

To Whom it may concern,

I believe that freedom of speech is an essential human right and a fundamental principle of Australian democracy. We express our deep concern regarding the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023, introduced by the Labor Party, which we believe represents a direct attack on freedom of speech.

I assert the following:

Subjective Definition of Misinformation: The bill's highly subjective definition of "misinformation" grants the government arbitrary power to determine what constitutes misinformation. This opens the door to the suppression of legitimate criticisms of the government, questioning of scientific ideologies such as climate change, immigration policies, gender dysphoria, and opposition to a voice in Parliament.

Draconian Powers of ACMA: The bill empowers the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) with draconian powers to silence critics of the government. It allows for fines of up to \$6.8 million to be imposed on social media platforms if, in ACMA's opinion, they have not done enough to prevent the dissemination of what ACMA considers to be misinformation or disinformation. This creates a chilling effect on free expression and inhibits open dialogue.

Protection of Government and Mainstream Media: The legislation carves out protections for government, mainstream media, and approved organizations, thereby creating an imbalance in the treatment of different voices and viewpoints. This not only undermines the principle of equality of speech but also reinforces a two-party system at the expense of independent media and non-government political parties.

In light of these concerns, we, the undersigned, call on the Parliament to:

Reject the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023, recognizing that it poses a threat to freedom of speech in Australia.

Safeguard the principles of freedom of speech and expression as cornerstones of Australian democracy, ensuring that all individuals, media outlets, and political parties are equally protected in exercising their right to free speech.

Conduct a thorough review of the bill to address its subjective definition of misinformation and the imbalance in protections provided to different entities, aiming to foster a fair and inclusive environment for open public discourse.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours Sincerely

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