

New ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation

Submission

18 August 2023

I write this submission to express my opposition to this proposal. Having worked and lived in a number of countries over the past 40 years, I have seen first hand the danger of suppressing free speech. I have also seen the lack of advancement through having populations who are told what to believe by politicians and or government bodies.

To give anybody the power to decide what may or may not constitute misinformation or disinformation is to muzzle the population that the government has been elected to represent.

Regardless of intent, any government body will have members who have particular believe systems whether they be political, social or religious and this leads to bias. Therefore, you can never have a truly neutral body to manage this process.

It is well known you can have a number of people in disagreement about known facts because they provide their view on the impact of these facts across a spectrum of possible applications. This is the basis of all scientific endeavours where some “facts” will be modified over time as they are challenged and exposed through direct observation. This has happened since the dawn of man and will continue.

I acknowledge that academics will be exempt, but academics are not always right. Examples of this can be found everywhere with the most cursory glance. It is important that academics are free to argue their position to advance knowledge. Why is it less important for the public to likewise argue their position to advance their knowledge?

Any groups of people with common interests and focus will still disagree and this is healthy. Farmers, fishermen, miners and any other industry you care to examine will have participants who disagree with how each other operates their business and what makes them succeed or fail. It is this disagreement that provides encouragement to examine practices to find a better way forward to the benefit of all.

The proposed new ACMA powers where power is given to decide what is truth and what is not will stifle debate, slow down and damage progress across multiple fields and has the ability to create social issues whether intended or not.

We are a free and vibrant society who elect officials to provide services. We are not a society that must be muzzled to protect ourselves and who need to be told what to believe and what not to believe. We are free to make this decision on our own.

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