

Submission on Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

The proposal is drafted using words such as 'misinformation', 'disinformation', 'harm', and 'hatred'. These terms are open to interpretation. The meanings of these terms are not universally agreed today, and even if it were, the passage of time will inevitably bring a drift towards unintended interpretations, or confected interpretations that are conveniently adopted to support a narrative. My concern is that the powers granted by this legislation will be used as a tool of oppression and suppression of opinions for ideological interests. Such powers are inimical to the liberal traditions that have made Australia a flourishing country.

The background to the proposed amendments is the rise in use of communications technology and social media. This technology does have dangers, but also presents new opportunities for defeating attempts to subvert public discussion. Mechanisms such as Twitter's Community Notes provide user-driven accuracy scoring of posts. This provides a control on misinformation that is based in the community. Our democracy is best protected when citizens have such powers, not when they are wielded by agents of the government,