

19 August 2023

To whom it may concern

Personal Submission:

Objection to the Proposed Bill to combat misinformation and disinformation

If it is implemented as is, as an Australian citizen I see this draft Bill now being introduced into the parliament as an assault on my freedom of speech.

We already have a judicial system that gives citizens in Australia the opportunity for redress against misinformation and disinformation (e.g. defamation, harassment, negligence) through our already existing laws. I therefore see this proposed Bill would only impair my ability to express any issues that I feel important but may not coincide with the mainstream narrative. Considering the current level of distrust in some of our political institutions that now exists, and in mainstream and other media, I am concerned that we could find ourselves embarking on a dark undemocratic period in Australian history.

As the above entities are mostly owned and/or controlled by international corporations, we would be handing over even more of our sovereignty as Australian Citizens to these powerful non-Australian entities to decide for us what is free speech or what they consider is misinformation or disinformation. Taking into account that these corporations would be assigned as abators of this new proposed Legislation, including the imposition of fines, this providing should be of great concern to us all. It is my understand that once a decision has been made that a citizen has breached the guidelines they will have no recourse or dialogue to redress this decision, thus arbitrarily depriving them of free speech. Democracy in whatever form a country adopts is founded on the rights of its citizens to freely express their views and opinions.

I note too that this planned legislation will not apply to everyone equally, in that it will exclude Government bodies, the mainstream media organizations and presumably any overseas entities involved in applying the guideline of this Legislation. In my view, these rights should never be handed over to foreign entities, corporations or international intelligence services who may use these powers to silence or influence a narrative for their own desired outcomes.

Australians have fought and made sacrifices to keep Australia a sovereign country, including the upholding of free speech as a right of every citizen. I will end my submission on that note by quoting **Noam Chomsky** ... "The smart way to keep people PASSIVE and OBEDIENT is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum." Is that the Australia we want our children and grandchildren to be living in?

These are the reasons I object to this proposed legislation.

