

Private Citizen submission to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 .

First of all let me express my absolute disgust and dismay at actually having to make a submission on this matter in my very own country. In my opinion it is both a massive overreach of government and bureaucratic power as well as a barely concealed effort to force social media platforms and other independent media to do the dirty work of the government. This is becoming an all too frequent method for governments to crush free speech, opinions and the free exchange of ideas being using corporations and big business to do what the government either fears to do openly, is legally unable to do or is afraid it will cost them votes. What you are proposing to do will as I believe you intended it to and that is to have a chilling effect on free speech with platforms nervous at the veritable “sword of Damocles” you have placed over their heads and the tangled web of what you define is actually misinformation and disinformation. The categories where you claim you are “combating” are an Orwellian nightmare. The “harm” definitions for the act are draconian Please tell me what someone posting can be a what you term a “harm to the environment”? Do you intend to go after companies that allow dissent on so called climate change claims or theories? Because if so there are literally hundreds and hundreds of claims made by Approved scientists, authorities, The UN and climate change alarmists which have all turned out to be misinformation ,disinformation, lies and flat out wrong. How many times have we been told both the Arctic and Antarctic would be ice free by such and such a date? Or that there would be no more snow by a certain date or that Polar Bears are almost extinct and yet here we are with plenty of all of these things and whenever these approved persons are questioned about it they kick the can further down the road another five or ten years. Will you be contacting media platforms about those outrageous examples? The “causing harm to the environment” clause seems to me to be there only to win the support of the Greens in passing this mess. It looks to me to be a covert way of silencing dissent to the Government approved ideology and dogma of climate change. The “causing harm to the environment” clause is way too vague it can be used to label almost anything a threat that some unelected bureaucrat decides on the day fits the charge or as .Lavrentiy Beria said “Show me the man and I’ll show you the crime”

I also have great concerns about “hatred against a group in Australian society on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or physical or mental disability “ definition under “harm” again it enables you to virtually label any criticism of any group which you do not want criticised as harm There should be absolutely no section of our society protected from criticism. When they are it is only concealing the fact that there is something very wrong within that group. Does protection under this proposed act also extend to people of European heritage who are heterosexual and Christians?

Every day I read the news from around the world online via independent media, main stream media and social media as well as listen to many podcasts and thus consider myself to be far more widely informed than most Australians who get their news in 3 minute grabs from channel Seven, Nine, or Ten. What has come to my attention and is causing me great suspicion is that every English speaking nation and Europe is doing, trying to do or has already done what you are attempting. The USA, Canada the UK Europe and New Zealand have all been threatening and some have already legislated this disgusting push for power over what can be said or written The fact that governments around the world appear not to be acting or legislating in a vacuum or independent of each other can only lead me to believe they are acting in collusion or concert on this matter. Is there some event upcoming which you believe you must have complete control over all that is said, written and in video form across the entire internet?

I wish to give you just a couple of quick examples of things which were claimed by governments who proclaim themselves to be “trusted sources” and main stream media to be true which turned out to be wrong, propaganda or blatant lies and which had a devastating effect on people’s lives. The “weapons of mass destruction” lie used to justify the invasion of Iraq by Bush Blair, Howard and co. It was blanket news coverage around the world even though weapons inspectors could find none and said so it was repeated over and over again. Then we have the

“mobile anthrax caravans ‘ which could manufacture anthrax on the move, Colin Powell even held up a vial of white powder at the UN assembly to hammer home his point again more misinformation and disinformation he later before he died said it was his greatest regret.

Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis died, hundreds of thousands were made homeless and the Middle East pushed into complete turmoil which continues to this day and not to forget our own soldiers who were killed, maimed for life and mentally scarred forever all because of “approved disinformation”. I could go on..... the “Gulf of Tonkin incident” used to escalate the war in Vietnam another false incident story the end result was 1.4 million Vietnamese casualties including 415,000 killed. There was no social media then, no podcasts and the main stream media was totally compliant with the government except for a notable few reporters like Daniel Ellsberg they reported what the government told them as fact and the misinformation and disinformation they concocted still spread very efficiently around the world. It appears that lies, misinformation and disinformation are quite okay as long as it is our side doing it. There are no consequences for lying or spreading disinfo/misinfo when you are the government or a politician in fact you have exempted yourselves from the act, granting yourselves immunity which should send up a huge red flag in the mind of any logically thinking person and by doing so signals to the rest of society the government fully intends to break it’s own laws. By exempting itself from the very legislation it intends to enforce upon and punish others for it leads to a situation akin to politicians exempting themselves from drink driving or drug laws it lets us know they intend to break those laws and wants to be immune from prosecution for their actions which is morally repugnant and the antitheses of democracy and makes a mockery of the tenet “we are all equal before the law” The Government must always be accountable for it’s actions and be in effect the model citizen itself setting an example on how to behave, or we have a two tier justice system which is the hallmark of all corrupt dictatorships. What effect would your legislation have on the Daniel Ellsberg Pentagon Papers if they were published online on social media today, when and if it comes into being? Would it be labelled misinformation or disinformation by the US and our military and would you coerce the platform into taking it down? Who knows how many lives that “misinformation” saved, it literally stopped a war and showed that three Presidents had misled the American people and also our people.

