

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I am strongly opposed to the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. I believe that this bill, whilst aiming to address concerns about misinformation and disinformation, poses a huge threat to freedom of speech and paves the way for government overreach in regulating online content.

Freedom of speech is a fundamental pillar of a democratic society and any legislation that threatens it should be critically examined. The vague terms "misinformation" and "disinformation" are subjective and can be widely interpreted. Such ambiguity could enable the government to suppress dissenting opinions or unpopular viewpoints under the pretext of combating misinformation. This makes it harder for different viewpoints to be heard and discussed openly.

Furthermore, I find it deeply hypocritical that the government is exempt from the very rules it seeks to impose on social media platforms. Granting the government the authority to regulate truth online while allowing it to disseminate its own information without scrutiny is very worrying and raises concerns about unequal treatment and transparency.

The proposed fines outlined in the bill are disproportionately large and could potentially force smaller businesses and individuals to comply, stifling innovation and limiting independent voices. The threat of substantial penalties will deter people from sharing their opinions openly and engaging in important discussions online. This could lead to self-censorship and have a chilling effect on free expression, which is detrimental to democracy.

I strongly believe that addressing misinformation should not involve censorship by the government. Instead, promoting a culture of critical thinking and media awareness, and encouraging open dialogue, are more effective approaches to combat misinformation. Empowering individuals to make informed decisions and allowing differing viewpoints to coexist is essential for a healthy democracy.

I urge ACMA to carefully consider the implications of the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. I encourage you to uphold the principles of free speech, transparency, and open discourse. It is vital to strike a balance between curbing harmful content and preserving the democratic values that underpin our society. I hope that ACMA will take into account the perspectives of people like myself who are deeply concerned about the potential impact of this bill on our fundamental rights.

Sincerely,

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