

I am concerned that the alleged fight against “fake news”, “misinformation” and “disinformation” is a worry for free speech, a cornerstone of western democracy and the Australian way of life.

Increasingly it appears that government use of these words is code for “censorship” to control not only free speech but also notions of truth and reality. There are those in places of authority who believe that their definitions, their preferences, their views must override everything else. We have seen this over the past several years, where ordinary Australians who disagreed with often arrogantly propounded, now-demonstrably false and inaccurate, claims by politicians, bureaucrats and media personalities, have been vilified, lost jobs and in some cases their homes and lifestyles, been forced to accept mandated toxic jobs, forced to wear masks, have suffered illnesses including mental health problems, have been refused access to services, refused ability to visit hospitals, attend funerals, cross state borders to return to their homes, etc. This does not even begin to address the violence we have seen of police attacks against ordinary people expressing their opposition to governments effectively imprisoning people in their own homes or the complicit mainstream media refusing to acknowledge the extent of opposition to the false narratives.

It has become blatantly obvious with the forced release of hidden emails and reports that there have been government, corporate and media cover-ups of the true facts – all of this despite so-called “fact-checkers” rallying against them and the de-platforming and closing of accounts of anyone who does not accept the politically-correct narrative. The de-banking of Nigel Farage in the UK for holding unfashionable views is a wake-up call for us in this country, too.

The current Bill vaguely defines the key concepts of “misinformation”, “disinformation” and “harm” thereby permitting government ministers and their bureaucratic advisers - not to mention the so-called fact-checkers who are trained to operate in a politically-mandated manner – to continue promoting their own brands of disinformation, regardless of the facts. Your own Information sheets use phrases such as: *“multitude of harms from disrupted public health responses...”* when the reality is that these public health responses have been increasingly shown to have been questionable and excessive.

The notion of keeping people 'safe' from misinformation is itself misleading, as speech, even based on falsehoods, cannot cause real, direct harm.

Who will control the so-called fact-checkers. The draft states that *“the ACMA will not have the power to request specific content or posts be removed from digital platform services.”* It is almost guaranteed that these platforms will automatically remove material to ensure there is no doubt of their compliance. In very recent days we have seen these “fact-checkers” shutting out any posts on social media sites as “misinformation” that suggest that the Uluru statement is anything more than a single page – this despite the fact that architects of the statement have, in the past, quite clearly claimed that the full statement is “18 or 20” pages long. So, either the social media sites are protecting their own bank billions, as it were, or they are flagrantly interfering in Australian politics – neither action I find acceptable. This is a government and its lackies censoring dissenting voices. This is not the democratic society for which, across the world in the past, Australia has been

Furthermore, the behaviours of these platforms to date have not been encouraging in respect of *“rules... to have systems and processes in place to address misinformation and disinformation that meets a threshold of being likely to cause or contribute to serious harm.”* This concept is open, in my view, to any amount of massaging to produce a desired outcome that would, in fact, be harmful to anyone opposing the loudest political, bureaucratic, globalist or media voices.

I strongly urge the abandonment of this Bill in its current form.