

'No' to Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

Recall the time in Australian history when married women were banned from working in the Australian public sector until the discriminatory law was overturned. Thalidomide was approved by medical professionals but caused severe birth deformities worldwide before the drug was withdrawn. Homosexuality was deemed a criminal act in our country and many others until the law was reformed.

These are examples from the past, where government bureaucrats, academics and traditional media outlets got it wrong – the same organisations which the Bill proposes to uphold as the keepers of the truth in 2023 by banning all dissenting views.

Beware the unintended consequences of enacting a Bill which segregates our society into those who have the correct, government-approved thoughts and those who do not.

The anonymous bureaucrats, academics and captains of industry who authored this Bill, have intentionally misnamed it: it is a Bill to censor free speech, control the flow of information and stamp down any debates by which Australians can voice their differences and agreements in how to improve society.

This Bill talks of the Australian government incentivising co-operation and requiring digital platform providers to keep records related to misinformation and disinformation. Plain and simple, this is the coercion of commercial agencies and the outsourcing of records collection in order to criminalise Australian citizens for expressing their opinions.

Here is what I would like my government to do to promote transparency and fairness in digital platforms: Legislate for every online space using AI (Artificial Intelligence) algorithms to publish, in Plain English, the functions and effects of the algorithms on information which is either provided or captured.

I do not permit the Australian government to curate my information for me. Long live critical thinking.