

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

### Submission opposing amendments

While Misinformation and Disinformation do pose problems, the answer does not lie in an Orwellian state where free speech, critique, discussion and open debate are not allowed. This Bill would give power to the government, ACMA and digital platforms to silence anything that opposes the prevailing ideologies / political agenda. Allowing media to report information with integrity, free debate of issues and not selective control of information is the better way to combat false information. Hypocritically, the Bill exempts government communications from censorship yet does not allow other elected representatives or any constituents the same privilege. No government is the ultimate 'Truth authority'. Shutting down free speech in this way would damage democracy - seriously imposing "harm to the integrity of Australian democratic processes or of Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government institutions" [see Exposure Draft p10 defining 'harm' part (c)]. The censorship powers that bureaucrats and digital companies would have goes far beyond reasonable limitation, seemingly without accountability for possibly excessive censorship in view of the exorbitant penalties. Definitions in the Bill of misinformation, disinformation (vaguely defined as 'false, misleading or deceptive'), and harm (definition is ideological and broad) is subjective and dependent on the judgement of ACMA bureaucrats and digital companies. This type of forceful government control of information would be expected in a totalitarian society. It is harmful as it undermines public trust and democracy.

Please do not allow this draconian legislation to proceed.