

20 August 2023

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

**RE: Communication Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 - (the Bill)**

Thank you for providing the opportunity to provide a submission.

Any potential positive objective of the Bill is outweighed by the risk of censorship. It is my opinion that the Bill should not be approved for the following reasons.

The Bill will

- 1) Remove the transparency and accountability required for a democratic society
- 2) Inhibit intellectual freedom
- 3) Impact free dissemination of information by allowing influence and manipulation
- 4) Pose a danger to the public by withholding evidence based information
- 5) Reduce the trust in government information even further
- 6) Undermine our democracy and hinder free expression

The Bill does not take into consideration

- 7) The potential for competing conflicts of interest and the impact on what is deemed a risk of 'serious harm'
- 8) The potential for what is deemed 'misinformation and disinformation' to change over time
- 9) That 'serious harm' can be challenged by interpretation and judgement

The Australian Government states *'Information is a valuable and powerful resource which is at the heart of every government decision and activity'*. The Freedom of Information Act and relevant state based legislation recognises that the information government holds is a national resource and is managed for public purposes and that public access to it should be prompt and at the lowest reasonable cost.

This Bill has the extreme opposite effect on the public by censoring information that the government deem will pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of Australians. Australians should have the right to make their own decisions by having access to all information available. The government do not have the right to censor information.

Freedom of speech and the freedom of choice must not be taken away.

Yours faithfully,

