

Feedback on an exposure draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

This Bill formalises the collusion of Big Government and Big Tech in the censorship of public debate. It is anathema to a democratic society.

We know exactly what the Government is doing – establishing a Ministry of Truth to suppress views that oppose the Labor party's views, by coercing social media companies into banning those opposing views as 'misinformation'. We condemn this thinly-veiled Orwellian move.

A handful of government employees at ACMA will have the unchallengeable authority to determine 'truth' and judge 'harm' on any matter of public debate – a truly despicable proposal for a self-governing society, where decisions should be determined by free public argument, not by elite manipulation of public argument.

Does the Minister not realise how absurd it is to pretend that a government agency can be trusted to be impartial and apolitical in the suppression of information? We are vividly aware of politicised censorship of 'misinformation' (information which was in fact true) in the US – for example, where Big Government and Big Tech colluded to suppress the Hunter Biden laptop scandal prior to Joe Biden's election, or the Wuhan lab leak theory, or the FBI corruption in perpetrating the Trump / Russia hoax?

Here, the Bill will be used as a pretext to 'shadow ban' or shut down opinions on social media that are well founded, sincerely held, but contrary to deeply held quasi-religious articles of faith for Labor, touching on the climate cult or the gender cult or the demonisation of all things colonial. This Bill even references 'the Australian environment' as a sphere where 'harmful' (i.e. climate-skeptical) arguments may be suppressed.

If the Labor Government proceeds with this Bill, it will be confirming itself as an elitist body that despises the birthright of ordinary citizens to argue their case on matters of public importance. It will not be forgiven.

Where free argument strays into defamation, we already have laws to deal with that; where it strays into incitement to violence, we already have laws to deal with that. All other argument must be allowed to enter the free market of ideas, where we the public will decide what to buy and what to reject.

Let free speech run its boisterous course on all matters of public importance – let Labor stop imposing its 'progressive' values on the rest of us with Censorship Bills like this. With free public argument, we the public will sift the sound information from the shonky information and form our own views – not the views our Government Masters allow us to form.

This Bill is a disgraceful abuse of Government power and an assault on the liberty of a free self-governing democracy.

It must not be passed.

Yours faithfully,

David van Gend