

The federal government's proposed Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2023 is a direct attack on our democracy and freedom of speech. I strongly oppose any such bill that restricts the right of citizens to free speech whether in public or online, at a time when government actions and those of the elites controlling our politicians, are questionable after the past few years of COVID-19 mismanagement and handling.

While several issues are presented in the bill's framework for consideration and debate, it is the very nature of this bill that concerns me the most. This bill will give arbitrary power to the independent regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), with new laws to control the spread of information online. In Orwellian terms, the ACMA will become Australia's 'Ministry of Truth' giving the ACMA the right to decide what is fact, what is truth, and what is 'misinformation.' These elites will be dominated and controlled by politicians, the rich, the powerful, and the influential. We only need to look at the disaster of the past few years of COVID-19 to see how politicians and media silenced any debate or dissent while pushing their own narratives and agendas. All debate during Covid was squashed and anyone suggesting anything other than the government's narrative was sidelined or branded with terms such as 'anti-vaxxer,' 'neo-Nazi' or a 'conspiracy theorist.'

Despite the federal government denying the need for and refusing to agree to a COVID royal commission into the government's handling of COVID-19 during the pandemic and the resulting lockdowns, the governments misinformation control has now been exposed. Over 4000 social media posts were censored at the height of the pandemic because they were deemed to be misinformation, but these have now proven to be factually correct. Comments and articles about the effectiveness of masks, mandates, and lockdowns were also censored at the time of the pandemic, but have now been shown to be valid with the evidence against the effectiveness of lockdowns to be alarmingly high, with nothing but negative social, educational and economic consequences for all involved. Even debate and discussion around the safety and efficacy of the mRNA so called 'vaccines' (Moderna, Pfizer and Astra-Zeneca) and lack of long term safety data available, was censored, removed, or 'fact-checked' online, both by the media and the government to push the political narrative. The release of the 8-page Pfizer documents on the short term and long term 'vaccine' effects and safety data, only after a court ruling to remove the multiple decade ban to the public, only shows the dangers of such mRNA drugs being injected into the human population with no short term or long term human trials - something ordinary Australians expressed concern or hesitancy about throughout the pandemic. Yet all these concerns were censored online, suppressed, or removed and deemed 'misinformation' by the government and the rich and powerful, because those valid concerns did not fit the political narrative at the time. One only needs to do a little research into the past few years to demonstrate how dangerous a 'Ministry of Truth' would be for our society to function in a free and democratic way.

At a time when debate, discourse, and discussion should have been encouraged and promoted, we lived through Orwellian control and saw the misuse of government and political power, with restriction after restriction placed on us, in order to remove more and more of our rights as Australian citizens. No government should ever hold that type of power again or give that power over to an independent regulator, such as the ACMA.

The underpinnings of a democratic society are the principles of freedom of speech, thought, religion, association, and expression. All citizens in a democratic country are entitled to these rights. This is one of the reasons Australia has been such a wonderful and free nation.

Therefore, any such bill that seeks to make the government or an independent regulator, a 'Ministry of Truth,' is very dangerous and a direct attack on the principles of democracy and our freedom of speech. I fervently oppose the Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2023.