

I strongly oppose the ACMA/Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Draft Bill and do not wish these amendments to the Communications Legislation to become law.

Below are a few of my concerns.

1 In the **definitions** section, '**Harm**' is defined as

- hatred against a group;
- disruption of public society;
- harm to the integrity of Australian democratic processes;
- harm to the health of Australians;
- harm to Australian environment;
- economic or financial harm.

My comment: defining a concept by using that same word does not make the meaning or implications clear or give citizens any realistic guidelines as to how to avoid causing any of these 'harms'. In my opinion, this definition lacks transparency and accountability.

2 No government or appointed body should have the power to tell people what they should be communicating in any form. Our armed forces defended our right to free speech when they opposed the totalitarian regimes of Europe.

Many developments in science have been achieved by questioning the prevailing beliefs, for example, Galileo's investigation of our solar system. Improvements in health care have come about by questioning medical and nursing techniques. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we were told to 'trust the science', and attempts to question or put forward alternatives were treated with scorn and punitive actions, both in the workplace and in social interactions. Details of 'the science' that were available to the public were limited by censorship, whether by bureaucrats or politicians.

In a democracy, we should expect our medical practitioners to be able to live their Hippocratic Oath and to give us accurate information without fear or favour. If we are to 'trust the science', we should at the very least have access to the range of research so we can form opinions based on a balance of facts, and not on scaremongering.

3 Punishment. Throughout the pandemic, we were told the vaccine would 'stop the spread'. This now appears to be incorrect. But many who objected to taking the vaccine were punished by being limited in the venues they could visit

and/or by losing their employment. It now seems clear that these measures were unfair and unnecessary.

The fines suggested in this Bill would create another division in our society, by prohibiting all but the very wealthy from being financially able to express their opinion.

Conclusion: I wish to protest against the passage of this Bill. Censorship of information and restriction of open and frank discussion is not acceptable in our country.