

Submission on the proposed Misinformation/Disinformation Bill 2023

From: Rosemary Ritorto [REDACTED]
To: Information Integrity <information.integrity@infrastructure.gov.au>
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Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to the "Have your say" consultation process on the government's exposure draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

I firmly believe this draft legislation is inappropriate and unnecessary. It is legislation that could be abused. It also requires every Australian to be entirely objective in their opinions. Which is impossible. No one can truthfully claim to be completely objective, as mankind is fundamentally and innately subjective. We cannot be entirely and wholly objective as it is impossible to put away or put off things that have been learnt in our lives, whether these things be learnt from our experiences or learned through society or cultural development. They form who we are. The proposed legislation requires those working for the ACMA to be objective, but they cannot be, for no one can be objective. So how can any one man, let alone a group (i.e. the ACMA), ever agree on a definition of 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' let alone tell others they are wrong in their opinions.

This bill seems like the government acting as 'the bullies' in the school yard, telling the so called 'nerd' of the school (the Australian public) that they should never wear a certain hairstyle as it is offensive, or use certain words as they are offensive, or to pray in the school yard as it might be offensive, etc. It is up to everyone to ignore words that hurt and move on. The historically British stoicism and maintenance of 'keeping a stiff upper lip' should be remembered and applied more liberally in life today as it was in days gone by. We do not need the government's proposed Communications Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 to tell us what is right and wrong about information written or spoken. We have and should continue to have the right to freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of religion, all of which would be in serious jeopardy should this proposed Bill come into existence.

As a librarian by profession, I believe the way that all Australians can truly be protected from misinformation or disinformation is to be information aware. This can be done by keeping the following points in mind when interacting with any piece of information, whether it be viewed, or read or listened to:

- determine who's is writing the piece?
- are they experienced or trained in the area they are writing about/ commenting on?
- when was the piece written?
- for what reason was the piece written?
- does the writer provide references to sources quoted?

If the government would allocate more funding to public, school and university libraries who promote good information habits as listed above, they would find more benefit and democracy to be more fully supported than the draft Bill allows. Every Australian would then be truly 'information savvy' when looking at websites, social media or any information source even newspapers, television news broadcasts etc. Australians need only to be information savvy, we do not need an unelected body (The ACMA) deciding what is misinformation or disinformation.

In summary I believe this draft Bill to be Orwellian and Communist in its very existence. In order for Australia to continue to be a democratic country we do not need this Bill.

Thank you for your time in considering my opinion.

Yours sincerely,

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