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The Minister,  
Australian Parliament  
Exposure Draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

I wish to submit the following comments re the above Draft Bill.

I consider this Bill infringes peoples right to free speech. Even though some harm may come, or assumed to come, from social media, those people still have the right to have their say, and not be threatened and punished for exercising that right.

You claim comments you see as damaging are a threat to our Democracy. The fact is that this very Bill is the threat to our Democracy. It is going down the path of creating a totalitarian State. I can not accept that state of affairs and am shocked that the current government is even considering such a path. In 1948 Australia helped draft Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which says “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”.

The Bill excludes content authorised by the Commonwealth, or State, or Territory, or local government. How come these authorities are not included? This identifies the Bill as “Big Brother”, Orwellian in nature. Governments today are the very source of much of the misinformation and disinformation, together with its compliant press. Examples are the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, NATO’s proxy war in Ukraine, the threat posed by China, the pseudo science of climate change, etc. Some of these have created an atmosphere of hate and division to one another, and other countries, that is extreme harm to our relationships with others. If you are going to sanction individuals, then surely our governments and main stream press and media cannot be excluded.

The CIA is probably the leading source in the world for disinformation and ASPIE (funded largely by the Government) would be a frontrunner in Australia, especially for anti China disinformation.

Another aspect of the Bill is the extreme financial punishment regime. The penalties are just outrageous and it appears are meant to provide the ability to remove people from the scene by destroying them financially.

In conclusion I reject this proposed Bill. It should be trashed.

Yours faithfully,

Alex Walsh