

I have endeavoured to try and calmly discuss the measures proposed in this bill. However, every time I read through what is proposed I am brought to a state of frustration, anger, disgust and incredulity. Time is now running short, so you will have to put up with many of these feelings coming through in my writing. I would apologise for this, but this proposal is so abhorrent that anyone considering such a crime against the fundamental rights of the people of Australia deserves no apology.

Freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is a concept that is so central and fundamental to a modern Western society that its importance, or the reason for its importance is seldom even considered. However, we are now faced with a turn in the fundamental direction of Western societies. A growing and deeply troubling authoritarian streak is making its presence felt in several at least nominally tolerant Western societies. Societies based largely on the enlightenment movement, which brought in, and in some cases returned, reason, science and a respect for the rights of the individual. These values have propelled humanity to great and sometimes terrible deeds. Of supreme importance of the rights of individuals that were observed to exist, is the right to freedom of speech. Why is this so? What is so important about freedom of speech? Freedom of speech is absolutely required for freedom of thought, and without freedom of thought we cannot be free at all. Free speech is not about allowing people to say inane things to each other. The only time that free speech requires defence is for controversial speech. Speech that challenges the status quo. That is not to say that such speech should just be accepted, certainly not. But the remedy to controversial speech is NEVER censorship, it is always more speech. The only remedy to controversial speech is further speech, ideally in a continuing discourse that aims at developing a better understanding of what each of the parties means as speech that appears controversial is often due to a misunderstanding on the part of one or more parties. In reality, the ideal is seldom if ever reached, often because one or more parties participating are firm in their beliefs, beliefs which may or may not be based on reason. But that is fine. People can disagree, and as long as they have the emotional maturity of a 5-year-old, they can generally resolve to agree to disagree.

Let me start with the first elephant in the room that I come to. Misinformation. What exactly is misinformation? It is described as being false information that is spread through means other than legacy media (why the means of distribution change the nature of information remains puzzling to me). But who decides what is false? Who dares to have such arrogance that they can determine truth and falsity? Experts? Seriously! Experts are wrong so often that it is scarcely worth taking notice of them, the "truth" according to experts changes as the seasons do, with what was previously the "truth" being, often begrudgingly, relegated to foolish understanding of the past on a regular basis. Take for example, stomach ulcers. For many years the cause of stomach ulcers was known as a fact to be stress. However, some enterprising Australian scientists thought otherwise, they thought it was caused by bacteria (*Helicobacter pylori*). But the experts would not have a bar of it. These scientists were, by the definition in this proposed legislation, spreading "dangerous" "misinformation". But... Barry Marshall and Robin Warren were right, and went on to eventually win the Nobel Prize in Physiology. Were they to be subject to having their speech constrained by the "experts", that step in understanding would have been prevented. Scientific progress occurs for the most part by the breaking of previous paradigms. This is necessarily done by people who the "experts" think, at least initially, are wrong. Scientific progress is not possible without the ability to put forward theories that are not consistent with the current understanding. Now, you may say that science is different from people discussing things on social media. Is it? I would posit that it is no different in reality. How do people communicate with each other? They must voice their ideas, but under this proposed legislation, only "approved" ideas that the "experts" agree with will be allowed. This prevents communication between people. You say it is to "prevent harm" and to keep people "safe". What a horrible thing to say! Do you consider the citizens of Australia to be infants? Do we need to be coddled and wrapped in cotton wool, lest we encounter the slightest insult.

As C.S.Lewis most eloquently put it:

"Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience. They may be more likely to go to Heaven yet at the same time likelier to make a Hell of earth. This very kindness stings with intolerable insult. To be "cured" against one's will and cured of states which we may not regard as disease is to be put on a level of those who have not yet reached the age of reason or those who never will; to be classed with infants, imbeciles, and domestic animals."

No one, most particularly government bureaucrats, have a monopoly on the truth. Just as you do not, neither do I. It would be abhorrent for me to silence the speech of those I do not agree with, just as it would be abhorrent for those I disagree with to silence mine (or for moral busybodies in some bureaucracy to silence my speech, or another's). Misinformation is a nonsense term. It is meaningless outside of the subjective definition of some "expert" who is almost certainly wrong.

We then move on to disinformation. This is easy. Since disinformation is based on misinformation, which is meaningless, it crumbles. I struggle to understand what exactly this bill is talking about when it mentions disinformation. Some sort of nasty foreign actors... Russians? Are they in the room with us now? Again, this is an insult to the intelligence of Australian citizens. Is the government seriously worried about some organized group trying to sway the opinion of the Australian public through underhanded psychological manipulation? If this is the case, then a mirror is what you need. The use of "Behavioural Insights Teams", more commonly known as Nudge Units in order to "encourage" (using fear and shame to try and coerce people into making choices that they otherwise would not freely make is deeply immoral) people to change their behaviour to what the government wants.

Let us move on to "Harm". Who is harmed and in what way are they harmed? Inciting hate crimes against an identifiable group, well that would already be covered under existing laws as incitement is already a criminal offense. But I don't think that is what is really meant by this term. The reality of this is that what passes for "hate crime" will be expanded and expanded to encompass the subjective hurt feelings of children in adult bodies that are being pumped out of our Universities these days. The concept of a hate crime has been diminished so much that it is meaningless. It amounts to someone saying something that someone else (perhaps not even the intended recipient of the remark) found "offensive". So...how offensive can speech be? Does it need only to not offend the intended target, or the 10 people surrounding them? How about 100 people, or 1000, or 1000000. Very soon, it becomes impossible to say anything of any importance, as any opinion that is non-trivial in any way is bound to offend someone. And so, what! Offense is something that can only be taken, never given, and once it is taken... nothing happens other than the taker becoming offended. If they have any sense at all, they will soon choose to stop being offended and move on with their lives.

