

SUBMISSION ON PROPOSED “COMBATING MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION BILL”

I am extremely concerned about the proposed “Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill”.

I understand this is proposed may be an attempt to eliminate some of the evils of social media but it is something like hitting a fly with a sledge hammer. Everything around gets smashed while the fly escapes.

This bill would completely remove freedom of speech from our country and is a breach of our human rights. It puts control of what opinions or facts are allowed to be dispersed via social media in the hands of the social media giants who, mainly because of the huge fines potentially incurred, would block everything they thought the government would not approve of. What qualifies them to be the arbitrators of free speech, to determine what is “misinformation” and what is “disinformation”? In fact, no-one should have this control in a democracy, which by definition allows everyone the freedom to hold and express their own views.

This bill would change our government from a democracy to a dictatorship. The fact that the government and mainstream media are exempt from these provisions is even more concerning because that means that everything the government says is classed as truth with anything contrary to that being classed as “misinformation or disinformation”.

A good example of how this would affect the country is the current debate on the proposed aboriginal Voice to Parliament. The general public would not be able to hear the case against this proposal as it would be considered “misinformation or disinformation” and therefore blocked on social media. This is particularly concerning as so many people only go to social media for information. How can a major change to our constitution be instigated in a democratic country without the population being fully informed? This would mean citizens would have to vote without knowing both sides of the debate. That is how it works in a dictatorship.

I trust you will consider the concerns raised in this submission in a reasonable way.