

I have read the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 and would like to express my opinion on this.

There have been some extraordinary disinformation that some people act on. An example of this concerns 5G towers causing COVID-19, resulting in people burning down these towers across the world. The worst kind of disinformation involves the assumption by the US, British, and Australian governments that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and that resulted in the loss of lives and still has consequences to this day.

I have some concerns about the bill. If it is passed, the government would force social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to censor posts that it does not agree with. This bill is not surprising, given that it is from the same government that wanted to introduce a mandatory Internet filter that is on par with China's censorship regime.

I object to the clause stating that all forms of government will be exempt from this legislation, as it sends a clear message that it is allowed to give out the type of disinformation highlighted in Paragraph 2 of my submission, and the Australian people would not be able to have a proper debate on its announcements. This is ironic considering that Australia was one of the countries that helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Article 19 of the UDHR states:

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”*

I am also concerned that if social media platforms suppress any misinformation or disinformation, they are also suppressing good debates, and therefore will have a chilling effect on free speech.

This bill should not be passed.