I am writing this submission to voice (while I still can) my vehement opposition to the draft bill.

Let me start with addressing this clause in the bill – "Harm to the health of Australians". Government misinformation caused me harm, four times. But let's talk about the latest one. Those doctors and scientists (some even Harvard professors) who were shut down and removed from digital platforms after giving warnings about certain health measures during the pandemic… if I'd had access to that information I would have been making a fully INFORMED choice and not just fed the misinformation and scare tactics used by government health officials. If I'd had access to that information instead of what we now know was misinformation; also unquestioningly parroted by the main stream media, I might not have been damaged. I regret my uninformed decision. I vigorously questioned doctors and specialists about certain aspects pertaining to my health but couldn't get any answers. I followed harmful government misinformation that firstly, I would be keeping my parents safe because the misinformation was rife that the vaccine stops transmission of the virus dead in its tracks. We now know that was one of the biggest forms of misinformation which I might add should have been revealed in contracts the government signed. There should be no way that trial data would have been withheld when signing those contracts. If it was not sighted then that's gross negligence and there were no grounds to spread that "information" and if it was sighted then you knowingly spread lies in the way of mis/dis/mal information and you yourselves caused harm to the Australian public but by all means recuse yourselves from inclusion in this bill. And secondly there would be no problem with the response I was questioning doctors over because they would have been allowed to speak freely but instead it seemed they were gagged, only able to repeat the harmful government misinformation. If you are going to make amendments to the bill like this then the Australian government should absolutely NOT be exempt from it and neither should the main stream media. My point here being, both entities need to clean up their own backyard before forcing us to clean up ours.

"Containing information that is false, misleading or deceptive" - The government were the exclusive purveyors of harmful, false, misleading and deceptive information to the public during the pandemic alone. The government lied (leading health officials are on camera admitting it now) about masks, transmission/contraction, herd immunity, lockdowns (which actually caused intense harm), children and the virus, fit; healthy people and the virus….. The list is extensive and instead of doing their job and investigating everything, questioning everything on our behalf, the media ditched their own duty of care to the country and just parroted the lies and harmful dis/mis-information AND mal-information the government demanded of them. And yet here you are imposing these dystopian, invasive laws on digital platform users and letting yourselves and the media off scot-free to continue to spread misinformation all over again…and again…and again. To cause harm. To call people trying to get more information and asking questions names like anti-vaxxers, racists, Putin apologists, white supremacists, right wing extremists, science deniers, conspiracy theorists and then when all is said and done and the truth finally comes out, the government just move on to introducing a bill that further marginalises all of those people who were trying to get to the truth. Not one government official nor the media has come out and apologised for causing harm to all of the people they marginalised, misinformed and called names.

We are not stupid idiots. This bill is causing harm in itself because you are essentially saying the Australian people are too stupid to decipher fact from misinformation for themselves. How dare you. Who do you think you are to call me too stupid to simply look up something if I think it sounds suss? And there's another point of harm you are causing with this bill. If you strip away the information YOU deem harmful then all we are left with is what YOU believe is correct and nothing else. No research needed because it can't be found. That's the classic definition of dictatorship. Where Hitler burnt books, you're burning digital information that scares you.

- “Harm to the Australian environment”. I do not believe climate change is an existential threat. The scientist’s not receiving large sums of money have abundant scientific data to back that up. I will obviously be shut down, fined and what else…If I go against the narrative on climate change the government is trying to push?

Imagine if this “misinformation” rubbish was around when Albert Einstein was challenging Newton’s theory of gravity. Imagine that. We would never have heard of Albert Einstein. Science, no matter which side of the political spectrum should be scrutinized, questioned and given a chance to evolve and that can never happen if we’re shut down for sharing information that refutes the government science they want us to numbly repeat. Imagine, Einstein being labelled a gravity denier because he had a different theory to Newton? Just shut down and never heard from again. I don’t recall the media or government calling Einstein a science denier, white supremacist, climate denier, racist, conspiracy theorist, far right wing extremist or anti-vaxxer when he challenged scientific theories; even those theories which were at the time widely accepted. That’s what science is all about. Challenging, questioning, and investigating. And not just science, that’s what builds societies, that’s how societies grow. Healthy and vigorous debate, questioning, challenging, testing, experiencing other points of view. How can any of that happen when the government demands anything going against what they want to be shut down, never heard of again? Fining people, especially those who are struggling financially, forcing them to shut up because it might not be in the government’s best interests. What about OUR best interests that the government has been elected to represent?

