

I wish to register my opposition to this bill, not because misinformation and disinformation is not rampant, but because this bill has the serious potential to be abused by any government to close down public debate, freedom of speech, and any opposition to government policy.

There can be no assurance that ACMA will be fully independent, as many supposedly independent bodies have been and continue to be stacked by governments to include often a majority of cronies of political parties and industry representatives, who are placed in these positions both for nepotistic purposes ("jobs for the boys") but also to implement policies, narratives, and indeed misinformation which favours the ruling political party. For example, in regards to the Fair Work Commission: "Labor has accused the government of "stacking" the industrial umpire after it appointed six people to senior positions, most from employer backgrounds." Guardian article from December 2018.

In the case of ACMA, who will decide whether a particular piece of content constitutes misinformation and disinformation? The ALP government itself routinely pushes misinformation - will it be penalised? For example, it pretends that it is reducing emissions by "clean energy" whilst adding several hundred thousand people to the country's population every year, obviously increasing emissions and loss of carbon sequestering ecosystems, allowing new fossil fuel exploration and production and increasing fossil fuel exports, and allowing "renewable" energy to destroy ecosystems, the climate effects of which are unaccounted for and certainly contrary to any claims of clean or green energy. Yet it pretends routinely to be "following the science" on climate action.

ABC's Media Watch denounced the "lab leak" theory behind the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic as "conspiracy theory" ie 'misinformation', now it seems officially likely that this was in fact the origin of this virus. If the Misinformation Bill had already been passed, it is likely that any suggestion that the virus originated in a lab would be regarded as misinformation and anyone suggesting this would be penalised. The facts change as new information and research comes to light. Will anyone in ACMA be keeping tabs on this? Will it be the arbiters' job? Are they capable and qualified of such in-depth analysis and monitoring change in scientific opinion? I very much doubt anyone in this organisation is capable of this let alone showing any objective impartiality.

I note the ACMA has already penalised broadcasters for breaches of industry codes of practice regarding climate-related coverage and Covid-19 vaccine coverage. It is not specified in the article from 16th April 2023 "Broadcasters breach rules in COVID and climate coverage" which is concerning in itself. One element that is mentioned is "the effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccine". Presumably there was some doubt about this which was contrary to some medical opinion and government narratives. A study published in the Lancet on February 10th 2023, stated that "Our analyses indicate that vaccine effectiveness generally decreases over time against SARS-CoV-2 infections, hospitalisations, and mortality. The baseline vaccine effectiveness levels for the omicron variant were notably lower than for the other variants". So, is it true that any doubts about Covid-19 vaccine effectiveness are 'misinformation'? It is worth noting that EG.5, a subtype of the omicron

variant, is the new dominant variant. Governments are no longer enforcing vaccine boosters. Misinformation? The facts change.

Another type of misinformation, that many broadcasters, and indeed every government, routinely indulge in, is lying by omission. Ignoring important elements and facets on particular issues is at least as important a source of misinformation and disinformation as any other. For example, the ALP government has embraced the highest level of mass immigration ever experienced in this country, at exactly the same time that homelessness has reached crisis point. The obvious excess demand on additional housing brought by mass immigration is never mentioned by government and broadcasters as a primary cause of this crisis. This is misinformation and disinformation. They instead pretend its all due to lack of supply, despite the fact that Australia has already the proportionally largest house building industry out of all OECD countries. This is misinformation. Will ACMA penalise the governments and all broadcasters which push this narrative should the bill be passed? I don't think so. ACMA will only pursue misinformation and disinformation which is contrary to government narratives. It will be used as a political weapon.

There are many other examples of lying by omission I can touch on. Many environmental NGOs claim to be acting to save endangered species such as the koala, and routinely solicit donations on that basis. Population and economic growth has been identified by many scientific articles as the fundamental drivers of biodiversity loss and extinctions. In the case of the koala, it is well known that their habitat is being decimated by incessant housing and infrastructure development in SE Qld and NE NSW. However not one major environmental NGO has ever campaigned (to my knowledge) against population and economic growth. In effect they are lying by omission and pushing misinformation and disinformation, pretending the koala can be saved from extinction without addressing these drivers. Will the ACMA penalise these environmental NGOs for simply being complicit with government agenda? I don't think so.

I mentioned above that 'climate action' is also a source of disinformation. Governments and environmental NGOs and media such as 'Renew Economy' are actively pushing the disinformation that even wind and solar industrialisation severely impacting ecosystems is valid climate action. We know that destruction of ecosystems and deforestation negatively impacts the climate, not only because the destroyed carbon biomass becomes CO2 emissions, and that there is consequent ongoing loss of carbon uptake, but because there is loss of evapo-transpiration, loss of water cycles, loss of shading, loss of direct heat storage by photosynthesis, and changed weather patterns meaning less rainfall, which compounds all the other effects. Pretending that industrialisation which destroys ecosystems is valid climate action is simply pushing the interests of industry and is disinformation.

The ACMA Online Misinformation Bill is Orwellian and exceedingly dangerous. It has the obvious potential to be abused and used for political purposes to close down public debate and freedom of speech and expression. It should not be considered as valid

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