

Attachments:

[Free Speech is Essential.docx](#) ;

Please find attached my submission on the above issue.

Regards,
Peter McGuigan



Virus-free. www.avg.com

Free Speech is Essential.docx

Submission concerning the exposure draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

I am very firmly opposed to this draft legislation.

The whole concept of what it is trying to achieve is wrong. It is undemocratic, illiberal, controlling and ultimately, dangerous.

The first sentence in the website ([New ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts](#)) canvassing our feedback, after the headline 'The Issue' says:

'Misinformation and disinformation pose a threat to the safety and wellbeing of Australians, as well as to our democracy, society and economy.'

No it doesn't. Just the opposite. And this is why:

- (1) Who is anyone to say what is misinformation and disinformation. A government body. No thanks. Only the cut and thrust of free public debate can hope to get all the arguments out there and a consensus reached. One only needs to look at the failure of many covid era government policies to see how destructive and in error it is to allow only one point of view. Furthermore, it is not the role of government to monitor our speech and certainly not to control it. You may as well rename ACMA the Ministry of Truth.
- (2) I'm not sure how misinformation or disinformation can be a threat to safety and wellbeing. We should not be catering to the lowest common denominator in such issues. I recall a common refrain that 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me'. The answer for those offended by words is either harden up or respond with their arguments.
- (3) We already have Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 which covers cases of racial or ethnic abuse.
- (4) I don't want a nanny state shielding me from discussion. No progress in any society has ever been made by shutting down new ideas or the discussion of the merits of the status quo. Scientific advancement, for example, is achieved by specifically questioning the current theories.
- (5) The government should recognise that tolerance and diversity should apply equally to people's opinions. Not just immutable traits.
- (6) Free speech is the font from which all our other freedoms derive. Erode free speech and every other right can potentially be removed. Seriously.

(7) In recognition of the above arguments a district court in Louisiana has just called the US Federal Government's pressure on social media companies to curtail posts about Covid 19, the most massive attack against free speech in Unites States history. Do we want to repeat those errors here?

You may publish this feedback apart from contact details below.

I do not represent any organisation.

Regards,

Peter McGuigan

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