

20 August 2023

Submission on Exposure Draft

Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

To Whom it May Concern

I am writing to vehemently oppose any notion of curbing free speech under the pretext of countering or addressing misinformation. This approach, rather than a specific legislative form, presents a profound assault on the cherished principles of our democratic society.

Australia's legacy as a champion of democratic values is rooted in the freedom of expression and the unrestricted exchange of ideas. Any endeavour to suppress speech in the name of combating misinformation poses a severe threat to these foundations that have stood the test of time.

It is imperative that we meticulously assess the ramifications of stifling discourse. While purportedly aimed at protecting the public from misleading information, this strategy can easily be misused to silence dissenting voices, dissent being an integral part of any thriving democracy. Such an environment undermines the very essence of our nation's commitment to open dialogue.

The strength of our democracy lies in our ability to engage in robust discussions and challenge prevailing narratives. Resorting to censorship in the guise of addressing misinformation weakens this democratic fabric, rendering our society less resilient to alternative viewpoints and diverse opinions.

I urge you to reflect on the long-term consequences of endorsing such an approach. The temptation to silence perspectives that run contrary to mainstream thought may be alluring, but the price is too high to pay. Instead, let us foster a society that values critical thinking, discernment, and the individual's right to form their own conclusions.

In conclusion, I implore you to stand firmly against any form of speech suppression, especially when justified under the pretext of countering misinformation. Our democracy thrives when we uphold the ideals of free expression and intellectual diversity. I trust that you will prioritise safeguarding these democratic pillars at all costs.

Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

Virginia Williamson