




18th August, 2023

To the Committee,

I am a teacher in , and I am very concerned about the exposure draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

Although the intention is to improve clarity and authenticity of information shared, the restrictions on the freedom of expression are a danger to the fundamental sharing of information necessary in a functioning democracy.

The exemptions likewise are well meant, but are so complex one can foresee High Court challenges by those with money, and overreach by business owners and social media platform monitors on the citizens the Law should aim to empower.

Private messengers are already heavily censored, even without this Bill. Although an exemptions are mentioned, in practice this Bill will empower social media monitors/ community guideline enforcers to feel virtuous by misusing their censorship powers.

The few provisions that have been included to acknowledge the competing right to freedom of expression are tokenistic and do not satisfy the high bar required in international law for the interference with fundamental rights of freedom of expression.

Yesterday's misinformation may be tomorrow's well-known fact; consider how the existence of Jewish consecration camps was misinformation for years, but now in our history textbooks.

Rather than amend this Bill, it ought to be discarded as a threat to our democracy. It is better to allow the risk of lies than reduce and restrict our accessibility to dubious facts and truths.

I refer your committee to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and use these to shape Australia's ability to increase communications and sharing of knowledge.

Yours faithfully,

Fiona Reeves Bach.HRSc, Masters of Teaching

