

Submission on New ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation.

I wish to register my strong objection to the proposed new ACMA powers claiming to combat “misinformation and disinformation”. The stated aims “to tackle harmful online misinformation and disinformation while balancing freedom of speech” are incompatible. The proposal presupposes that the truth of any contested claim can be determined objectively and with certainty by a government appointed panel, or on some consensus of “experts”. Recent experience with official Covid-19 statements on the effectiveness of masks and vaccines and denial of harmful vaccine side-effects, initially insisted on but subsequently walked backed, exposes the futility of such an approach. Other controversial topics from the China lab-leak hypothesis to the Russia-Trump, Biden-Ukraine and CIA/FBI Social Media collusion conspiracies, are entirely proper subjects for unhindered discussion on open forums. Claims of a “voluntary code” notwithstanding, government coercive powers have no legitimate role here and are far more likely to “undermine trust in governments and institutions” than any amount of alleged on-line misinformation.