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10/09/23

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Subject: Feedback on the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my deep concern and outrage regarding the draft bill titled the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. As an Australian citizen and a fervent believer in the principles of freedom of thought, expression, and religion, I firmly believe that this bill not only infringes upon these fundamental rights but also unnecessarily divides our society.

At the heart of my discontent lies the discriminatory approach adopted by this bill, which classifies citizens into two categories based on the government's subjective determination of trustworthiness. It is alarming that the government seeks to delineate those who are deemed trustworthy to participate in public forums without being monitored and reported on. This exclusionary approach contradicts the principles of equality and fairness that Australia, as a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), has long championed.

Article 18 of the UDHR guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the right to manifest one's beliefs in teaching, practice, worship, and observance. Similarly, Article 19 of the UDHR guarantees the right to freedom of opinion and expression. These universal rights explicitly protect individuals' ability to hold diverse beliefs and express these beliefs without interference or discrimination.

It is disconcerting that the proposed bill seems to be based on a presupposition of an atheistic worldview, which disregards the deeply held religious beliefs of many individuals in our diverse society. The categorization of certain faith worldviews or their foundational teachings as misinformation reflects a level of intolerance that is concerning and incompatible with Australia's commitment to human rights. In a multicultural society like ours, it is crucial to respect and acknowledge the diverse perspectives and beliefs held by our fellow citizens.

Moreover, the bill's underlying assumption that individuals are incapable of discerning between reliable and unreliable information undermines the very essence of an informed democratic society. Rather than relying on censorship and heavy-handed monitoring, a more effective approach would be to promote media literacy education and critical thinking skills that empower citizens to evaluate information independently.

In conclusion, I vehemently oppose the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. The bill's divisive classification of citizens, disregard for religious freedoms, and lack of trust in the Australian public's ability to distinguish fact from fiction are deeply troubling. I urge the government to reconsider this bill and instead focus on fostering media literacy and promoting a society where diverse perspectives are respected and valued.

Thank you for considering my feedback on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

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