

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

1. I am a university-educated mother and grandmother. I have had the privilege of access to information to enable me to make my own decisions. I do not want my grandchildren to be spoon-fed a diet of “this is what the government says, and you had better believe it.” I want them to be able to think critically and be able to make wise decisions. This is not possible without access to information.

The proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 would severely restrict Australians access to information, and thus their ability to make good decisions.

2. Freedom of speech is a fundamental and non-negotiable human right, and hence a fundamental right of every Australian. It is the role of the Commonwealth of Australia to recognise that fact and to protect the freedoms that every Australian already possesses.

Australia is a founding member of the United Nations and an original signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 18 of that declaration reads:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

Article 19 takes this right even further:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

If the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023 were to pass, the Commonwealth of Australia would be in breach of its international human rights obligations and at odds with its own nation’s character and values. This is totally inconsistent. We must not pass this Bill.

3. Who is the government to decide what’s true and what’s false? The government told us COVID-19 vaccinations would keep Australians safe, and that turned out not to be true. Some people have had serious adverse reactions to COVID-19 vaccines, and the protection is negligible. The government told us ivermectin was not an effective treatment for COVID-19. That was a lie, but nevertheless doctors were banned from prescribing it to treat patients with COVID-19. Clearly governments cannot be trusted to speak the truth. It follows that they can’t be trusted to decide what is true and what is false on behalf of the community.

For a sovereign state to give itself the power to decide which facts are convenient, who must be silenced, and that it deserves immunity from its own rulebook is the antithesis of democracy — it is totalitarianism.

This proposed Bill does not benefit Australians, so it should not be passed.