



NEON SHED



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To: The Department of Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development,
Communications and the Arts,
CPO Box 594
Canberra ACT 2601

RE: New ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation (the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023)

This Bill is a gross imposition on our fundamental rights and a I believe, a step in the wrong direction. It allows for intrusion into Australian's privacy, and breaches the right to freedom of speech and freedom of expression.

It is not unusual for mainstream news media to share stories that have been unfounded or improperly researched, which leads to the spreading of disinformation and misinformation. Unclear and inconsistent Government messaging also causes significant confusion and misinformation, yet both are excluded from the Bill.

What is the root cause of these issues?

Identifying and resolving the root cause of misinformation, disinformation and educating people on how to identify and reject incorrect information will lead to an empowered, intellectual society of critical thinkers who readily dismiss unfounded and untrue theories.

This Bill seems to be the Government taking ownership and responsibility of the information on the internet, and being the ones to filter what they believe to be misinformation or disinformation.

Not identifying and resolving the problem will lead to continued oversight by the Government and the increased requirement for additional censorship in the future.

A better solution is educating the public on topics such as critical thinking, identifying misinformation and disinformation, and understanding confirmation bias, group think and cognitive bias.

Adults and school children alike should be educated on how to think critically, how to do their own research, and how to debate issues professionally, respectfully and with data from multiple sources to back up their thinking.



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Hosting respectful and professional debates on key issues of concern with experts from both sides of the spectrum, will allow for open and transparent questioning and answers. There are always more than two sides to any story. It is not uncommon for the Government and mainstream news media to share and promote only one side (often for the benefit of their funding sources or their political aspirations).

Government distrust in Australia is at an all time high

A report in 2019 showed that only 12% of people believe the government is for all people. 56 per cent, say government is run for a 'few big interests'. How will the implementation of this Bill ensure that big interests will not be directing what is considered misinformation, when we know that corporate lobbying is a billion-dollar business (2017)?

Even though the ACMA are 'independent' there is still a risk of industry capture. Personal and political interests and bias exist, as does corruption. One recent example is Gladys Berejiklian, who lied to the public and was found to have engaged in serious corrupt conduct.

There is too much that can go wrong with this Bill, and it does not address or begin to resolve the root cause of issues in Australian society, our culture the Government or mainstream media. We are already in a significant amount of debt and major issues such as domestic violence, bullying, sexual harassment and misconduct in homes, organisations and government seem to be more pressing to spend taxpayer dollars on.

I firmly recommend this Bill is not supported and efforts to reduce Government corruption, misconduct, misinformation and improve trust and transparency are focused on instead.

Government should not have the power to impose civil and criminal penalties on users of the internet if they don't agree with what is said. Especially when they refuse to impose civil and criminal penalties on members of Parliament and high profile people when they are found corrupt, spreading misinformation or engaging in serious criminal activities.

It cannot be a law for thee and not for me.

Courageously yours,



Nicole Turnbull
Chief Courage Officer | Neon Shed