

## **Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.**

I wish to comment on the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

As far as I understand, this proposed bill will give the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) the power to decide what is 'misinformation' and 'disinformation'. ACMA, an Australian Government statutory authority, would become the sole arbiter of truth, having the final say in what is deemed to be true and the power to compel tech companies to keep records of people (like me) who say the wrong thing as decided by the Government of the day.

The Government would also be able to determine the penalty or punishment for these so-called 'offences', whilst being exempt from their own rules. Essentially, the proposed Bill would allow for total Government Control. Indeed, of great concern, when interviewed recently about what he would do if he were dictator for 5 years, Mr Albanese said that he would ban social media, essentially eliminating debate about sociopolitical issues.

It is unclear how one would define 'truth', 'misinformation' and 'disinformation'. Often, what is considered 'true' at a particular time is actually later shown to be false, and there are examples of this throughout history, for example:

- \* the Earth was once considered to be flat but this was later shown not true
- \* Galileo discovered that the Earth was not the centre of the Universe
- \* Joseph Lister showed that washing hands kills germs and saves lives
- \* Many things I learned at medical school 40 years ago are now deemed untrue

The only way to discover truth and benefit society is to allow open debate and not silence debate as the proposed Bill would dictate.

The proposed Bill would damage freedom of expression and freedom of speech. Without freedom of expression, also called 'the freedom par excellence', no

other freedom can survive. If the proposed Bill passes into law, we would lose freedoms of expression, speech, conscience, thought and religion. The Government would have the authority to silence or cancel or censor any detractors, thus making any opposition to Government policy impossible (as seen in some communist and totalitarian regimes).

The proposed Bill contravenes international human rights, most relevantly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Australia is signatory. The ICCPR states that (i) Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference and (ii) Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression.

We have already seen medical and scientific censorship during the recent COVID pandemic. A collective, unanimous and unchallenged scientific position is rare, but over the past two years we have seen the Government COVID narrative proceed virtually unchallenged, with no debate, and doctors threatened with summary suspension if they openly disagree with said narrative. However, it is now clear that much of the Government narrative of the past two years, the 'safe and effective' vaccine indoctrination is simply not true. Freedom of speech would perhaps have protected the population from this apparent Government 'misinformation' and 'disinformation'.

I vehemently oppose the proposed Bill. If the Bill were to pass, we would see the end of the internet as a site for free exchange of ideas, the Government take control of information dissemination within Australia (as we already have in China), and the rights of the individual citizen become subservient to Government narrative. This would be a dark day for democracy, a right that our forefathers have fought hard to maintain.

Thank you for your consideration and for protecting us from Orwellian dystopia.