

I am very concerned that the bill titled *Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023* (Cth) will restrict freedom of speech. The terms 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' are not clearly defined and will give ACMA the power to determine what is false, misleading or deceptive. I am also concerned that government communications are exempted from the bill, as are the mainstream media and entertainment. This is a double standard. There are times when it is very important for private citizens to speak out about government actions to ensure accountability. Mainstream media are not immune from reporting misinformation and often present stories by their own bias and agendas.

There is a very real risk in passing this bill, that those who disagree with the government of the day will be silenced on a whole range of issues. Freedom of speech and communication is an international human right and must be supported as stated in the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

I thank all members of parliament for their hard work and ask you all to please consider the importance of freedom of speech in voting on this bill.