If I read the draft bill correctly a “digital service does not include email, SMS or MMS”. So it does including private messaging services on social media platforms? If so, you want access to private messaging and shut down what people are saying/sharing in private messages if you don’t like what is being said? If so, how very dictator-like and abhorrent. The insecurity of government is becoming dangerous if you don’t even want people talking about you and your policies/laws/health legislation etc. behind closed doors in the privacy of their own personal messaging service. Not really <u>private</u> messaging anymore then, is it? China do this because they are scared of people rising up and challenging their communist dictatorship. What’s your excuse?

“Digital platform rules may also require those digital platform providers to give any or all of the reports to the ACMA”, “

(10) If digital platform rules require a digital platform provider to give a report to the ACMA, the rules must allow the provider to:

(a) identify to the ACMA any information in the report the publication of which the provider considers could be expected to prejudice materially the commercial interests of a person; and

(b) provide reasons”.

There are many points at which the amendments mention reports being handed over to the ACMA, not just this one. Do those reports contain the personal details of the individuals who shared the so-called misinformation? If so, is that personal information then passed on to other entities to protect their commercial interests such as, for example, banks, in order for them to vet who they want banking with them? There are amendments that mention causing harm to commercial interests. Will this information, if it is passed on to entities such as banks then enable banks the ability to personally punish citizens by closing down/suspending the citizen’s ability to access their own money? This is beginning to occur as we speak and this bill hasn’t even come to fruition. Where are the assurances and protections that these <u>essential entities</u> will not work to punish citizens parallel to the proposed and disgusting ACMA punishments dished out?

ACMA says satirical/comedic content is excluded yet on digital platforms such as social media, memes meant for a laugh that relate to touchy subjects such as climate change/COVID for example are already labelled misinformation in most cases and even removed from platforms already. How will that be managed now with this bill? We are already restricted in what we can and cannot produce for comedy purposes. How can you laugh at something meant to be funny when there is a, "Warning! Missing context" or "Warning! Misinformation" label slapped below it? It's already the most ridiculous action that exists on social media platforms as it is. How can one freely have a laugh when there are "warning" labels slapped below every joke, every skit?! How's that going to go when this disgusting breech of freedom of speech is introduced? Opinions not allowed anymore if they go against the regime's narrative either? Social media platforms already label information, even comedy and satire with so called "fact checks". This bill is, in my opinion, government insecurity on steroids. History tells us that never ends well.

There is already the ability to block, snooze and unfriend people if we feel they are spreading "misinformation" or "causing harm". We already have the ability to deal with this ourselves. Why do you feel the need to take that choice away from us? Shut down parodies, comedy and satire that we understand is created for exactly the purposes mentioned. Comedy is not excluded at all from "misinformation" policing and you know it. Again, we are not idiots! We can decide for ourselves and have already been given the resources by social media companies to deal with it ourselves. Who do you think you are? It seems the Australian government are becoming more and more insecure. Why?

33 Examples - (e) preventing monetisation of misinformation or disinformation on digital platform services;

Again, my question is, if the ACMA have information for the government about a certain subject, let's say climate change and a person has, for example a YouTube channel dedicated to debunking what the government tell us to believe (there are many scientists who vehemently disagree with this main stream narrative and provide compelling evidence) how are you going to rip away income from a person by demonetising them just because they do not agree with the government and what they demand we believe? Are you happy with yourselves for coming up with a way to rip earnings away from people because they don't agree with what the government want? Because they are saying things that hurt you and your precious narrative? Once again, I have the capacity to decide if what I'm listening to is ridiculous, harmful, truthful or otherwise thank you very much and once again, this is already being over-policed. People are already having their ability to earn money from digital platforms ripped away from them…this is now moving into tyrannical governance.

