

Here are my reasons for strongly objecting to the draft "Communications Legislation Amendment Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2023", or any similar bill aiming to regulate online content:

1. **Freedom of Speech Concerns:** The bill infringes on the right to freedom of speech, a fundamental tenet of democratic societies. There will then result in potential overreach by the government in deciding what is deemed as "misinformation" or "disinformation." Indeed, politicians will find it almost impossible to avoid the temptation to use this legislation to silence opinions it dislikes or even finds inconvenient as currently happens in China and other totalitarian countries.
2. **Ambiguity:** The definitions of "misinformation" and "disinformation" are subjective as well as ambiguous. Without clear guidelines on what counts as misleading content, there's potential for arbitrary enforcement or misuse of the law. Much better for ideas to be debated in the open without Government interference.
3. **Chilling Effect:** The bill will lead to a chilling effect where platforms, to avoid potential penalties, will over-censor content, thereby restricting the free flow of ideas and information.
4. **Potential for Bias:** Given the subjective nature of misinformation, there's a concern about potential political bias in how rules are applied, favouring one viewpoint over another. In practice, anything which isn't left leaning will be labelled 'far right' and banned.
5. **Impact on Small Platforms:** Larger tech companies may have the resources to handle the compliance requirements of such legislation, but smaller platforms or start-ups will be disproportionately burdened.
6. **Unintended Consequences:** The broad sweep of the legislation will inadvertently capture genuine satire, opinion, or other forms of protected speech, leading to unintended suppression of legitimate content.
7. **Privacy Concerns:** To enforce such a bill, increased surveillance or monitoring will be necessary, raising genuine concerns about user privacy and data protection.
8. **Government Overreach:** The government should not have the authority to decide and control what is true or false, as this will pave the way for further governmental control over other facets of online communication. Indeed, it's almost as though the government is following the George Orwell script in his novel 1984.