

The proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 is 'a license to censor' and is a direct attack on one of the fundamentals of our society, that being Freedom of Speech.

This legislation targets everyday Australians, independent media and non-government political parties while carving out protections for government, mainstream media and "other" approved organizations.

It would give the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) draconian powers to silence critics of the government and impose fines up to \$6.8 million on social media platforms if, in ACMA's opinion, they have not done enough to prevent the dissemination of what ACMA considers to be misinformation or disinformation.

One of the main concerns with this bill is its highly subjective definition of what constitutes misinformation. Basically, misinformation will mean whatever the government wants it to mean. This could easily include legitimate criticisms of the government, questions about the science underpinning climate change ideology, questions about high immigration, questions about gender dysphoria, and statements for the No campaign against the voice to Parliament.

There are many recent notorious examples of professional news outlets propagating (wittingly or unwittingly) information that is false, misleading or deceptive, since the focus of the Bill is the presence of misinformation on 'digital platform services' (and not the regulation of the mainstream news media), it is not clear why professional news content should be excluded from the concept of 'misinformation'. The adoption of this bill, will reinforce Governmental and foreign influence on Australia's information space.

Legitimate criticisms of Government as well as differing points of view from the populace, are excellent indicators and essential foundations of a healthy democracy. The passage of this bill will erode our democracy.

Opposition to The proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 must be made so as to take a stand for freedom of speech and opinion, ensuring that hard won individual freedoms endure in our society. Lest we transpire into an Orwellian future where the "Ministry of Truth" governs all!