

The Key Flaw

The concept of **Misinformation** (and its subset, as defined, of *deliberate Disinformation*), is meaningless without reference to the concept of **Truth**.

This entire legislative proposal is based on the flawed notion that establishing the Truth is essentially unproblematic - and that as a consequence it's possible and desirable for government to play a paternal role in determining what is, and is not, misinformation on the community's behalf, .

Yet the notion that it's easy to determine the truth - and thereby reliably identify misinformation - flies in the face of thousands of years of philosophical inquiry and dispute. It overlooks the obvious fact that notions of what's true and what's not change dramatically over time and remain in flux.

That's not to say the concept of truth is without meaning - or that seeking the truth is pointless. Seeking the truth, in fact, is the purpose of any authentic intellectual inquiry. But truth is better seen as a goal rather than a fixed destination. Crucially, **anything which hampers the process of truth seeking is unhelpful and potentially dangerous.**

That is my central objection to the legislation. **It purports to assist the community by combatting "misinformation", but would instead distort and undermine open, free debate - the best process we know for ascertaining the truth and identifying falsehoods.**

The case of COVID

To anyone who survived the COVID pandemic in Australia and followed developments with a critical eye, it is downright astonishing that the Government has the chutzpah to propose legislation to control "misinformation" at this time.

What's obviously needed with regard to COVID is a thorough independent inquiry into pandemic management. This must include an attempt to review official policies that were implemented in the light of what we now understand about the

disease. Necessarily such an enquiry must look at public advice given by governments and medical authorities - advice that was uncritically repeated by mass media and given pride of place in social media.

In the initial months of 2020, most commentary about the possibility of a vaccine to protect against COVID focused on the difficulties and stressed the likelihood it would be years in development.

Then a few major pharmaceutical companies swung into action at “warp speed” and soon the official information changed. From a speculative medium- to long-term possibility, the COVID vaccines promoted in Western countries swiftly became promoted as THE way out of the pandemic.

The authorities in the USA - and their mini-me equivalents in Australia - assured everyone that the vaccines would prevent infection and stop transmission. On that basis it was claimed that not taking the vaccine was extremely antisocial behaviour.

When it became apparent that simply wasn't true, the rationale for being vaccinated changed; it was no longer about preventing infection and transmission, but rather about reducing the severity of disease (at least short-term). But whereas the initial vaccination program was a two dose regimen, boosters soon came on the scene. People who faithfully follow government advice to take all the boosters available have by now endured at least five jabs.

None of this would be so serious were it not for the increasingly obvious fact that adverse reactions to the vaccine have been far, far higher than initially promised, This is indicated by many data points including excess all-cause deaths, which have been abnormally high in Australia since 2022 and continue to be significantly above average.

In addition, while the authorities' fixation has been on lockdowns, masks and vaccination, almost no attempt was made to give early treatment to people infected with the novel coronavirus. In fact, it was discouraged. Despite promising indications that Hydroxychloroquine and Ivermectin had benefits especially in the early stages of infection, those treatments were actively ridiculed.

The entire process amounted to unseemly group-think on an international level, promulgated mainly from the USA and UK, via government and media channels. High level expertise within Australia that could help steer better policy was ignored and suppressed if it clashed with the dominant paradigm. That paradigm, adopted so trustingly by Australian government authorise and regulators, was largely US in origin, and influenced by the vagaries, disfunction and blatant corruption of the USA's medical establishment and regulatory processes.

As time goes by, it's become ever more clear that the sceptics of Australia's official COVID policy were correct in many of their claims and criticisms. Thanks to the welcome change of management at Twitter, many of us are now able to share opinions and information again on that platform - but from 2021 there was a massive purge on social media of accounts that questioned the official narrative.

This purge was partly Big tech and Big Media groupthink, but it was also carried out as a result of a government pressure. There has been no apology for this, or acknowledgement from government or mainstream media (with the welcome exception of [x.com](https://www.x.com)) that the censorship exercised at the time was inappropriate.

Far from seeking to expand its powers to censor, the government in Australia should be facing public scrutiny over the disinformation it promulgated itself since 2020, disinformation that was protected by censoring dissident views on mass media.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zI3yU5Z2adI>

The (Deliberate) Chilling Effect

I appreciate the legislation does not propose that government takes a direct role in censoring specific posts on social media.

While intolerable, that would at least be obvious. People would know what has been banned - and would be able to complain about specific decisions to quash free speech.

The proposal is for a more subtle process of encouraging and facilitating censorship, in cahoots with the tech companies that run social media, but with some very nasty added elements.

Particularly creepy is the idea of creating lists of account holders with dissident opinions. The East German Stasi held similar lists, and that did not end well for the perpetrators.

Conclusion

A healthy democracy should encourage lively debate among its citizenry. Its decision-making should make full use of the expertise and talent in the community. It should never seek to intimidate, marginalise or de-platform dissidents whose only "offence" is to peacefully promote alternative opinions.

The proposed legislation is unnecessary as the alleged harms of the current situation are unproven and unquantified. On the other hand, the potential harms of more - not less - censorship are real and highly significant.

At a time when Australia's political elite is ramming through a major long-term commitment to military alliance with the world's most bombastic imperialists, with minimal public debate - and committing Australia to expenditures on military hardware on a scale unprecedented in our history - it is sinister that this government is proposing to monitor dissent with a view to its suppression.

The problems of censorship have been well understood for a very long time. From Socrates to John Stuart Mill, from the US First Amendment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there have been persistent and heroic attempts to make a persuasive case for free speech and open debate - and give this basic freedom legal force.

Unfortunately Australia has no constitutional guarantee for free speech and the Human Rights Commission, from its inception, has been a disappointment to those of us who hoped it would strengthen the defence of free speech in Australia.

The Government should withdraw this divisive legislation and focus instead on restoring the credibility of official information by taking a lot more care to ensure it is accurate, appropriate and truthful to the greatest extent possible - and not distorted by external pressure and corporate interests.