

I oppose this proposal, as it is an affront to our human rights.

Who decides if it's disinformation? The term is a nebulous one - "The key distinguishing feature between misinformation and disinformation in the Bill is intent." How on earth is can intent be proven, and when it is a controversial issue, who decides if something is "false, misleading or deceptive"? It is troubling that two of the examples in the Guidance Note boil down to questioning elections and criticising the Water Board. There is an alarming extra-judicial aspect to all this ("The Committee has decided...").

Free speech allows us to say all sorts of things - it is an obscene overreach for government to regulate what we say, merely because it is online. We already have laws for libel and incitement. It is not illegal to tell lies.

Here are the most egregious cases of recent disinformation that come to mind. The harm came from large organisations in each case.

1. Weapons of Mass Destruction propaganda to lead us into war: Iraq may have been trying to build WMDs, but there was a barrage of dubious information rushing us into conflict. The source of this? Government! And now, government is to be charged with regulating the information we receive?!

2. The origins of Covid - for many months, any suggestion of a lab leak was suppressed, whether it was from experts in the field or laymen intuitively seeing through the apparent coincidences. Who decided that? No idea - but social media and legacy media were certainly more than happy to enforce it, by not reporting/questioning, or by banning those who spoke. Then, suddenly, it turned out to be probably a lab leak after all. Who makes these decisions? Not private individuals.

The harm comes not from individuals, but from large organisations, and perhaps a misplaced trust in them. Attempts to bolster this trust are likely to fail, as large organizations are still very capable of getting things wrong.

But even if a faceless committee were to be 100% accurate in its judgement, the effect would be disastrous - people would trust everything on social media, because "otherwise it would have been censored". It would be teaching people to NOT think for themselves. Will an ever-expanding committee be taking a position on transubstantiation, the legitimacy of the Avignon Popes, or the Loch Ness Monster?

The issue of AI and bots was characterised only in terms of "what if they are spreading misinformation?" I think all AI Bots should be purged, no matter what they are pushing - they only serve the vested interests paying them.

From what I understand, media and politicians are exempt - the very people with the loudest voice in the community. How unjust is that? A law for the powerful, another law for the commoners - this is often voiced as a complaint about the law, but now there is a push to codify it, it seems. Those with the least say will be the ones having to look over their shoulder when voicing opinions.

Who sits on the panel? Regime-selected individuals keen to enforce political orthodoxy! It has often been said that the types of people wanting such positions are the last people who should be appointed to them.

A similar proposal was howled down in the US as "The Ministry of Truth". How will this one be remembered - The Australian Inquisition?