

## *INTERNET CENSORSHIP* – Just another attempt by the ALP

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When one strips away all the spin and perceived propaganda that surrounds the **Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023**, it represents an attempt by the Albanese / ALP government to impose censorship of social media outlets on the internet.

Not many Aussies may remember, but when former Labor Senator Stephen Conroy was Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy – a portfolio that he held from December 2007 to July 2013 under the leadership of Kevin Rudd and then Julia Gillard – he tried to introduce internet censorship. This quote from his Wikipedia entry:

**“Conroy faced severe criticism over his Internet censorship policies from various groups. While initially promoted as a way to block child pornography, the censorship policy has been extended to include legal material traditionally refused classification by the Office of Film and Literature Classification (now known as the [Australian Classification Board](#)), including sites depicting drug use, crime, sex, cruelty, violence or "revolting and abhorrent phenomena" that "offend against the standards of morality". On 19 March 2009 it was reported that ACMA's blacklist of banned sites had been leaked online, and had been published by [WikiLeaks](#). About half of the list was child-porn related; the remainder included sites dealing with legal porn, online gambling, euthanasia, Christianity and fringe religions; sites belonging to a tour operator, dentist and animal carers were also listed. Conroy described the leak and publication of the blacklist as "grossly irresponsible" and that it undermined efforts to improve "cyber safety". ”**

No person in their sane mind, least of all myself, is trying to defend child pornography or its posting on the internet. In that regard, former Minister Conroy was doing the right thing. But what about *“online gambling, euthanasia (legislation regarding that has been adopted by most states in Australia as of now), Christianity and fringe religions, tour operator sites, dentists and animal carers”*? When that news came out (thanks to Wikileaks) there was a very strong reaction against such heavy-handed censorship proposals. Conroy had to back down.

But now senior ministers in the ALP are trying the same stunt again, under a different guise. This present attempt also involves the ACMA, the same government agency that prepared the “blacklist” back in 2009. Now it is proposed that ACMA be tasked with developing “misinformation codes” as per the legislation.

I did read quite a bit of the draft exposure legislation, and not only was it boring, but parts of it were so convoluted and difficult to understand that in my view it became almost unintelligible or undecipherable! So much for presenting legislation to the Australian public that is clear, concise and to the point. I reckon that legislation prepared by any government should be able to be read, perused and understood (at least

most of it) by the public at large. That is certainly NOT the case re the proposed legislation amendments

Because of this apparent case of “history repeating itself”, I am opposed to these legislation amendments and the half-hearted attempt to pretend that they aren’t just censorship of social media platforms, but a “sincere attempt” to combat misinformation or disinformation.