

Submission re proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

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Please find below my submission for the above proposed legislation. Please note that I do not want any of my contact details published, although I consent to my submission and name to be published

Dr. Vicki Sanderson

SUBMISSION to AUSTRALIAN COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA AUTHORITY

It took centuries for the citizens of ancient Athens to struggle to obtain the freedom and right to debate policies and decisions in the public square. Those debates were held to the torch of credibility and evidence which all could wield. In the millenia which followed somehow that spirit of inquiry and reason prevailed, despite attacks from autocrats and those who wielded inherited or acquired wealth.

The spread of universal literacy and the printing press increased the power of the written word and deepened the strength of the freedom that education brought to the wider community. The extent of access to information today, via the internet, is unparalleled in human history. But so, too, is the capacity of the citizen to critique that information. In much of the world - but particularly in western societies - extended education and literacy is available to all.

It is therefore inexplicable that a modern, progressive government could propose legislation that presupposes that its citizens are incapable of distinguishing false from plausible information. It is axiomatic that the platform of our entire system of education is the ability to distinguish fact from fiction.

But the further intervention of a government agency in the determination of correct data violates the very principle of the millennia of struggle for individual freedom of thought and decision making. To go down that road is to risk shattering the belief that the individual, and his or her understanding matters.

No government should ever contemplate that road. It is a road that may take us all into a place we would never choose to go.

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