

20th August 2023

Submission re: New ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation

Exposure draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

I am writing to submit my feedback and opinions regarding the proposed new ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation.

You have asked for views on specific topics relating to the proposed draft bill. However, the purpose of my response is to state that **I am entirely opposed** to increased or additional government powers - relating to what people say and/or how and to whom they say it.

We live in a free country. Dialog on matters of any topic should be unfettered (within the broad context of civil discourse). This includes posts on social media.

I understand that the intent of the new powers is to prevent harm. Are you suggesting we need to be protected from each other? Freedom does not come without risks or costs. I can't recall voting to give the government "thought police" powers. I'm also unaware of anyone in my family, friendship or work groups who are being harmed by "misinformation" or "disinformation".

How can you say that misinformation and disinformation pose a threat to the safety and well-being of Australians, and to our democracy, society and economy? In my opinion, all this bill achieves is to muzzle criticism of government narratives (i.e. "misinformation") - through scaring social media platforms into restricting content through fear of penalties.

There are many examples in history where fringe ideas have been proven correct (or the accepted narrative proven incorrect).

It's not the government's job to police what is subjectively harmful on social media. Especially when the government itself is not subject to the same standards or penalties for "mis" or "dis" information.

This legislation amendment is a really bad idea and I hope it never sees the light of day.

Simon Begg