The people who have been de-monetised on some platforms for telling the truth and showing factual evidence to back up their claims are moving to platforms that won't take away their freedom to speak. Is this the real reason you and other countries have, it seems, colluded with each other by bringing out almost exactly the same bills? So you can get into those platforms that back freedom of speech and rip away the last vestige, the final ability for people to earn money. Seems to me that's the case here.

I reiterate, this bill treats us like we are complete and utter idiots and reveals an underlying, sinister motive. Ripping earnings away from people because they are not conforming to your way of thinking. How dare you treat us like a bunch of vulnerable fools who need to be protected from words that offend YOU. It seems the Australian people need to be protected from the current government more than they need protecting from government-deemed "wrong speak".

33 - (f) supporting fact checking;

You mean like the “fact” checking about the laptop? The “fact” checking that went with Russia-gate? Journalists even won awards for documentaries about this disgusting mis/dis/mal-information! No fact checking needed there let alone “investigative journalism”!

You mean like the “fact” checking about transmission/contraction/efficacy/lockdowns/masks-cloth, double masking/herd immunity/safe and effective/stops transmission dead in its tracts? You mean like supporting that “fact” checking? There are videos on YouTube and posts all over social media that are still up touting the mal-information that “the vaccines stop the virus dead in its tracks”. Why hasn’t any of that misinformation from media outlets, the government and citizens been removed? Labelled at the very least as misinformation? This is unbelievable. This bill is clearly intended for a different purpose than what you are touting if real misinformation is still floating through the social media ether. No wonder government and media are exempt.

Supporting the same “fact” checking on the conditions of the Reef? Glacial melt? “No ice caps left in 5 years” said for the last several decades at least. Are you happy to continue to support that “fact” checking?

Are you happy to support the same “fact” checking on the Prime Minister saying “Voice. Treaty. Truth” but then says there will be no treaty? You mean like all of that “fact” checking support?

Supporting “fact” checking about “weapons of mass destruction”?

You mean supporting the same “fact” checking that lied about Assad using chemical weapons on his own people in Syria? You mean like checking those “facts”?

Supporting “fact” checking about Julian Assange and all the absolute lies and disgusting MAL-information put out about him that may actually cost that man his life? You mean supporting that sort of “fact” checking? People who are trying to defend Assange by telling the truth about this entire situation are being harmed by the misinformation people were fed by government bodies. They are being abused and shut down around every turn. But by all means, slap these amendments on us peasants while you go about your business harming the Australian people with your lies!

The government hurt people every day by turning truth into lies by way of supporting so called “fact” checking.

Years and years of being told all of those outright lies, lying by omission, the misleading, the disinformation and misinformation that has been spread by government and media incessantly and yet you have the hide to sit there and say you support “fact checking”. You think it’s a good thing to continue to do so? I’m sorry but there’s something seriously wrong with anyone who believes that’s right. The “fact checkers” have had to be fact checked over the last 3 years at least and nearly every single one of their checks has turned out to be utter rubbish. How can you sit there and say you will continue to support that? That in itself is a recipe for disaster and if you are going to continue to support the “fact checkers” that are spreading outright misinformation then this bill should be wiped from the face of the planet! My God!

Fact checking seems to me to be less about checking actual facts and more of an excuse to remove content and demonize any person, no matter who they are, that doesn’t comply with the current narrative being pushed by whichever side of government is at the helm.

The role of the government is to represent the people. To work for the people in bringing about a happy, free society that is easy to move about, to have the capacity to think freely, to speak freely and to prosper. The government is supposed to help make our lives better not bring in draconian laws that only suit themselves and shut down the very people they are supposed to represent! This bill is not what a government is about. YOU don't decide what information I have access to. YOU don't decide what information might be "harmful" to me. That's up to ME to decide. If I were a parent then how I parent and the role of keeping my child safe is up to ME to decide not you! You are treating us like children who need to be protected. That's not how it works. If I felt I needed protection I would call the police. That's how a democracy works. I make my own choices, I decide what information will be harmful to me, not you.

