

# COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (COMBATTING MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION) BILL 2023

Submission to the Draft Exposure Bill

20<sup>th</sup> August 2023

## Summary

This bill has no place in Australia, no place in a democracy and I am strongly opposed to it. I have many concerns including who gets to determine what is mis/disinformation, who decides on the definition of harm, and I do not believe that the government should be given these powers.

## Detail:

This legislation will have the effect of significantly limiting what speech and content will be able to be hosted on digital platforms, and therefore significantly limiting what Australians can see and consider.

I cannot fathom how this legislation came to be proposed, and I am grateful to see that there are many groups in Australia calling on all in government to oppose it.

Some of my main concerns include:

- Who decides what is “mis/dis information”, and how could anyone possibly have this type of knowledge?
- Who determines what is “serious harm” and how could anyone possibly be trusted to make this determination?
- How can anyone be sure that information being published today won’t be found to be true at a future time? History is littered with examples of this, where beliefs once considered solid are later found to be partly or wholly wrong.
- Good ideas and policies are arrived at through debate and discourse - this bill will stifle genuine debate that has the potential to lead to better understandings, ideas and policies.
- Stifling open debate will not end that debate – instead it will send potentially nefarious debate underground (and thus not visible) and it will end up being more dangerous than if it were visible and able to be refuted.
- How can we be confident that future governments will not misuse this power? This legislation has the grave potential to be used against those

with political and ideological differences on all sides of the political divides.

- How will this bill affect people with disabilities, in particular those with cognitive impairments?
- How will this bill affect people with religious views that are not in line with the supposed public narrative? Again, this might depend on which government is in power.
- Existing legal processes are sufficient to enable governments to pursue genuine harmers if that is found to be required.

As I have said, I strongly oppose this bill and I pray for the future of Australia that it is taken no further in its current or any other form.

Wendy Wright