

Submission re *Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2023*

I am deeply concerned about the *Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill* proposed by the Albanese Government. It's intent seems more like something I might read in a dystopian novel, but certainly not in a bill presented for consideration by the Albanese Government.

In my opinion, the proposed Bill is an unacceptable threat to freedom of speech and democratic rights in Australia. Here are some of my reasons:

- It gives unwarranted authority to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to decide what qualifies as 'misinformation' or 'disinformation'. These are subjective definitions that seem to make them the arbiters of what is true and acceptable and what is not.
- This is unfair in that it gives the Government and mainstream media the freedom to express their opinions while restricting what others may say or publish, which leaves room for abuse of power.
- It would suppress public debate and dissuade individuals and groups from presenting diverse opinions and perspectives, hampering the vitality and creative potential of Australia, e.g. tech companies could become tools of government censorship, thereby stifling free speech and undermining the open exchange of ideas.
- It goes against the principles of a democratic society, which needs freedom of expression and diversity to thrive. In contrast, the Bill would strongly encourage ideological conformity by paving the way for suppressing dissenting voices and hindering independent thought.

I am strongly urging the Government to withdraw this Bill. As decreed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers'.