You are breaking down democracy with this bill alone. You have absolutely no right to do it. How are you going to answer your grandchildren when they ask "what did you do to fight for our freedom?" Will you be happy to answer, "Oh little one, I didn't fight for your freedom because I was the one who helped take it away". Is that what you want to be remembered as? The people who ripped away an entire country's freedom to speak. Freedom to discern for themselves what is and is not the truth. Freedom to laugh. Freedom to share what they deem acceptable information. Every country has a different way of expressing themselves. Every culture is different. If Australians are shut down because the government want to "protect" them, how will other countries see our culture and humour in all of its Aussie glory?

What you deem misinformation or harmful might be another culture's way of expressing themselves. There is a diverse pool of faith based religions in this country. Just because some religions believe in a way of living their life doesn't mean they deserve to be silenced just as other non-religious groups don't deserve to be silenced either. Shutting people down all-together, means there is no room for discussion, debate and in turn, reconciliation if that's what's needed. How can people live together in diversity if they cannot be allowed to read, hear and experience all walks of life, all information and all points of view? As mentioned further up, social media already have many facilities in place for people to utilise if they feel they are being fed lies and misinformation. By pushing that even further, you are treating people like second class citizens, not able to think for themselves; critically think and decide what's best for them.

I am disgusted and ashamed to have to sit down and air my grievances over this draft bill in the first place. I cannot fathom the amount of insecurity and fear the government must have by needing to introduce amendments such as these. I will finish my objection by reminding you of historical censorship put in place before a certain dictator tyrannically ruled over the people. This is nothing more than a history lesson in case history is being forgotten. Never forget. Digital media wasn't around back then but it is now and it's being highly censored out of nothing more than government fear and insecurity. Just how far you are willing to go will be telling. We have already been shut out of international media broadcasts the government didn't want reaching our ears and eyes in the way of the Russian Times and Sputnik. We are unable to gather information on the other side of the "argument" which is extremely concerning.

Again, the government telling me what is harmful and what I should or should not be consuming, it's not on. I am an adult, not your child!

These excerpts were taken from the Holocaust Encyclopaedia. I am in no way comparing the government to Hitler. That's not my intention rather, I'm pointing out the history of what happens when a government decides what the people can and can't say and how damaging censorship can be.

"When the Nazis came to power in 1933, the German constitution guaranteed freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Through decrees and laws, the Nazis abolished these civil rights and destroyed German democracy. Starting in 1934, it was illegal to criticize the Nazi government. Even telling a joke about Hitler was considered treachery. People in Nazi Germany could not say or write whatever they wanted.

Examples of censorship under the Nazis included:

- Closing down or taking over anti-Nazi newspapers;
- Controlling what news appeared in newspapers, on the radio, and in newsreels;
- Banning and burning books that the Nazis categorized as un-German;
- Controlling what soldiers wrote home during World War II.

September 1939

Banning Germans from Listening to Foreign Radio

World War II begins on September 1, 1939. Shortly afterwards, the Nazi regime makes listening to foreign radio broadcasts illegal. This is an attempt to control what information Germans hear about the war. The Nazi regime sees news and information from outside Germany as a security threat. They are worried about foreign radio broadcasts, which some Germans can access on their home radios."

Lastly, some quotes that should be digested:

"When you tear out a man's tongue, you are not proving him a liar, you're only telling the world that you fear what he might say."
― **George R.R. Martin, A Clash of Kings**

"When truth is replaced by silence, the silence is a lie."
― **Yevgeny Yevtushenko**

"Who is more to be pitied, a writer bound and gagged by policemen or one living in perfect freedom who has nothing more to say?"
― **Kurt Vonnegut**

"The burning of a book is a sad, sad sight, for even though a book is nothing but ink and paper, it feels as if the ideas contained in the book are disappearing as the pages turn to ashes and the cover and binding--which is the term for the stitching and glue that holds the pages together--blacken and curl as the flames do their wicked work. When someone is burning a book, they are showing utter contempt for all of the thinking that produced its ideas, all of the labor that went into its words and sentences, and all of the trouble that befell the author . . ."

― **Lemony Snicket, The Penultimate Peril**

"Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear."

[*Special Message to the Congress on the Internal Security of the United States*, August 8, 1950]"
― **Harry S. Truman**

"Censorship is telling a man he can't have a steak just because a baby can't chew it."
― **Mark Twain**

Regards

Ruth H.