

Freedom of speech and democratic rights should not be threatened. Everyone should have the freedom to express his or her feelings or debate subjects freely, without censoring by the government or its appointed bodies.

I stand with the ACL and others who have expressed their views as follows:

We express our serious concern and opposition to the *Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill* proposed by the Albanese Government.

We are deeply concerned that the proposed new powers will threaten freedom of speech and democratic rights in Australia in the following ways:

- The Bill grants the government the authority to define truth, allowing them to control and manipulate the flow of information.
- Whilst imposing restrictions on online platforms, the Bill gives the government and mainstream media a free pass, creating a double standard and eroding the principles of fairness and equality.
- The Bill empowers the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to determine what qualifies as “misinformation” or “disinformation”. This subjective definition leaves room for abuse of power, and suppresses public debate and diverse opinions and perspectives.
- The Bill effectively enables tech companies to become tools of government censorship, stifling free speech and undermining the open exchange of ideas.
- The Bill paves the way for ideological conformity, suppressing dissenting voices and hindering independent thought. This goes against the principles of a democratic society that thrives on diversity and freedom of expression.

The proposed Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill will see the government define what truth is and give power to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and online platforms (Meta, YouTube) to enforce it. The proposed Bill would empower ACMA to determine what is harmful and what is acceptable in the public square, specifically online.

Under this unprecedented power the government would be the ultimate authority of truth. Ideological conformity would be enforced in Australia.

But note this:

The ultimate truth does not rest with the government but is found in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We urge the government to withdraw this Bill and uphold the fundamental rights of every Australian citizen as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – ***Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.***

Anything less will cause serious, detrimental, implications for free speech and democracy in Australia. We urge the Australian government to uphold the principles of transparency and accountability, and foster an environment where open debate and diverse opinions are welcome.

No Government should be the authority of truth.

No Government should limit freedom of speech.