

To whom it may concern:

Below is my submission on the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.



A few months ago I read the book 1984. The reading of this Bill yesterday, gives me great pause to consider the significant similarities with the theme of that book. I have to say I have very serious concerns about this Bill and my recommendation is that it is removed entirely.

Over the last three years we have seen Professional Media organisations and Government Ministers and departments at both the State and Federal level continuously provide information that in the passage of time has proven to be entirely false and incorrect. This Bill excludes the misinformation that these entities produce. Over the same period we have seen independent, doctors, scientists, journalists, and citizens who have provided truthful information backed up by substantiated facts, have their voice silenced by illegal and immoral actions by government departments and powerful business interests. This Bill appears through its definitions and structure, to be another avenue for government and powerful business interests to silence those similar categories silenced over the last three years.

Open discussion from either end of the spectrum is what is required to allow a democracy to function. One group may say one thing and another group may say the opposite. It is up to each group to present their facts and for the listeners to make up their mind where the truth sits based on what is presented to them. This Bill removes this tenant of a functioning democracy and may lead down the path to a totalitarian state.

To make this Bill achieve the aim stated in its title, it should be policing the entities that have their content excluded from control by the Bill. These are the entities that have by far the largest reach and provide the majority of information on a daily basis to Australian residents. It should be essential that these entities provide truthful information backed up by substantiated facts. It should also be essential that the arbiter is not beholden to any of these entities but is truly independent.

In summary, this Bill should be entirely rewritten to focus on the information provided by the entities that are excluded and to provide an independent Arbiter. If left in its current form without addressing the concerns raised above, the Bill should be removed entirely.

Paul Dean