

Dear Representatives,

I have read the proposed Bill in detail and wish to make the following comments:

This Bill is primarily based on the false and somewhat patronizing premise that the Australian public is too inarticulate and stupid to be able to spot misinformation and disinformation for themselves, so a paternalistic government must obligingly step in and do it for them.

It is well out of step with similar existing legislation in other Western democracies and is demonstrably contrary to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Is the Labor Government now proposing that Australia abrogates its UDHR obligations? If so, then the Government needs to come clean about it right now, not after the fact.

The Bill proposes some of the most draconian control mechanisms concerning the free flow of information and ideas in the Free World. There are no defined mechanisms to protect valid expressions of political opinion or religious conviction and there are no defined limits regarding exactly what can and cannot be suppressed. Furthermore, there is also no right of appeal. In other words, the legislation could be applied when and where ever any future government wanted.

Of significant concern is that the government is itself exempt from the Bill's provisions, thus any government will have *carte blanche* to disseminate and enforce any falsehoods it may see fit as genuine information without fear of challenge or prosecution. *i.e.*, "It must be true because the government says so".

Indeed, the proposed legislation has obvious and very chilling overtones of George Orwell's dystopian novel '1984', essentially appointing a government department (the ACMA) as a 'Ministry of Truth' and weaponizing 'Big Tech' to implement its edicts. 'Big Brother' government is thus empowered as the arbiter of 'fact' and 'truth' and the sole dictator of what information the Australian public has access to. The name Josef Goebbels immediately springs to mind - a very sinister and scary thought indeed, to put it mildly.

That the present Labor government even has the audacity to try and introduce such draconian legislation into a Western democracy strongly indicates that there is an ulterior motive here, *i.e.* the promotion of societal conformity to a progressively more authoritarian regime, adherence to current political ideology & government policy and the silencing of dissent. There are already enough self-appointed 'thought police' in Australia as it is; we do not need any more and we certainly do not need the present government turning Orwell's fictional 'thought crime' into a reality, which is essentially what this proposed legislation will do.

In summary, this ill-conceived Bill is a disgraceful and patronizing affront to a mature democracy which must be scrapped in its entirety right now if Australia has any hope of remaining an open and free society. I trust that you will take these comments onto consideration when voting on this Bill and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Alan Cheshire

