

ACMA – Misinformation Disinformation Proposed Bill.

I write to express my deepest concern to what I view as Governmental over-reach in regard to what is poorly defined in the above proposed Bill as “misinformation and disinformation” leading to equally poorly defined “harm”

The definitions lack clarity and provide scope for artifice in interpretation by a singular body with questionable accountability and transparency, under the influence of government.

It seems to me that the actions this Bill purports to cover is retrospective. It comes on the back of the last three years of similar activities to impede the publication of any online commentary that ran counter to a singular Government narrative. It was noted in Senate committee enquiries that various departments did engage with platforms to influence the removal of such commentaries deemed to be “misinformation” and “disinformation.” A declaration that something is “disinformation/misinformation” does not make it necessarily so, and there must be robust safeguards in place to protect Freedom of Speech.

Rational debate around the management of the COVID response – including early treatment, the trial of experimental MRNA technologies, lockdowns, masking etc, was actively suppressed and the responsibility of individual discernment of issues eroded in an hostile atmosphere of “othering” of anyone wishing to source information and make their own determination of the merits, or otherwise, of such information.

Freedom of Speech is at serious risk, as is democracy where any government claims power to be the sole arbiter of truth, and partners with mainstream media and educational institutions to promulgate same, and then exert penalties on other online platforms which publish content deemed to run counter to it.

The failure of government (State, Federal, Local Government, Education) to foster healthy debate in what is supposedly a democracy where “Freedom of Speech” is a foundational tenet, was notable by its absence. The ominous silence in calls for debate continues to this day despite “purported Truths” underpinning government decisions and directives, being exposed by substantive evidence, which indicates some such “truths” are based on unsubstantiated or even, spurious claims. And when it comes to “harm” there is no change of heart to address those who are heart sore, through suffering of personal injury and loss.

This proposed Bill needs to be held in abeyance until the Royal Commission into all aspects of the COVID response promised by Anthony Albanese and the responsible Minister, is undertaken with broad parameters, including the influence exerted by Government departments on such online platforms which took down, closed accounts of those who were deemed to publish “misinformation” and “disinformation”. It is only then that any evaluation of the necessity for, and content, of such a bill as this, should then be debated.

Yours faithfully

18/8/2023