

Public submission regarding: Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

(August 20th, 2023)

The Lethal Threat to Democracy: The End of Free Speech.

In the 21st Century, Australians have often relied on the U.S. for upholding Freedom and Democracy. The debt we owe to our American allies is vast. Ronald Reagan said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction... It must be fought for, protected, and handed on." Today, our freedom faces a new threat: state-imposed silence.

The proposed Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) misinformation bill represents this threat. It's government control over free speech. Our freedoms rely on our ability to speak freely. This bill needs to be stopped.

Worldwide, governments, from the U.S. to China, struggle to identify misinformation. Instead, they're afraid of the truth's power. They lean on media giants to censor inconvenient truths. Instead of championing free speech, they suppress dissent. The risk to democracy is often overlooked.

Letting the government be the final judge of truth is chilling. The ACMA misinformation bill embodies this danger. No government should have this power. Our forebears fought against such totalitarianism.

Democracy thrives on open debate. To suggest that 26 million Australians can't discern truth is not only arrogant but also undermines democracy's foundation. A government that doesn't trust its citizens distrusts democracy itself.

The bill is biased. While certain groups can speak out, the average citizen is silenced. This isn't only an attack on free speech but also a threat to democratic values.

The bill's vagueness is deliberate. It makes individuals and publishers self-censor. History shows how unclear laws in authoritarian regimes controlled the public through fear.

Satire, a critical tool for commentary, is also at risk. We shouldn't allow humour to be controlled by bureaucracy or overridden by political correctness.

History shows that truth always emerges. Trying to control it makes its breakout more potent. The real danger isn't misinformation, but the widening gap between the rulers and the ruled.

Trust is waning fast. A government that muzzles its critics only hastens this decline. Trust can't be imposed—it must be earned.

Reagan warned, "If we lose freedom here, there is no place to escape to." The U.S., under the weight of shifting ideologies, may be faltering. It might be up to Australia. Internal and external threats challenge us. We must stand against the threats to our freedom, champion truth, and protect our democracy.

In Reagan's words, freedom is never guaranteed. We must always defend it.