

We strongly oppose the Communications Legislation Amendment [Combating Misinformation and Disinformation] Bill 2023 empowering an unelected, commercial entity - ACMA or another, to determine what is truth online or on social media. It is also referred to as 'The draft Censorship Bill' here. Our views expressed online will be excessively monitored and non-conforming activities will be recorded. This is an assault on democracy and an affront to freedom of speech and conscience. Why?

It is with the utmost horror and disappointment that we see **extremely unclear legislation** like this one **attempting to cap our freedoms**. Why is the Labor Government (or any Government) exempt from this sort of proposed legislation? Such hypocrisy is astounding! **The duty of good government in a democracy, is to uphold the common good of the people it governs. Only from that commission, is government empowered to act.**

So the government would be free to tell lies, but we could be banned from challenging the lies?

'MISINFORMATION'

The most obvious danger of this Bill is that governments and their agencies can't be trusted to define 'misinformation'. They trade on misinformation all the time!

One after another, we the citizens who purport to live in a democracy that is Australia, increasingly see the miscarriage of justice stemming from misinformation, lies and misconduct/misuse of powers.

Example 1: The ACT Director of Public Prosecutions, Shane Drumgold, resigned in the wake of an independent inquiry's sweeping criticisms of his serious misconduct and dishonesty in the prosecution of Bruce Lehrmann. (6 August 2023) Mr Lehrmann issued a statement, saying the ACT Government needs to show "leadership" and hold the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to account. "Given the alarming reading courageously reported by the media earlier in the week, this shouldn't be a surprise to anyone..."

Are citizens who follow what happens in the nation precluded from giving opinions on matters like the above?

Eg.2 The ACT Government's attempt in May 2023 to forcibly acquire Calvary Hospital, a well-run private concern with a substantial lease period remaining is another example of Government's overreach illustrating abuse of property rights and religious freedom. This was done by legislation that was drafted and tabled without any consultation with Calvary Hospital, management, staff or patients. The matter is now before a Senate enquiry. So why should this Bill exempt Governments from being transparent, listening to concerned opinions objecting to such actions online?

WHO & WHY IS UNELECTED ACMA GIVEN JUDICIAL POWER TO CENSOR & PUNISH?

Next, who and why should the five unelected bureaucrats of the government's Australian Media and Communications Authority (ACMA) be given disturbing new powers to shut down important political debates?

This draft Censorship Bill defines misinformation as information that, for instance, is 'false, misleading or deceptive; and ... reasonably likely to cause or contribute to serious harm'.

'HARM'

But what is 'harm'?

The draft Censorship Bill says, 'harm means', among other things, 'hatred against a group in Australian society on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion...'.

That list, can make it very risky to discuss the obvious dangers of multiculturalism and mass immigration. (Just look at the violent race riots now destroying France.)

It will also make it even riskier to discuss ethnic crime, [REDACTED] or why Labor's planned Aboriginal-only Voice to Parliament will divide Australia.

With major changes being envisioned, does this proposed legislation seek to silence citizens wanting to ask questions and express their opinions online before they cast their vote?

Was Mr. Albanese himself anticipating the implementation of this draft Censorship Bill when he complained in February that "misinformation" on the Voice was a danger to our society: "There are already people out there pushing misinformation on social media – drumming up outrage, trying to start a culture war ...

"There are always those who want to create confusion and provoke division ..."

On the other hand. Mr Albanese himself has been fact-checked by journalists and found to be contradicting in his statements as to what the Voice actually represents in the Uluru Statement he quotes so much from!

(See the Credlin Report featured in Sky News recently; Interview of Ben Fordham & Albanese on 2GB; Thomas Mayo & Ray Hadley on 2GB);

In fact, another part of this Bill could be used to shut down anyone who the political class accuses of provoking such 'division' with their 'misinformation'.

It says harm also means internet posts which 'disrupt public order or society'.

But what on earth does that mean? Does it include posting calls on the internet for a protest against authoritarian governments. who impose unnecessary lockdowns or the culling of wild brumbies based on wrong figures of brumby population?

Next, a third definition of 'harm' in the Bill: 'Harm means ... harm to the Australian environment.'

What if activists demand ACMA crack down on blogs, posts and videos which argue, – in the opinion of many, that global warming is not a crisis and that the government's global warming schemes should be scrapped as a waste of money?

They'll complain that's 'misinformation' that causes 'harm to the Australian environment'. Shouldn't we be free to conduct a healthy debate of differing opinions online?

Sure, ACMA, could turn down their complaints.

But defending themselves in ACMA investigations will cost media and internet companies a lot of money, and facing fines of billions of dollars will make many too scared to fight.

ALTERNATE VIEWS SUPPRESSED

In addition, this Bill is particularly concerning for Christians and other minorities, who want to express an alternate view to the prevailing woke culture on gender, sexuality and abortion.

There are other approaches that can and should be explored, that do not infringe upon freedom of speech.

The obvious attempt of this draft Censorship Bill to frame the Government as the 'Ministry of Truth' as in George Orwell's book '1984' is an attempt to give it authoritarian powers to censor and control its citizens and must be strongly opposed and condemned!