

[REDACTED]

I, the undersigned, express my serious concern and opposition to the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 (the Bill)* as proposed by the Albanese Government (**the Government**).

I am deeply concerned that adoption of the Bill will threaten freedom of speech and the democratic rights of Australians in the following ways:

- The Bill grants the Government the authority to define what is truth, allowing the Government to control and manipulate the flow of information to the Australian people, so that only what is deemed by the Government to be “truth” is released to the public.
- Whilst imposing restrictions on online platforms, the Bill gives the Government and mainstream media an exemption, creating a double standard and eroding the principles of fairness and equality.
- The Bill empowers the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) with determining what qualifies as “misinformation” and “disinformation”. This subjective approach will create a huge void in the proposed law for abuse of power through political and/or personal pressure, and will suppress public debate and allowing for a diversity of opinions and perspectives in what is currently a representative democratic nation.
- The Bill will facilitate social media and internet search companies becoming tools for censorship by the Government, stifling free speech and undermining the open exchange of ideas and opinions.
- The Bill paves the way for ideological conformity, suppressing dissenting voices and hindering independent thought. Such approach fully reflects the policies implemented by the National Socialist Party in Germany (and other countries which it invaded) during the 1930’s and 1940’s and those implemented by various socialist and communist dictator states over the past 100 years. This approach goes against the principles of a democratic society, that thrives on diversity and freedom of expression.

I urge the Government to withdraw the Bill and to uphold the fundamental rights of all Australian citizens, as stated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations General Assembly, Paris, 10 December 1948):

*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.*

Anything less will cause serious, detrimental implications for free speech and democracy in Australia.

I urge the Government to uphold the principles of transparency and accountability, and foster an environment and dialogue where open debate and diverse opinions are welcome. Such dialogue can be facilitated by the Government within an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and kindness.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Andrew Batts