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Submission to the Communications Legislation Amendments (Combatting Misinformation & Disinformation) Bill 2023.

From Malcolm Eglinton

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I have read the reasons suggested for the proposed Bill. I would express my opposition to this Bill. This Bill is unnecessary & if passed has the ability to be used to control all expressions in the various media areas in the same way that totalitarian Governments do that to their people in other parts of the world today.

The proposed Bill is inconsistent with the fundamental right to freedoms of speech which we have taken as a given in Australia as a part of our foundational rights & is upheld even in the UN Declaration of Human Rights & International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights.

The Bill would too much power in the hands of unelected officials who would be able to silence speech in the public forum if they did not happen to agree with the content. We have seen in recent times how politicians & bureaucrats & activists have labelled many things hate speech, misinformation or disinformation based on their own perception or their own bias on a particular subject. In the recent same sex marriage debate the many people in public positions of power & that included the bureaucracy, politicians, business leaders in positions of influence & media outlets chose to call those who opposed the same sex marriage Bill as people who used hate speech, misinformation or disinformation. In the recent debate about the proposed referendum, many are suggesting that the NO case is presenting racist hate speech, misinformation & disinformation even though those speaking publicly are high profile judges, constitutional lawyers, highly respected aboriginal people who are opposed to this & many decent people who see that there is a potential problem with the voice. All of these could well be considered as producing hate speech when in fact they are speaking the truth & presenting valid facts that just happen to be rejected by the yes camp & whose facts & views are not welcome to these high profile politicians, activists & influential corporate leaders. The fact that we see this type of hostile attitude in people who will have influence in the implementing of such a Bill is a very good reason not to allow it in the first place. We also saw during the Covid issue that many people of medical repute

who did not agree with the so called medical “experts” & their response to Covid were silenced & forced to remain silent. Doctors faced the risk of deregistration if they spoke out against the official line of action which meant that genuine debate among professionals was not allowed & so we lost the input of good people who may have been a benefit in the way Covid was managed. Alternative treatments were forbidden & were regarded as dangerous misinformation or disinformation & the public were not given a chance to assess the information for themselves. The danger of vaccines was not allowed to be publicly voiced & any who dared challenge the so called official line of the “experts” (whom we now know were not so expert or knowledgeable) were ridiculed, silenced or threatened with loss of job. This is where the proposed Bill will lead & it will be even worse because it will be like the propaganda units of the totalitarian Governments of this world like China where only the official view is allowed.

This Bill would put too much power in the hands of unelected unaccountable bureaucrats who would be subjected to pressure from politicians to act according to their views or they may simply be bureaucrats with a particular bias & target those with whom they disagree.

The penalties that will be placed upon tech companies if they violate an edict from these people responsible for watching for misinformation etc is inordinate & will be such a threat that actual controversial debate will be silenced due to fear of such a penalty. That is un-Australian & must not happen.

The power that ACMA will have to demand information & evidence of an offence is wrong. This whole Bill reeks of a desire to control the information that is in the various media outlets so that only the official government position on anything can be safely presented. Any opposition or even debate that challenges a government position may be deemed as violating this Bill & so face an inordinate penalty.

The fact that Governments & other public bodies are not going to be subject to the same ACMA scrutiny tells us that this is nothing but a Marxist propaganda unit which must be resisted at all costs so that we retain freedom in this country to debate issues without fear & to express our views freely without being censored by someone who happens to disagree with us but has the authority of this law behind them to protect the Government from dissent & silence dissenters.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission.

I trust that it will assist you in coming to the conclusion that this Bill is not required & that it is not in the national interest to be introduced.

Please oppose this proposed dangerous Bill & make sure that we retain the freedom to express our beliefs & views. Let the public assess the various views & let Australians make up their own minds as to what is hate speech, misinformation & disinformation .

Sincerely,
Malcolm Eglinton

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