

Telephone: [REDACTED]

ABN: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

18 August 2023

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

**Re: Communications Legislation Amendment
(Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023**

Pursuant to your email, dated 18 August 2023, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your invitation to make some personal comments concerning the above stated Bill.

Preamble

By way of preamble, permit me to state that I was born in the Netherlands five years after the end of World War II. I am proud to say that, on [REDACTED], I became a Naturalised Australian Citizen and I feel very privileged to call The Commonwealth of Australia my home.

My parents both lived through and survived World War II. Neither of my parents would ever speak about the war and it was not until my father was dying that he spoke about WW II and told me that he worked with the Dutch Resistance.

Notwithstanding the principal Netherland's foreign policy of neutrality, the Nazi forces invaded the Netherlands on 10 May 1940. The earlier promise of nonaggression by Hitler proved worthless as so many other promises made by Hitler and the Nazis. This letter is not meant to be a lesson in European history; rather, I wish to highlight two things which were imposed upon the people of the Netherlands following the Nazi invasion:

First, there was a repeat of the book burning for which a precedent had been set in Germany on 10 May 1933 when there was a public book burning by students of all literature deemed inconsistent with state policy. The same took place in the Netherlands. Jeroen Dewulf wrote that "The German invasion of the Netherlands on 10 May 1940 was not only a tragedy for the Dutch people; it was also a tragedy for Dutch literature. In just a few weeks the intellectual leaders of an entire generation would disappear." ⁽¹⁾

Second, the Nazi Regime systematically stopped the Dutch people's access to radio broadcasts. In a term Paper written by Baek, Hee Won, the following details are given: ⁽²⁾

- During World War II radio listening was restricted in Holland. In 1940 the Dutch were forbidden to listen to foreign broadcasting and Dutch broadcasting-organizations were censored by the Germans.
- Broadcasting of English and American songs was forbidden in January 1941.
- The grip of the Nazis on the programming was increasing, they ordered to broadcast Aryan "Auflagesendungen" (mass-produced programs).

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- On 9 March 1941 the broadcasting organizations were dismantled, and a German propaganda-station "De Netherlands Omroep" (Dutch for: Dutch Broadcasting Organization) was founded.
- Foreign broadcasts like the BBC and Radio Orange from the Dutch Government (in exile in London) were very popular with the Dutch people. The Germans were trying to stop the broadcasts any way they could, by forbidding to listen or by trying to jam. These measures were not effective enough, the final measure was the confiscation of all radios on 13 May 1943.

Personal Concerns

Permit me to say that I am not, for one moment, equating the Government of Australia with the Nazi Regime; nor is this letter intended to cast any aspersions whatsoever upon the Australian Government or any elected person therein, either Federal or State. I have an enormous respect for our elected government. I am seeking only to express my concerns about the Bill hereinbefore mentioned. Accordingly, I have cited the examples of Nazi control over communication in The Netherlands only to show what can take place when freedom of speech, thought and view-points are controlled. Because of what my parents witnessed during WW II and, especially my father — whose involvement with the Dutch Resistance led to him being taken to one of the forced labour camps in Nazi Germany — I had the privilege of growing up in a home where any form of prejudice against people (be it their colour, race, creed, religion, etc.) was deemed to be akin to the unpardonable sin. When my father was dying, he broke down and wept and told me that I needed to ensure such things as he had witnessed in WW II would never happen again. His view was that freedom of religion, speech, culture and thinking, were inalienable human rights.

In light of the forgoing, Sir, I find myself in full agreement with a statement made by Senator Alexander Charles Antic in his email dated 7 July 2023, where he made the observation that "A healthy, functioning democracy requires freedom of speech, which means that ideas from across the ideological and political spectrum are discussed and debated with the hope that good arguments, guided by the light of truth, will win the day. However, words like harm, misinformation, and disinformation have been weaponised to shut down critics of the broader ideological agenda at work in western nations, with COVID being a prime example." ⁽³⁾

I love The Commonwealth of Australia and the fact that, like the Netherlands, we have a democratically elected Government. It is for that reason that I express my concern over the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023, because I feel that it will undermine a healthy, functioning democracy where freedom of speech and thought is no longer possible.

Yours sincerely,



Acknowledgements:

- (1) Jeroen Dewulf (2010) *Spirit of Resistance: Dutch Clandestine Literature during the Nazi Occupation*. Published by: [Boydell & Brewer, Camden House](#)
- (2) Baek, Hee Won (2008) *The History of Radio in the Netherlands 1919-1945*. Korean Minjok Leadership Academy International Program. Term Paper, AP European History Class, July 2008
- (3) Senator Alexander Charles Antic, BA, LLB. alex@alexantic.com.au Ministry of Truth. 7 July 2023.

