

Dear Sir/Madam,

Today, I wish to address a matter of utmost importance: the proposed Bill put forth by the Labour Government to grant sweeping powers to ACMA (Australian Communications and Media Authority) in order to govern and enforce misinformation and disinformation online.

While the intention behind this bill may seem commendable, we must tread with caution when considering the potential consequences of such an action. In theory, protecting marginalized groups such as those based on religion, race, sex, sexual orientation, and even gender identity should be a noble pursuit. However, we must question the wisdom of handing over the power to determine what is "true" and what is "false" to a single entity, regardless of everyone's 'best intentions.'

Please comprehend, I am not speaking ill of ACMA or the Labour Government, however this not only opens the door for potential abuses of power but also raises concerns about the impartiality and objectivity of such decision-making in the future.

Let us not forget the events of 2021, when numerous cardiologists, embalmers, medical professionals, and media figures expressed skepticism regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. Instead of engaging in open and honest dialogue, they were met with censorship, hostility, and smear campaigns. They were silenced, their voices suppressed, and their concerns dismissed.

However, as time unfolded, it became painfully evident that some of their apprehensions held merit. We must recognize the danger of allowing the government or any single entity to determine what is true and false, particularly when it aligns with a specific narrative that they wish to promote at the time. The notion that "truth" can be molded to suit an agenda is abhorrent and fundamentally contradicts the principles of democracy, freedom of speech, the pursuit of knowledge and basic human rights. I'm sure you would agree.

To compound matters, we find ourselves facing a legislative landscape that is baffling and convoluted. The government claims transparency, yet the majority of the Australian public remains blissfully unaware of the existence of this bill and wouldn't comprehend it even if they did read it. It is only when individuals begin to face exorbitant fines of up to \$500,000 for simply expressing an opinion that somehow caused "harm" to someone's feelings - but more importantly deviates from the narrative imposed by ACMA and / or the Labour government that they will awaken to the reality of their diminished freedom once this bill has passed.

Now, if you like the idea of sneaking nefarious things past the Australian people like a poker player handing a card under the table to another player, then continue as normal. Do nothing contrary to what you are doing. But if you have a shred of dignity about you, please read on.

Allow the terms "what is right" and "what is true" to remain ambiguous enough to not take away the ability to at least question the

claims. That's what this bill sets out to take away from us. Sure there should be some responsibility on people sharing information online - I completely get it, but not at the expense of basic freedoms being snatched from us under the table.

It is your duty to safeguard the principles upon which our democracy is built, and to protect the rights and freedoms of every Australian citizen. With great power comes great responsibility - this bill treats that concept like a falsehood because once this bill is passed the ACMA or the Labour Government gets to decide what a falsehood is.

Rather than gap pointing, allow me to offer a better solution: teach the Australian people values like: "The onus of burden of proof is on the one making the claim." Implore people to be accountable for their own rhetoric, don't just take their freedoms away.

Why is this important?

400 years ago the "truth" was that the Earth was flat. 1,000 years ago if someone had chickenpox it was a well known "truth" that the chickenpox would be cured by the Trepanning ritual which involved drilling a hole into the person's forehead to 'release the demons' therefore saving the person's soul. Even as recent as 2011, until a study was done by the University of Wisconsin-Madison it was widely believed that women were biologically 'bad at math.' It wasn't until that study eventually proved that being good or bad at math wasn't biological, it was the result of social and cultural circumstances. Isn't it amazing what "truth" can sometimes mean.

My point is that "Truth" isn't always "Fact" until we've had some healthy debate. Healthy debate involves two parties putting forward opposing claims with evidence and reason to back up their argument and hopefully a resolution is found, if not it is likely more debate is required. We should teach the Australian people these values; teach them that it's ok to be wrong sometimes, but the pursuit of truth and fact is still admirable. Teach them that it is ok to disagree, it doesn't mean the other party is stupid or wrong, it is usually just another perspective that, if we're wise, we can learn from even if we do think it's wrong.

If you pass this bill and relegate what is "truth" to solely come from ACMA or any other sole entity, this is what you take away from the Australian people; our ability to seek the truth. Because once this bill is passed, the "truth" will be forcefully served to us on a silver platter - and it won't be up to us when that platter inevitably includes a side of poison.

Thank you for taking the time to read my peaceful rebuttal to the proposal of the aforementioned Bill,

Kindest Regards

:Justin-Ronald: Banks.

Without Prejudice UCC 1-308