

## **Submission on the exposure draft of the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023**

It is the height of arrogance for anyone to assume that they have a monopoly on the understanding of “truth”. The public servants that seek the power to censor ideas they do not themselves believe should consider the possibility that one day their position of power may be swapped with their antagonists, and they in turn will demand uncensored free speech. Bad ideas are humiliated and destroyed by open free speech but enriched in the dark by censorship. Only the cowardly and incompetent resort to censorship.

Free speech allows government incompetence or lies to be challenged. Even though many public servants have honourable intentions, they are not immune to making mistakes, and dishonourable people often grift their way into positions of government power. The concept of government employees policing speech is anathema to anyone that respects the personal freedom and autonomy of the public. Free speech is fundamental to the promotion of peaceful protest when those with power deliberately or inadvertently do the wrong thing.

Around the world and within Australia, the list of grievous government behaviour is long. Free speech and protest has historically challenged government injustice and policy incompetence such as:

- Denial of women’s right to vote.
- Persecution of homosexuality.
- The white Australia policy.
- Denial of citizenship rights for Aboriginals.
- The Vietnam War draft.
- The “weapons of mass destruction” lie that led Australia into war.
- Delayed banning of Mercury vaccine adjuvants and dental amalgams.
- Delayed banning of lead fuel additives.
- Delayed banning of asbestos mining and use.
- And on and on.

Any public servant that believes such terrible mistakes are “obvious” and could never happen again is gullible and ignorant. The internet and online forums are modern public squares. In the public square bad ideas may fester, but they will not grow. In the public square good ideas will gain acceptance and promote societal progress. Reject online censorship of heterodox ideas.