

26th July 2023

Sharon Stace
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Information Integrity Section
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications & Arts
GPO 215
CANBERRA ACT 2601

SUBJECT: Exposure Draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like this letter/email to be considered as a submission. This submission can be made public.

I am writing to you to express my concern about 'Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill'. I am against it for many reasons but will condense it the following few.

- This Bill is a significant over-reach by the Government exceeding any other existing models in the western world. The fact that it is a blatantly opposing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be concern enough. But this Bill has the potential to remove from the Australian people everything that the Declaration of Human Rights is trying to protect. Equivalent European laws are not this ambiguous or restrictive and are working models.
- The Government in its intent to combat online misinformation and disinformation by foreign instigators, Australian ones or any illegal or dangerous organisation could be used to legitimise attempts to restrict public debate, censor unpopular opinions and enforce politically motivated ideological conformity. This tyrannical type of over-reach is not 'pie in the sky' as it was evident in the way Federal and State Governments handled the recent pandemic with their allies the media. Two critical manipulators of misinformation.
- The exemption of the main players of misinformation, two being the Government and media, to be exempt from censorship is ridiculous. The Bill enables them and their bureaucrat buddies, big tech to censor speech without any clear boundaries, guidelines or standards. It lacks accountability or transparency on those who hold the power of control over it. As it stands it can clearly become weaponised against the very people it is supposed to protect.
- This Bill is vague in its definition of 'harm'. And yet wants to give excessive penalties and prosecutions. It wants to transfer its responsibility risks onto the Providers and Platforms when it is not theirs to police free speech. Free Speech is just that. Twitter was compromised by the USA Government and this model is to give our Government more power than displayed in the US. I cannot think of anything worse. A global assault on free speech and any opposing view was obvious during the Pandemic and that was without Bills like this. Weaponization is a very real possibility and all things considered there are Centuries of evidence where things that were meant for good in the hands of evil become weapons of destruction.

- Who deems what is responsible and irresponsible speech. Who or what decides what subjects are worth talking about. This is a power that should remain with the individual. Good leadership in Government should be debating controversial subjects and showing the Australian public how it can be done rather than looking for ways to remove the opposing narrative.
- This Bill contradicts the Governments ideology particularly that of giving voice to the minorities. Censorship of this magnitude has the potential to remove voice from minority opposing opinions.

I say 'NO' to this unprecedented, under prepared Bill. It is like 'Pandoras Box' or a 'Can of Worms'. This bill although presented to do good is going to do more harm. It is tokenistic at its best. Like the 'VOICE' it is a Trojan Horse. Please consider how dangerous this Bill is and stop it in its tracks.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Stace

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