

# Misinformation Bill Must Be Stopped

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Dear Misinformation Bill Review,

Freedom of speech is a fundamental right of every Australian. This proposed "misinformation" law is an attack on our basic human rights by a government that is supposed to uphold those rights, not stifle them.

The government is attempting to place upon itself an impossible burden of objectivity. No government body has the wisdom or ability to sort out what is true and what isn't. We've never had so much information available at our fingertips in all of human history. The amount of information that can be accessed online is incredibly vast. What group of bureaucrats could possibly discern truth from falsehood on every subject?

The bill's stated aim is to keep Australians from "harm". Preventing harm is a good thing. The problem is that the proposed law will ultimately do great harm itself. One example is the recent pandemic and the question of where COVID-19 originated. The official line was that it came from nature and that the lab origin was "misinformation" that could "harm" our relationship with China.

Now we have learned that the virus likely did come from the Wuhan lab. What was once called "misinformation" is now quite possibly the truth! The question of COVID-19's origin is vital so that we can avoid a repeat scenario. Censoring truthful reporting about the lab leak theory will itself cause "harm" by preventing us from learning from our mistakes.

With this one example, we can see how the proposed "misinformation" law will increase "harm" even as it seeks to reduce it.

I also note the government wants to exempt itself from this law. That is very unfortunate given the amount of misinformation pedalled by all parties in election campaigns and even in governmental roles. That fails the pub test for a government that is serious about preventing misinformation and harm.

When two parties have a difference of opinion about what is right and what is wrong and what is good information and what is bad information, how can a government, with an ideological bias (as all parties have), be the unbiased arbiter of what is and isn't misinformation? The next step under this legislation would be for a government to declare that everything the oppositions says is misinformation. That would be the end of democracy.

The bill is misguided and must be rejected.

