

IN REGARD TO NEW LAWS BEING PROPOSED TO COMBAT “MISINFORMATION” AND “DISINFORMATION”.

I am appalled at the measures being proposed. In fact I am stunned to find that the government can so blithely recommend them. These are measures which stand in direct opposition to the well-measured running of our country along democratic lines.

Ironically, I find that the first sentences in the section titled ‘The Issue’ are themselves replete with misinformation.

Take for instance the claim that ‘Misinformation and disinformation pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of Australians, as well as to our democracy, society and economy.’

We live in a world which is a troubling mix of both true and false information. Over history there has never been any sense that misinformation is a threat to our society or democracy. The world has lived through many times where both truth and falsity lived together, yet people were able to somehow muddle through without the sort of Orwellian measures being proposed.

In fact, if anything, there have been times when people believed that MISINFORMATION was what society needs in order to flourish. Perhaps this way of thinking began with Plato and the ‘Golden Lie’ but it has been well known through the 20th century in the form of war-time propaganda and so on. Whether that has always been for the best is another issue, but the point is that people in government have generally believed that MISINFORMATION rather than truth is actually good for society as a whole.

It is therefore strange that this screed from the government is arguing just the opposite of what has been firm government policy around the world for centuries. One naturally wonders if the government is being entirely frank, or whether the content of ‘The Issue’ section is another deliberate attempt to create misinformation in order to achieve government objectives!

In the end, misinformation is not a serious threat to democracy, society as a whole, or even our economy. Truth tends to out, even if it takes a while sometimes.

Rather than misinformation, it is measures such as those being proposed which form a real threat to our social well-being. There are a number of aspects to this.

One obvious one is the centralisation of power and control. Centrally controlled societies have never worked well. Society functions best when

decisions are left to individuals at a grass-roots level. Any attempt to bring power to a central point ALWAYS has huge trade-offs in workability.

To try to centralise to control of truth and falsity in a centralised organisation is a recipe for disaster. We saw that recently with the COVID pandemic. So much of what was being pushed as scientific truth by the government and government agencies turned out to be simply false - not just slightly false but incredibly and dangerously false. Although many did lose their lives because of the COVID pandemic, many more have lost them due to vaccine injury.

It now appears that many lives could have been saved if more emphasis was put on treatment. However, it turns out, at least in the US situation, that the financial subsidies given to vaccine companies would not have been available if there were other known effective ways of dealing with the pandemic. Thus there was a big push by big pharma to keep the US agencies away from ameliorating efforts and keep them pushing for vaccination alone. This sort of misinformation being spread by big pharma in their own financial interests effected Australian policy, of course.

This is but one example. The ability of bureaucracies to make a mess of simple operations is legendary. Can you imagine what a committee is going to do if it is left to handle complex issues such as truth?

Of course there is a further problem. As well as the tendency toward incompetence of centralised government bureaucracy, there is also the temptation to corruption. In regard to misinformation, there would be an almost overwhelming temptation to put a thumb on the scales on many issues.

More than that, there are many who would try to use such a mechanism with the overt desire to create confusion in people's minds. In that regard it is only necessary to look at the recent arrival of 'fact checkers'. If you can convince others that you are an impartial fact-checker, then it is possible to get them to believe almost anything you want them to. People naturally think that an independent fact-checker must be trustworthy.

The observation of many in recent years, however, is that so-called 'independent' fact-checkers are in fact not independent at all but are just using that label as a smoke screen. They are paid by powerful interests who want them to come up with fact-checks which suit those interests. There are all kinds of roudabout methods 'fact-checker' use to lead people away from the truth. One of these is to take statements out of context but another is simply to lie.

The locus classicus for that approach is the letter put out in the US by ex CIA people and others claiming that the now infamous Hunter Biden lap-top had all the earmarks of being Russian disinformation. Of course, this was not true and the people who wrote this letter had no evidence at all that the lap-top wasn't genuine, but by clever special pleading and deceptive writing, they were able to convince a lot of the media to ignore the lap-top. What they were claiming as essentially a fact-check was in fact disinformation itself.

If powers over controlling information are increased in the Australian government it is inevitable that we will see more and more of this skullduggery - all in the name of protecting democracy!

Now, being aware of misinformation at a government level is one thing. It is the form of response that is perhaps the biggest worry. It has often been said that the answer to misinformation isn't censorship but the increase of accurate information in order to battle falsehood.

What the government is contemplating, however, is censorship, especially via social media. This is an appalling idea. We have seen exactly how this power has been used by the US government in shutting down voices on social media which disagree with it and the impacts have been extremely disastrous for both freedom and democracy.

The impact on the free media has itself been disastrous. The media needs to be a voice speaking truth to power, but instead government interference (in the name of limiting misinformation) has helped turn the media into a voice speaking government misinformation to the masses. This is the exact opposite of how democracy should work.

There is much more I could say about this but I will finally simply reiterate my original contention that this is an appallingly dangerous move by the government and I am shocked it is even being contemplated.