There is also a growing reliance on governments in relation to so called “independent fact checkers” which have been proven to be anything but independent and most are actually funded by what is termed “Dark Money” which is money from in the case of the US predominantly Democrat Party funders, supporters and donors. This is yet another attempt to outsource censorship and give distance to what governments cannot do or do not want to be seen doing. The business of censorship is a very murky one indeed. Censorship, and propaganda all too frequently go hand in hand with war and tyrannical rule, As RFK Jr said only last week “There is no time in history where the people who were censoring speech were the good guys. Governments abuse power, that is a reality and every power they grant themselves they always expand upon until it becomes so egregious in some cases the people have to push back. When it comes to governments the ‘slippery slope’ informal logical fallacy should be struck off the list of fallacies, it is not a fallacy but rather their business model. They will keep going and going until they have gone too far in some cases and are exposed for the type of people they really are.

I have tried to think of a time in my past(I am over 60 years old) when a government on any side of politics in this country or from any party put forward any legislation, let alone passed any actually limiting the ever increasing powers of government or putting into legislation any actual meaningful punishment for lying to or misleading the Australian people. In my view it is politicians who need to be held accountable and limited, their lies and misinformation/disinformation can lead us into to war and economic ruin and is especially prevalent around election time.

Labor appears to have grown tired of it’s critics and opposition to it’s policies and now finds it convenient to use laws it claims will “protect us and keep us safe from disinformation and misinformation” let me tell you in my life I have learned when a government tells you it wants to keep you safe from something it means in reality it wants to keep itself safe. This legislation is an aggressive and sinister attempt to place a stranglehold on free speech and internet content very

flimsily veiled as a protective measure. I imagine if this legislation was in place in the early 70s would Labor have forced media to take down articles in regard to the organising of anti war marches and threatened the pamphlet posters and those who gave their views a platform with huge fines? The party my family has voted for over generations has morphed into something I no longer recognise, My father just before he passed away expressed great dismay at the directions it had taken and no longer supported it.

We are at the point in my opinion where we ordinary people are in dire need of a bill of rights to protect our freedom of speech and human rights, it needs to be enshrined in our constitution to safeguard against the actions of radical governments and abusive bureaucrats. I notice with great dismay neither major political party will go anywhere near that proposal which takes me back to my earlier analogy about if politicians exempted themselves from drink driving or drug laws they do so because they intend to break those very laws so better for them if we do not have any enshrined rights it would be of great inconvenience and an obstacle to their agenda if we did. The citizens of this country need more information not less, from more sources. Not just the official approved information as dictated by the government and government officials. How dare you attempt to bring into being where you and the bureaucrats you put in charge of this legislation sit behind closed doors and decide what information I can and cannot have and that in some cases it is much better I do not know the truth at all “for my own protection”. As Simon Crean who I believe to have been one of the last true Labor politicians upon being mired in a mess “the truth would have done”.

Censorship is antithetical to democracy it's that simple. Democracy dies in the dark and behind closed doors. I have pondered how much of the current debate surrounding the No vote to “the Voice” would have been taken down and declared false or dis/misinfo, well I did not have to wait long at all to see an example. Peta Credlin was censored on social media after “fact checkers” claimed her article was wrong even though people on the Yes side have been saying the same thing for years. It already appears that people will be punished for criticising or resisting Government plans or ideology. The proposed legislation is so elastic in it's interpretations of what constitutes harm almost anything can be twisted and manipulated to reach the very low bar set for censorship.

This act is the equivalent of digital book burning by the government. As author Ray Bradbury once said “There is more than one way to burn books. and the world is full of people running around with lit matches” In this instance it is Labor with the lit matches. We live in a world where what is claimed to be true today is no longer true an hour a day or a week or month later facts, information and opinions change and evolve very quickly. What magical insight do Labor and the bureaucrats profess to have which will allow them to know what is the truth at any given moment and declare it the absolute truth? Two glaring examples of evolving stories are the Nordstream pipeline sabotage and the origins of Covid 19 ,what was hotly denied and decried as disinformation at the time now looks very different to what it did then. Not one of the trusted main stream media outlets has corrected themselves they just keep hammering the false narrative. There should also be an honourable mention made in regards to the “Trump Russia collusion hoax” millions of dollars and years investigation to find there was no collusion not one media outlet has corrected or apologised for their misinformation /misinformation Our own ABC did a massive “expose” on the story and last I heard it was still up uncorrected on their website.

Humans have only advanced by people successfully challenging what is said to be fact or orthodoxy at the time, this has always been the way forward. A person puts forward a theory or thesis, usually to much opposition then there is debate. If there is merit, truth and logic to the challenger's argument it supersedes the old truth. Does Labor propose to strike down any debate medical, political or ideological which does not concur with the current view? Because if so it is a recipe for intellectual and ideological stagnation where no one or nothing advances indeed a new dark age.

