

Dear Misinformation Bill Review,

Please accept my submission regarding the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023:

Firstly, I believe that there is a great danger in framing legislation which contains politically-loaded, unnecessarily broad, and highly subjective definitions. The definition of harm in the proposed bill, for example, encompasses anything deemed hateful, disruptive, or harmful to a wide range of personal attributes or entities such as gender, sexuality, the environment, people's health, etc. As a Christian, I am concerned that this legislation could be used particularly to target religious platforms or individuals who hold religious beliefs – as these often contain traditional views regarding marriage, gender, and sexual ethics. Such use of this proposed legislation would be "hateful, disruptive and harmful", not to say extremely discriminatory, to those upholding long established religious beliefs. Furthermore, restricting speech resulting in "Harm to the Australian environment" could preclude Australians' right to freely question and debate extremely important phenomena and policies which could severely impact all our lifestyles like "global warming", "climate change", and Net Zero policies. Surely it is self-evident that any view one disagrees with could be construed as "hateful, disruptive, or harmful" and then that used to justify censorship of such dissenting views. That scenario is anathema to a free and democratic society.

Inexplicably, but very conveniently for the major networks, ACMA's restrictions on misinformation and disinformation will exclude "professional news content" – with another exclusion being "content that is authorised by the Commonwealth; or a State; or a Territory; or a local government." I find that these exclusions are not merely utterly hypocritical, but a licence for the promotion of 'woke' and other 'politically correct' viewpoints without any opportunity for critical evaluation. The major news networks have an extremely poor track record when it comes to unbiased, even-handed and factual reporting of such viewpoints.

It is my belief that a healthy, functioning democracy requires true freedom of speech, which means that ideas from across the ideological and political spectrum can be discussed and debated freely by anyone. This is why I respectfully urge you to consider both the alarming scope and potentially very serious implications of this bill – and so accordingly recommend its complete revision.

Yours faithfully,

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