

I am writing to express my disgust at this exposure draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

This draft Bill does NOT strike an appropriate balance on freedom of expression!

I am horrified that such a Bill has even been proposed in a country that is claimed to be a democracy.

It is totally abhorrent to propose such control over constituents!

Who defines what is mis/disinformation? ACMA? Who dictates to ACMA what is the truth? The government? The government which is made up of fallible politicians who are known to break election promises.

I will share three examples of what was initially determined to be mis/disinformation and was later found to be factually correct:

1. Dr Ignaz Semmelweis – a doctor in 1847 who discovered handwashing reduced infections. He lost his position in the obstetric clinic as his discoveries were not accepted as truth. Ultimately the discoveries of Dr Semmelweis were proven to be factually correct and NOT MIS/DISINFORMATION.
2. Dr John Snow – a doctor in 1854 who discovered a link between Cholera and drinking water from a specific pump well. The government rejected this link, replacing only the pump handle. Further research proved Dr Snow's discoveries as factually correct and NOT MIS/DISINFORMATION.
3. The origin of Covid-19 – initially any suggestion that Covid-19 could have originated from a lab leak was considered mis/disinformation, including by independent fact checkers on social media and such posts were flagged and/or removed. It is now widely accepted that a lab leak is a possible cause. This theory is now permitted to be discussed and is NO LONGER CONSIDERED MIS/DISINFORMATION.

What would have happened in these scenarios had this proposed Bill be in place as legislation? Jail time? Would those involved be released once the facts were actually proven to be true?

Science is based on hypotheses, testing and researching, proving and disproving.

A suggestion once classed as mis/disinformation can quickly change to become a proven fact.

Determining what is mis/disinformation is susceptible to incorrect decision making as history has clearly demonstrated.

Every variation of this mis/disinformation Bill should be opposed. Suppression of open discussion has no place in a democratic society!

This Bill poses more of a threat to the safety and wellbeing of Australians, as well as to our democracy, society and economy, than any mis/disinformation ever will.

This submission can be made public and/or published but ANONYMOUS please.