

Date: 20 August 2023

Submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

## **OBJECTION TO:**

### **Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023**

**As an Australian citizen and a practicing lawyer for more than 45 years I wish to register my objection to the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.**

**The Bill proceeds on a misconception that it is objectively possible to separate out information that is free from error or content that could offend someone, from information that is erroneous or hurtful to someone. The history of ideas has often shown that information many thought to be correct in one era has later been found to be wrongly based or misconceived by a later generation.**

**Furthermore the idea that the alleged erroneous parts of information can be responsible for causing harm to someone or have potential to cause harm is an illogical and unbounded concept. The Oxford dictionary, and any number of science or medical textbooks have plenty of information in them that can be used to cause harm. What of the ancient wisdom, “ Sticks and stones break my bones but words never hurt me.”**

**The Bill employs the standard legislative method for solving all perceived modern-day ills; more government regulation. This legislation follows the same failed model, building ever more government bureaucracy on existing bureaucracy; more confusing rules and onerous regulations serving the primary objective of keeping unelected and unaccountable government officials in employment.**

**The belief that some regulatory authority will be able to discern what is correct, non-misleading information from what is not, can only lead to the realization of the Orwellian nightmare clearly foretold in the novel, “1984”**

**The result of this legislation will be to give faceless people the**

**indiscriminate power to decide what is “good” information and what is “bad” information, what information is “harmful” and what is “harmless”, when in truth these dualities are arbitrary and nonsensical. But a new Truth bureaucracy will impose itself on the non-government sector demanding individuals and businesses carry out onerous reporting, recording and other time-consuming tasks in justification of the new bureaucracy’s existence, all without payment.**

**As well as this further tax on individuals and businesses, the legislation will mark the end of freedom of speech in Australia. A free and open society depends on the free exchange of ideas [including cranky ones as presently perceived]. The proposed legislation will only enshrine more intolerance, with the Truth more and more owned by those usurping political power. This road has been travelled many times before and the wisdom of those in previous eras who experienced it still holds good. The words of Voltaire come to mind,**

**“I may disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”**

**But then is it disinformation to continue to attribute these words to Monsieur Voltaire?**