Governments, politicians and bureaucrats meeting behind closed doors to decide what information is allowed to be viewed and who gets punished is nefarious and grossly improper, it is wide open to horrendous abuse. The release and reporting of the so called Twitter files has shown how quickly things can get out of hand when censoring is carried out behind closed doors in some

sort of “star chamber” In many cases where the government knew what was being said was right they got it taken down anyway or claimed it was a lie/mis/disinformation. The Hunter Biden laptop was an egregious example of just that, they had the laptop in question for years and still denied it existed right up until they appeared in front of government hearings under oath and then and only then has the truth began to emerge. The Government, social media company closed door censorship meetings were also used to target and silence opponents of the government in the US and the writers/reporters of the inconvenient information. What was said and written at the time this story broke was true all along yet it was snuffed out. This act is no different from the government threatening main stream media to stay in line with what they say can be said or there is the threat of very real punishment and consequences, by way of censorship or financial punishment for those who transgress question or dissent. Indeed the behind closed doors collusion between the US government and social media and the adverse effect it had on free speech was so egregious a Federal court judge has issued a 155 page decision forbidding any further contact between the US government and social media because of the level of abuse to the first amendment which took place over the previous three years, this decision I might add is currently being furiously challenged by the Biden administration.

You are attempting to outsource censorship by getting bureaucrats to do it and making social media your censorship henchmen which is plain sleazy, but by doing so you have given yourselves plausible denial in that if it becomes public what was wrongly censored or it’s powers misused or abused and there is any blow back you can say you have clean hands and blame the bureaucrats. If you are so hell bent on this outrage at least have the courage to put a named and visible government minister in charge of what gets erased from our view. If you pass this, take full ownership of it and don’t be cowards.

“Keeping us safe” is a straw man the real object of this act is to deprive Australians of information, information which government disapproves of, finds embarrassing or exposes a murky agenda. Information which is in many cases benign or true it will be used to target the speaker and bring about a chilling effect. Every single piece of information taken down should show a blurred page and a picture of the Australian coat of arms with a message from the Labor government accepting responsibility for the censoring and why it was censored, at least be open and honest about what you are doing. I guarantee you it would not be long before people got very tired of seeing the Australian coat of arms being front and centre in any censoring.

We citizens need a bill of rights now more than ever that protects us citizens from government overreach and abuse of power with real penalties for doing so. We are now subject to so many laws, acts and legislation that we simply have zero hope of knowing let alone understanding them all and still you pass more by the day. Every power government grants itself it ends up abusing and I see no reason at all why this one will not be abused as well, there is nothing stopping politicians, lawyers and legal experts in the future reinterpreting and broadening this act for their own ends. We are on the verge of stepping into an Orwellian dystopian future because of this legislation. Does Labor honestly believe it will be in power forever? What is to say a future government of a different persuasion does not get into power and use this legislation to censor Labor and denounce any criticism or opposition to it’s agenda or policies as misinformation /disinformation. They would have the power to completely silence Labor and consign anything it says in the media or social media to the “memory hole” thereby seeing Labor “hoist on their own petard” If this act passes it will go down in history as the moment we lost the most basic and necessary requisite for a free and democratic society...free speech.

The way we get our information is rapidly changing we can access information, news and views from around the world in the blink of an eye via the internet. Main stream/legacy media is losing viewers and readers hand over fist. Some of the largest US cable news networks have only 100,000 viewers by the hour, I believe it is because people are now very aware of what is happening around them we can now see and hear every side to the story, we can see and hear what those who have been declared and denounced as enemies by our political leaders have to say and their side of the story. For too long the legacy media has been not much more than government stenographers or

official propaganda outlets. Apart from a few notable exceptions main stream media is no longer carrying out any investigative journalism, holding governments to account or hard line in depth reporting. The three minute skewed news grab on TV about serious events just is not enough anymore. We want more information not less and we do not want government interfering with it. If the government has done or intends to do no wrong then they should have nothing to hide. People in my experience have never mistrusted government more or been more cynical of their actions and motives than at present. It has been a long road and many lies exposed to get to this point where we are today. This legislation will make the government even less trustworthy or honest in our eyes. This is not Stalin's Soviet Union or Mao's China this is Australia and we do not wear actions like this without punishment at the ballot box.

This entire act is a wolf in sheep's clothing, it is bad, very bad for our future as a free and open democratic society it is a step toward tyrannical government. We are at the time and, in a place where whenever we see or hear a Prime Minister or politician declare they are doing something to keep us safe, for our own good or drape themselves in the flag and patriotism or utter noble speeches in parliament about their saintly intentions we are about to get screwed over. We did not get to this state of mind by our actions or words we got here by your words and your actions. We no longer trust you and this act proves why. Put this legislation where it belongsin the bin it has no place at all in our society and I am absolutely appalled at the fact it is Labor proposing it.