

Regarding misinformation/ disinformation bill.

When I was young, a common saying to comfort a bullied child was 'sticks & stones may break my bones, but words can never harm me'. I however did not find much comfort in that, and I believe that words do harm. One only needs look at the number of suicides & their causes, to see that words can hurt deeply. A politicians lies can lead to wars & many deaths. A treasurers lies can bankrupt a country leave millions destitute. In my naivety I pondered whether it could be made illegal, to say that which is demonstrably false or hurtful. Innocently seeking a way to stop lies from being told in public, and intentional bullying.

After growing up & learning about history in relation to freedom of speech, I've concluded that it's not possible to legislate speech, without ultimately restricting the freedom to speak. Yes it can be dangerous & hurtful to allow everyone the freedom to say whatever we like. But I believe it is even more dangerous to allow a select few to decide what is true, and what is allowed to be said. Giving politicians the authority to decide what is truth, is like giving paedophiles permission to run a day care centre.

There needs to be a free & open discussion of anything & everything, in order to discover truth. Most people cannot think about complicated issues without uttering words. Without the ability to freely write or speak these words, right or wrong, and hear others speak, right or wrong, there is no discovery. We also sometimes need to hear & see two contrasting ideas in order to discern which one is true.

In the introduction to 'The Issue', it was written;

*'Misinformation and disinformation pose a threat... to our democracy, society and economy.'*

The bigger threat to our democracy, society, and economy is not from people posting on social media, but from politicians speaking on TV. The bill appears to regulate some platforms, but exempt others. If you want to experiment with regulating disinformation, then perhaps start by imposing these regulations on politicians first, on the platforms that they use, and see how that goes. A law for thee, but not for me indeed. If this bill passes, don't forget to also change the name of the ACMA to 'The Ministry of Truth'. A politician attempting to regulate what information is acceptable on a people's platform, is like a fox wanting to regulate what type of door is acceptable on a hen house.