

## **New ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation submission**

Growing up in Australia I was blessed with a great education, one that taught us to think, question, analyse and be open minded. Our selected texts and topics in English were thoughtful, mind opening and challenging. Science and mathematics taught us that they weren't settled and that much of the thinking was based on hypothesis that with further study would either be validated or disproven.

We read about Galileo Galilei and the Inquisition, we read Brave New World, Animal Farm, Fringe Dwellers and 1984. We learned about Hiroshima and Oppenheimer, the atrocities of 2<sup>nd</sup> world war, we learnt about history both good and bad. We learned how societies could be built to thrive or be suffocated.

We learned about people like Hitler, Stalin and Mao Zedong, we learned about Nelson Mandela's and Stephen Biko's fight against apartheid and Mahatma Gandhi's peaceful protest. In summary we received an education that opened our minds and eyes to the world and taught us how to think. It taught us that what some claim is misinformation or disinformation is in fact the truth.

The open mindedness that I had been taught served me well in my career. I challenged companies and governments to think outside of the box and look at new solutions for helping our country, people, environment and planet.

Since 2020, this education has once again served me well. Having been taught how to research, read data and listen to scientists, from early in the pandemic I was keen to understand about Covid-19 to protect my family and friends.

On April the 8<sup>th</sup> 2020, John P.A. Ioannidis, Professor of Medicine (Stanford Prevention Research), of Epidemiology and Population Health and by Courtesy, of Statistics and of Biomedical Data Science, published "Population-level COVID-19 mortality risk for non-elderly individuals overall and for non-elderly individuals without underlying diseases in pandemic epicenters"  
[www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.05.20054361v1](http://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.04.05.20054361v1).

This publication using data from several well documented events clearly demonstrated that Covid-19 had a low mortality and risk for people under 65 without underlying diseases.

Further studies came out confirming the results, so it was astounding to me that Victoria Government Health Officials took such harsh society wide measures for 1 or 2 cases of COVID-19. Alternative measures could have been taken to protect those at risk without causing such a major impact on kids, young people, small businesses and the economy.

It felt like living in a twilight zone, with highly respected scientists publishing data that was ignored and when Australian citizens tried to share it, they were banned or deplatformed. Facts were ignored and the public were bombarded with significant non-data substantiated fear mongering by mainstream media.

Next came the vaccines, mandates and vaccine passports. We were told that mandates and passports would not happen and then they did. We were told that the vaccines were safe and effective for everyone when FDA, other regulator and manufacturers documents showed that the vaccines had not been tested on high risk groups.

Having had multiple anaphylactic events, allergies and anti-phospholipid syndrome and with a husband with previous pericarditis, I needed to understand the risk factors from the newly

developed vaccine technology. So once again I read every medical research paper I could find, including early trial data, FDA and other regulator information. What we were told in the media, was not the same as what the data said. There were potential risks of thrombosis, deadly clots and anaphylaxis as well as potential heart issues. The early data already showed that vaccines had risk factors and were not going to be safe and effective for everyone as they hadn't been tested on people with pre-existing conditions.

In February 2021, data and information was already available regarding vaccine breakthrough infections, whilst our governments and media denied this could happen. Even though data was available on breakthrough infections and viral load being equal between unvaccinated and vaccinated, unvaccinated individuals were banned from society and vilified. None of this made sense and once again people who tried to share data were censored. This again raises the question as to who was spreading misinformation and disinformation. Hindsight is not needed if health officials and journalists invested time reading available data.

The Australian public were told things by media and government that was in contradiction with scientific data and denied things that became realities (Covid passports, mandates). How can we in all honesty now create a fair and equitable misinformation and disinformation legislation? Do we live in a society where only one entity is to claim they are the bearers of "truth" and then when they get it wrong just shrug it off. This is reminiscent of all those books that were taught as part of the Australian education system, that warned of governments and societies where freedom of speech was censored and eradicated for the benefit of control.

Australia always was a country that prided itself on freedom, the proposed legislation is a complete contradiction to Australian freedom and will stifle our citizens and society. We need to be able to have healthy debate, listen to opposing views, stay open minded and think outside of the box if we want to thrive.