As a working Australian mum and someone who values personal freedom. I am opposed to this proposed legislation to stifle our freedom of speech on the internet.  I gather that this is in response to the many people who post their opinions as "truth" on social media. I understand that this can create conflicts and/or unrest in some areas of society or even create confusion surrounding topics of contention, but these issues cannot be dealt with simply by putting the power in the hands of a few to determine what is or isn't TRUE. We must know by now that truth is subjective, really, as we all have a different perspective on reality. Therefore an absolute truth couldn't really exist by its nature.  **I have read that this legislation aims to "balance freedom of speech" with "combatting misinformation…" but that doesn't make sense. I don't believe you can have both, either speech is free or it is not. Whether that speech is "truth" or not is completely subjective.**

Social media has given so many people a way to voice their opinions, see others viewpoints, and discuss topics of all sorts. I believe that these kinds of platforms help people to work out their own viewpoints and can help them define their values and boundaries.  Without proper arenas for conversation, debate and expression of opinions, we become a totalitarian regime that will eventually take away the soul of the country. Also, looking back in history, many supposed "truths" have now come into question, and many previous 'absolutes'  have now been exposed as having grey areas that need further investigation and discussion to help prevent future inconsistencies. How can we deem something to be 'untrue' just because it is novel, unexplored, or simply not yet "proven" through the current model of testing?

Not only that, having a subjective view of what is worthy or harmful to post will detract from so much comedy and satire that has come to define Aussie culture, and that would be tragic! We have to be able to laugh at ourselves and stop taking offence to everything that is said. Although the draft attempts to exclude humour and satire I highly doubt this will be possible. Again, it's all so subjective.

I believe that no one individual, nor a group of individuals, nor any industry 'leader' should  be in the position of power to decide what is harmful or not, what is funny or not, what is helpful or not, what is educational or not, or what is entertainment or not, or what is hurtful to another, really. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE, as truth is subjective, and a matter of perspective, in my opinion.

I absolutely agree that private messaging should remain exactly that, private.

The proposal states that ACMA will initially leave it up to "INDUSTRY to develop a code of practice to combat misinformation and disinformation…". So that would give private companies the power to decide what is 'harmful" or "untrue" ? Tempting private industry, once again, to use that power to help increase their revenue and mould the narrative to suit their vested interests. Then, once that is deemed ineffective, this "industry standard" that the ACMA would have the power to create could, in my opinion, have a troubling impact on our kids. Current and future generations are heavily influenced by social media, whether we like it or not, and as a parent, **I would hate to take away the opportunities for them to be exposed to actual reality, rather than a contrived one.** If they become even more insulated against "harmful words" or wrongdoings by others, it would take away from their experience of life and their ability to grow into resilient, critical thinking, kind hearted people who stand on their own morals and values to decide with their conscience and intuition of what is truth. This should apply in the real world as well as the virtual one.  PLEASE stop trying to take that from them, and let them live in a FREE and OPEN society that allows for self expression and the experience of learning discernment for themselves. **It is not the role of government nor industry to dictate beliefs, values, morals and opinions onto the people and demand that they agree.**

 I also don't agree that fining the companies that allow questionable content will do any good at all. Not just because they have multi-million dollar budgets, but if it did deter them at all, we are back to the same issue I have just outlined. Sugar coating content and disallowing controversial

opinions leads to people who cannot discern for themselves what they choose to believe in, and ultimately what is right or wrong in their own hearts. I hope that is not the outcome this type of legislation is aiming for.

We live in an age of CGI and software that can manipulate images and content so convincingly that I don't think it is possible to tell what is real and what is fake anymore, so the idea of trying to identify true versus false content on social media will be incredibly difficult, in my opinion.

**I think more focus should be put on identifying, deleting, blocking and prosecuting financial scams, websites designed to manipulate and groom kids to gamble and online sexual predators rather than trying to protect people from some potential misinformation that may come their way while using social media.**

Thank you.