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19 August 2023

Submissions Officer
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development,
Communications and Arts

Dear Submissions Officer

I am writing to express my very strong opposition to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

This bill is a threat to the freedom of the Australian public and the advancement of knowledge in this country. It must not be enacted as legislation.

My reasons for objecting to the provisions of the bill are as follows.

1. There is no justification for this bill. The Australian public can discern what information to read and agree/disagree with by itself and does not require government interference in the process.
2. The ACMA does not have a monopoly on truth. It cannot determine what information is correct and what is not and it cannot presume that its ability to determine truth is better than that of other Australians'. What arrogance!
3. Truth is not a tangible constant. Truth is different things to different people and different cultures at different times in history. Our understanding of truth in any discipline or any area of society is always changing. It can't be controlled and manipulated. Nor should ACMA try to do so.
4. The ACMA does not have the knowledge or resources to determine what information is correct. To do so would require the constant monitoring of data, opinions and ideas.
5. The government's censorship of information on the basis that it is 'misinformation' threatens our democratic right to freedom of speech.

6. The government would be able to unfairly use the bill to push a political agenda and curb the rights of other parties/individuals to raise justifiable objections where appropriate.
7. The bill would prevent new, but unproven, knowledge and ideas from being disseminated that could lead to important scientific, economic and social advances. In this way, it would stifle progress.
8. The bill presumes that information can cause people to harm themselves without factoring in the responsibility of individuals regarding such choices.
9. The bill does not adequately define 'misinformation', 'disinformation' and 'harm'.
10. The bill unfairly requires platform owners to do the government's job of policing the legislation.
11. The bill imposes harsh penalties that are not deserved.

This bill must be abandoned and never resurrected. It can do nothing but harm to Australia and Australians.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Ward