

To whom it may concern

I am writing to voice my strong opposition to the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023".

Whilst I fully support **true** misinformation and disinformation being spread, we must not allow political, medical debate and freedom of speech to be suppressed.

The government must respect alternative thought, opinions and professional advice and not suppress those people who have opposing ideas. The last 3 years has taught us greatly, that many great minds, who spoke out and were suppressed, were in fact, correct!

The Australian people need to be able to have debate, accept constructive criticism and learn to discern for themselves what is right and what is wrong. Stopping peoples' critical thinking is a move in the wrong direction, to end up with people not thinking for themselves could well create a very dangerous future for us all.

It is essential to build a resilient society and learn to make our own judgement of what is reliable information and what maybe untrue, of course guided by suggestions from government professionals but not a forced opinion.

Freedom of speech is a fundamental democratic right that should be protected, and any legislation aimed at combating misinformation must be a careful balance to ensure that it does not infringe upon this fundamental right.

The power given to the government to determine what is considered "misinformation" or "disinformation" is subjective and open to control and we must not allow overreach and censorship. This could result in the suppression of dissenting viewpoints or the targeting of individuals or organisations that debate the government or hold alternative perspectives. A robust and independent fact-checking source should be established, instead of relying solely on government oversight to ensure the accuracy of information.

I would like to further add that, the bill lacks clear safeguards to protect the privacy of individuals. Increased monitoring and surveillance powers granted to government agencies under the guise of combating misinformation, raise concerns about the potential for excessive data collection and retention. This seems to be leading to the erosion of privacy rights and the undemocratic action on free expression, as individuals may self-censor due to fear of being subjected to government scrutiny or retaliation.

Furthermore, the bill fails to address the underlying causes of misinformation and disinformation. May I suggest that the government could invest in media literacy programs, education and critical thinking skills to empower individuals to navigate and fully comprehend the complex information that we find ourselves being fed.

To conclude, whilst I acknowledge the importance of addressing misinformation and disinformation, the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 does raise huge concerns regarding information integrity, freedom of speech, and privacy. It is crucial that any legislation that may be passed, be carefully written to protect these fundamental rights, while effectively addressing the issue at hand. I urge you to reconsider the provisions of this bill and engage in open and transparent public consultation to ensure a comprehensive and balanced approach to combating misinformation and disinformation.

I appreciate your time in considering my submission.

We must think of the generations ahead and keep our wonderful country a democrat society.

Kind regards