Disruption of public order. Again, inciting someone to commit a crime is a criminal offense. There is no need for additional laws to make what is already illegal more illegal. Especially when it has such a chilling effect on free speech.

Harm to the health of Australians. Really! Let's not beat around the bush. You're talking about COVID. Well, we are seeing how well the "experts" got that right over the last few years. You, government bureaucrats, want to tell people and doctors how to treat their specific health needs? But let's have a look at who the "experts" in this regard are. Are they independent respected scientists who do not have any vested

interest in the use of any particular treatment? No, they are very often heavily connected with the pharmaceutical industry and have immense financial interests. We now live in the surreal situation where excess deaths of Australians have been tracking well above baseline rates for years, and the "experts" are at best baffled as to the cause but mostly just pretending that it's not happening. Well, it is. People are dying, young people, people who should not have died, people who were coerced into taking experimental therapies. You lament that people spreading what you consider to be "misinformation" caused distrust in the medical community. News flash! It was the behaviour of the medical community that caused the distrust. The sacred relationship of trust that existed between a doctor and patient, on in which the patient expects that the doctor will recommend treatment based solely on what is in the best interest of the patient was shattered. As time has gone on, we have found that the supposed "misinformation" has been much more accurate than the official line. From the ludicrous "wet market" origin story to masking, social distancing and lockdowns. The official measures were all wrong. It beggars belief that so much could have been gotten so wrong, the measures taken weren't just wrong, they were anti-right, which strains credulity that it's all a coincidence.

Harm to the environment. I'm not even sure what this means. How does speech harm the environment. The example given is strange. What you are probably talking about, but don't want to admit, is that you intend to censor speech that doesn't comport with the "global boiling" (I think that is the latest incantation) narrative. Again, we are in the territory of purported "experts", but this time these "experts" are in the form of the high clergy of a quasi-religion. They are very certain of the prophecies of their sacred models, even when the observed reality does not match their predictions. Undeterred they march on, proclaiming ever more dire emergencies that we must absolutely believe unquestioningly. But these people disseminate disinformation (by your very definition). They have knowingly manipulated and fabricated climatological data and disseminated that in order to affect the behaviour of Australian citizens. I do not want these people to be silenced, far from it. But to silence the voices who call out their errors is a huge danger. I guess at this point it might be a good time to give an example. What can happen when the government forces the adoption of a particular scientific theory? Let's have a look at Trophim Lysenko. The details of Trophim Lysenko's theories on agricultural plant breeding are not particularly important for this example. Broadly, he developed a theory of genetics that matched with the political ideology of the Communist USSR. As such, his theory was supported and no criticism of it was allowed. The speech of anyone who doubted it was censored. As a result of the implementation of his theories an estimated 15-55 million people in the USSR and China starved to death. Lysenkoism is often thought of as the imposition of a pseudoscientific paradigm, but the reality of it, and the cause of it, is censorship. When the "experts" declare that the "science is settled" and no debate is allowed, then you are headed down the path of Lysenkoism. Last century, it took the lives of millions. If we make those mistakes again, the toll could be in the billions.

Economic harm. Again, here you are infantilising Australian citizens. People are not idiots; they can look at information and determine for themselves whether they want to believe it or not. Besides, if someone is spreading malicious false information about a company... that would be slander (or libel), which is a civil tort that is already handled in our legal system.

Overall, this proposed bill is deeply insulting to the Australian people. It infantilises them and presumes that they are so dim that they must be fed all of the "correct" opinions from on high. The existence of "misinformation" is a subjective and dubious assertion, and the purported "harms" are either already covered by existing laws, or ludicrous infringements on the free discussion of ideas. The reality of the implementation of this bill would be an Orwellian nightmare for the people of Australia, ruled over by our own Ministry of Truth. Is the government so scared of its own citizens that it does not want them sharing their opinions? Why would they be scared though, surely, they aren't acting against the interest of the citizens... surely. You'll say, I'm sure, that this bill doesn't do what I'm saying, that it doesn't actually censor the free speech of Australians. Don't lie. That is exactly what it will do, and what it is intended to do. It is the essence of the bill but written in a slimy and deceptive way in order to offload the enforcement of the censoring to third

parties. This is a tactic often employed by authoritarian dictators, turning the citizenry into spies for the State, and publishers into censors. This bill is no different.

We are supposed to be living in a modern Western society, one that values human rights. The rights of free speech, life, liberty, and property. But tyranny is only one step away. This bill would not merely mark a step down the road to tyranny. It only takes one step. If that step is taken, the entire society that people think they live in is destroyed in an instant.

Throughout this submission I have not endeavoured to write about what the reasonable limits of the bill should be, or what limits of free speech would be reasonable because this bill is an abomination. It is totally wrong and MUST be scrapped in full. There is no amendment that could be made to remedy the defects in this bill, it is an insult upon free people and any who support it mark themselves as tyrants. Throw this bill in the bin and drag all those who proposed it out by their ear!

Sincerely,

Appalled Citizen