

**Attachments:**

[Response to Proposed Amendment.docx](#) ;


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Please find the attached response.

Regards

Sean Moran

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09.08.2023

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts  
2 Phillip Law St,  
Canberra

**Subject:** Feedback on the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my deep concern and outrage regarding the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. As an Australian citizen, I believe that this bill demonstrates a complete disregard for the freedom of speech and the rights of ordinary citizens. With the increased use of “nudge teams” and propaganda via the media it is clear these proposed amendments to the current legislation heavily impacts our democracy in a totally unbalanced manner.

Firstly, the bill creates a clear divide between two classes of citizens. One class consists of politicians, journalists, and members of educational institutions who have the power to spread information, whether it is true or not. The second class includes regular citizens who often possess a wealth of knowledge and insight on various topics, including industry insiders. This bill unfairly favours the former group while suppressing the voices of ordinary people who rely on the internet to express their opinions and engage in democratic discussions. It’s intent is to ensure that only one narrative is heard, all other views will be suppressed.

Moreover, the excessive fines imposed by this bill will lead to a chilling effect on freedom of speech. Digital services will become more restrictive and cautious in their approach to speech, surpassing the already stringent regulations. Additionally, the code's application across the entire industry without any "pressure escape valves" will further amplify the harm caused by this bill. The internet, hailed as the most powerful democratic invention, will thus be dangerously hindered.

The bill's attempt to judge what is true or untrue is an impossible task and therefore based on a dishonest premise. Knowledge is constantly evolving, and new information often contradicts what was once widely accepted. The inclusion of public health-related information in this legislation is particularly concerning. Many statements about COVID-19, initially perceived as factual, were later proven false. These examples highlight the challenges in accurately determining what constitutes misinformation or disinformation. Such a broad scope for removal of both provably false and even true but misleading information raises serious concerns about censorship and the restriction of free speech.

Even Dr. Nick Coatsworth, a former Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Australia, raised significant concerns about the scope and application of this bill. His scathing rebuke on Twitter indicates that experts themselves have reservations about the bill's implementation.

Furthermore, the bill's reliance on industry bodies, which are often influenced by large players in the industry, will potentially create anti-competitive practices. The regulations formulated by these bodies may serve as gatekeeping mechanisms for smaller digital services, hindering their ability to compete effectively. The recent market competition between platforms in addressing misinformation and disinformation has shown promising results, with users migrating to platforms that meet their expectations. This organic process should not be undermined by imposing onerous regulations that benefit the largest digital services.

Additionally, the extraterritorial application of this bill on foreign entities and the lack of knowledge and compliance with Australian law pose significant challenges. Other countries may follow suit and impose similar requirements on Australian digital services operating globally, leading to a fractured and restricted global internet. Australia should not undermine its position as a democratic nation by imposing its laws on foreign websites and platforms.

Furthermore, the proposed bill's interference with personal faith and belief systems is deeply concerning. Categorizing certain religious perspectives or fundamental faith worldviews as misinformation demonstrates a lack of tolerance and respect for diverse opinions and beliefs, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In conclusion, I strongly oppose the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. It threatens the freedom of speech and stifles the powerful democratic potential of the internet. The bill's reliance on industry bodies, its extraterritorial reach, and its interference with personal faith all contribute to its misguided approach. I urge the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts to reconsider this bill and protect the fundamental rights of Australian citizens.

Thank you for considering my feedback. I trust that you will carefully review the concerns raised by myself and many others who share similar viewpoints.

Sincerely,

Sean Moran