

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

I am writing to express my deep anger and outrage at the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. It is evident that this bill demonstrates a lack of respect for the freedom of speech of Australian citizens.

This bill effectively creates two classes of citizens, with one group consisting of politicians, mainstream journalists, and members of educational institutions who will have the power to spread information, whether accurate or not, online. The second group consists of regular citizens who often possess more knowledge on certain topics than those in the first category, such as industry insiders, and also citizen journalists who are often more rigorous in their work than those in the mainstream. This legislation puts regular citizens, who have found their voice through the power of the internet, at a significant disadvantage.

The excessive fines outlined in the bill will result in digital services being overly restrictive in terms of speech, even more so than the most restrictive digital services currently in operation. The problem is further compounded by the fact that the code applies across the entire industry, leaving no room for any escape valve in the system.

Accurately determining what is true or false is a nearly impossible task. New information is constantly emerging that challenges what was once widely accepted as fact. The bill's broad definitions could potentially categorize various statements, such as those related to COVID-19, as public health misinformation. This opens the door for the removal of content that may actually be true but is deemed misleading or deceptive. Freedom of speech is crucial as it allows for open and honest discussions and the exploration of different perspectives until common ground is reached.

Even Dr. Nick Coatsworth, a former Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Australia, has expressed serious concerns about the scope and application of this bill. His statement on Twitter highlights the challenges that arise when attempting to implement legislation on misinformation, stating that it would be impossible to effectively enforce and would likely result in fines being levied on content that is not, or turns out not to be, misinformation.

Furthermore, this bill appears to only consider larger platforms like Facebook, Reddit, and Twitter, but inadvertently includes thousands of community websites due to its broad definitions. This oversight demonstrates a lack of thorough consideration and understanding of the impact this bill may have on smaller websites.

The legal risk imposed by the bill presents an unreasonable restriction on our freedom, liberty, and the right to freedom of speech and enterprise. An individual website owner, both within and outside of Australia, with social features like comments or forums, could potentially face fines up to AU\$500,000, while companies could face fines up to AU\$2,500,000. Additionally, the expectation that website owners should comply with industry codes they may not even be aware of raises serious concerns about fairness and due process.

The proposed delegation of legislative power to private entities that are not directly responsible to Parliament, as outlined in the bill, amounts to an unconstitutional abdication of legislative power. This is a significant concern, as it violates the implied constitutional freedom of political communication.

The bill assumes that the government and accredited media and educational institutions can determine truth without taking the experiences and viewpoints of ordinary Australians into account. This dismissive attitude towards the viewpoints of regular citizens undermines the democratic process and hampers diversity in perspectives.

The threats and potential interference outlined in the bill towards digital platform providers and users further erode our freedom and sense of security. The imposition of reputational damage, financial penalties, and the imposition of obligations on businesses and individuals adds unnecessary stress, distress, and inefficiency to their lives. The requirement to potentially report on friends, family, or political co-agitators is reminiscent of oppressive regimes and goes against the spirit of Australian mateship.

The categorization of political party viewpoints as misinformation and subsequent removal from digital platforms will leave voters in the dark and hinder the democratic process. Independent media organizations, journalists, and bloggers will face complex reporting standards and misinformation reports seeking to ruin their reputations. This ultimately perpetuates a system where only government-approved media outlets benefit financially, creating a skewed and unbalanced information landscape.

The categorization of different citizens into classes, with trust only placed in those deemed worthy by the government, is in direct contradiction to the principles enshrined in international human rights declarations. Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, expression, and access to information are fundamental rights that should be respected and protected.

In conclusion, I strongly oppose the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. It undermines freedom of speech and imposes unreasonable restrictions on regular citizens. The broad definitions, lack of consideration for smaller websites, and potential for abuse raise significant concerns about the impact this bill will have on our democratic society.

I urge the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts to reconsider this bill and instead focus on promoting critical thinking, media literacy, and open dialogue as effective means of combatting misinformation and disinformation. While considering the question, please cogitate on the image below. Debate is essential for progress, for freedom, and for basic human rights.

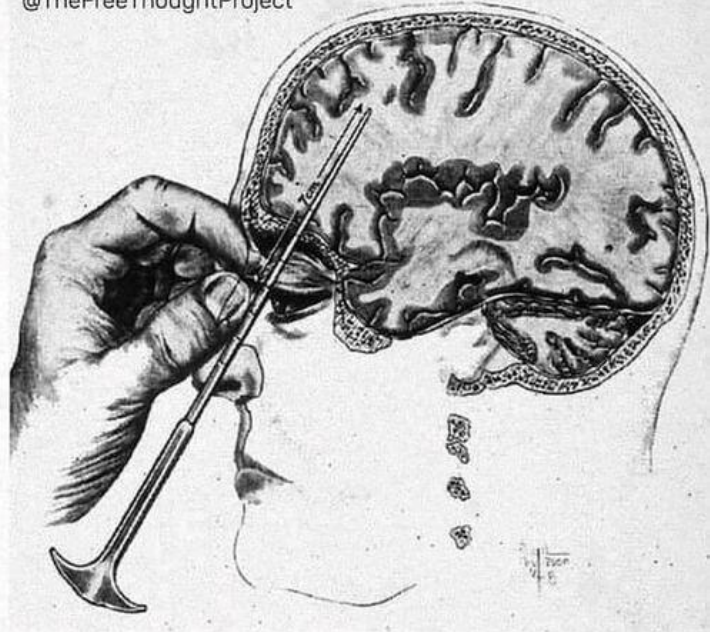
Yours sincerely,

Andreas Mijic

# Always Question "Settled Science"



@TheFreeThoughtProject



In the 1940's-50's a Lobotomy represented the leading edge of psychiatric science and many considered the procedure "settled science." Infact, in 1949, the inventor of the procedure, Dr. António Egas Moniz, was awared the Noble Prize for his discovery. Thousands of patients had their SELF destroyed by this procedure and became docile, robotic, non-humans,

**Remember there is no such thing as "settled science," everything should always be questioned and studied.**