

Censorship Submission

From: Andrew Strang [REDACTED]
To: Information Integrity <information.integrity@infrastructure.gov.au>
Date: Sun, 20 Aug 2023 13:03:49 +1000

I oppose the so called *Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill* as proposed by the Albanese Government. The Western Liberal Democratic system evident in Australia has delivered prosperity, security, well-being and freedoms unimaginable to the vast majority of humanity, present and past. It is a system that is very precious and extremely fragile.

Free speech is a key pillar that underpins our liberal democratic system. It is a fundamental right, because without it we cannot assert our other rights. Without it, we cannot hold governments to account. Without it, we cannot fight to uncover the truth. Without it, we cannot voice and debate ideas. Without it our Liberal Democratic system will not survive.

A healthy, functioning democracy requires freedom of speech, which means that ideas from across the ideological and political spectrum are discussed and debated with the hope that good arguments, guided by the light of truth, will win the day. However, words like harm, misinformation, and disinformation have been weaponised to shut down critics of the broader ideological agenda at work in western nations.

Therefore, I have serious concerns and oppose the so called *Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill* as proposed by the Albanese Government as the proposed new powers will threaten freedom of speech and democratic rights in Australia in the following ways:

- The Bill grants the government the authority to define truth, allowing them to control and manipulate the flow of information.
- Whilst imposing restrictions on online platforms, the Bill gives the government and mainstream media a free pass, creating a double standard and eroding the principles of fairness and equality.
- The Bill empowers the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to determine what qualifies as “misinformation” or “disinformation”. This subjective definition leaves room for abuse of power, and suppresses public debate and diverse opinions and perspectives.
- The Bill effectively enables tech companies to become tools of government censorship, stifling free speech and undermining the open exchange of ideas.
- The Bill paves the way for ideological conformity, suppressing dissenting voices and hindering independent thought. This goes against the principles of a democratic society that thrives on diversity and freedom of expression.

I urge the government to withdraw this Bill and uphold the fundamental rights of every Australian citizen as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – “*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*”

Anything less will cause serious, detrimental, implications for free speech and democracy in Australia. I urge the Australian government to uphold the principles of transparency and accountability, and foster an environment where open debate and diverse opinions are welcome. To do anything less will see Australia travel further down the path of authoritarianism and destroy the precious and unique system of Western Liberal Democracy that has delivered prosperity, security, well-being and freedoms unimaginable to the vast majority of humanity, present and past.

I oppose the so called *Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill* as proposed by the Albanese Government
Andrew Strang |

Message protected by MailGuard: e-mail anti-virus, anti-spam and content filtering.
<https://www.mailguard.com.au/mg>