

CONFIDENTIAL

Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill,

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing a submission about the federal government's proposed mis/disinformation bill.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and online platforms (META, YouTube) would be authorised to enforce it. The goal is to prevent 'serious harm' by stopping mis/disinformation.

The proposed Australian legislation is part of a larger battle over free speech in the Western world, particularly in the United States, where the government puts pressure on social media to censor free speech (and these private companies seem to be willing to comply).

Traditionally in a democracy 'truth' is fashioned on the anvil of public discourse. This includes the classroom, the public square, and a court of law where all parties bring their verifiable evidence. From these exchanges, a more accurate picture of reality is constructed. Free citizens are expected to ascertain the truth for themselves rather than have it dictated to them.

Under this legislation, governmental 'orthodoxies' would stand as absolutes and political and/or religious speak not in line with ACMA would be silenced through censorship. The tried-and-tested traditional way of ascertaining truth would be neutered.

I ask you the following questions:

Where are the protections of valid expressions of opinion? While there are some 'feel good' words about 'free expression,' they provide no guardrails to protect free speech.

Where are the limits to speech suppression (e.g. incitement to murder vs. a difference of opinion)? In other words, what limitations and accountability will be put on ACMA when determining false, misleading or deceptive speech?

Why does this bill contradict the fundamental freedoms of speech and communication under international human rights instruments like the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights?

Why is speech controlled by a government bureaucracy rather than moderated in the public square, the classroom, or other ways?

Why is the criterion of 'serious harm' ill-defined? Elastic definitions can be manipulated to silence reasonable legitimate public speech.

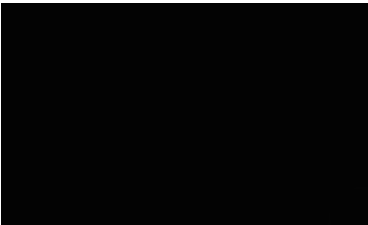
How is our privacy protected when ACMA demands information/evidence about alleged disinformation?

This legislation with its high penalties for ACMA's perception of mis/disinformation will be stifle free expression - guaranteed. No one has a monopoly on truth and reality and it is important that we maintain freedoms, not squelch them to protect some narrative or special interest group.

Freedom of speech is the first and most important freedom. If it goes, the other freedoms will follow suit. Controlled and cancelled speech is the pathway to tyranny. This is not hyperbole; history bears it out.

In light of the above, I urge rejection of this bill which, at its core, is a flagrant violation of free speech. The 'serious harm' it seeks to prevent will actually cause much greater harm by eroding our fundamental freedom. No amount of sweet words or token concessions can compensate for this.

Yours sincerely,



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