

Gerard Saunders

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Sunday 20 August 2023

To Whom it May Concern,

I write in relation to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

This Bill should not be allowed to pass into law under any circumstances. I am strongly against providing powers to the government (ACMA), or to big-tech companies being forced by the government, which compels the censorship of the views of Australians online, irrelevant of how "right" or "wrong" some may deem those views to be.

It is never the place of government to be the arbiters of truth and such a concept is simply incompatible with a democracy.

To control one's speech is to control one's thought. To control one's thought is to remove personal agency and ability to make informed decisions. Error is required in order to learn. Discussion of erroneous positions is required to reach reasonable conclusions, without the need of an overbearing referee.

Imperfect governments and their agencies are comprised of imperfect people, often distant from the origin of ideas. Therefore, they least appropriate group in society to be seeking this level of power over citizens.

Further, the implications of any such law will require the deployment of vast resources to police ideas and thoughts, with detrimental punishment to otherwise exemplary members of the Australian community. To push freedom of thought underground is more dangerous than having bad ideas challenged by peers through open public discussion. It is a lack of judgement to believe otherwise.

Government cannot bestow this level of power upon itself. It is an illegitimate assumption of power, and nothing more.

This Bill should never have even been conceived, let alone reach draft stage and be considered in any serious way.

Yours Faithfully,

Gerard Saunders