

Submission

Re: New ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation

To whom it may concern,

I am strongly against providing powers to the government (ACMA), or to big-tech companies being forced by the government, that compels the censorship of the views of Australians online, irrelevant of how “right” or “wrong” some may deem those views to be. What is thought to be correct in science one day will be wrong the next and vice versa. There is no single arbiter or panel of truth. The only way to cope with mis or disinformation is to encourage more debate and to create a society where critical thinking and intellectual curiosity is the norm.

Human progress in every field depends on free speech. Galileo, the Wright brothers, Albert Einstein and every other innovator who has uncovered knowledge contrary to the accepted wisdom of his or her day could attest to that. Hungarian physician Ignaz Semmelweis was long ridiculed for his suggestion that unwashed hands contribute to death and disease. Hand washing is now considered an essential part of all medical interventions.

I hold serious concerns as to how “harms to health” referred to in the proposed Bill will be defined, and who will decide what is untrue.

A fact sheet on the draft Bill says that decisions will be made by “fact checkers” and other “systems and measures” put in place by online platforms. These bodies will seek to avoid large penalty fines imposed by the ACMA. The question is “how will the ACMA assess the compliance of online platforms in monitoring content? Clearly misinformation and disinformation can be influenced and pre-determined giving the ACMA indirect power to determine “truthfulness”. The ACMA has no role in determining truthfulness.

There is no single arbiter or panel of truth. The only way to cope with mis or disinformation is to encourage more debate and to create a society where critical thinking and intellectual curiosity is the norm.

I ask for this Bill to be dismissed and a new focus given to protect Australians against the suppression of free speech and to promote critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, and innovative thinking for the advancement of Australia.

Yours sincerely,

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