



20 August 2023

The Secretariat  
Consultation on **ACMA Misinformation powers**  
Email: [clientservice@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:clientservice@infrastructure.gov.au)

Dear Review Secretariat

**RE: Australian Publishers Association: submission to the Department of Industry's consultation on proposed new ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation**

**Preamble:**

The Australian Publishers Association (APA) is pleased to accept the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts invitation to contribute to this consultation on proposed new ACMA powers to combat misinformation and disinformation

**The Value of Publishers:** Publishers play a critical role in bringing the best written works to readers worldwide. They add value through informed processes of selection, in some genres involving peer review, as well as editorial improvements, production, promotion, distribution, and sales. Our members publish not only the latest novels and beloved Australian classics, but a vast array of cultural and knowledge works, including biographies, cookbooks, gardening guides, how-to manuals, histories, young adult fiction, picture books, scientific journals, and more.

The APA represents over 200 Australian publishers, who account for more than 90% of the country's \$2 billion annual book industry turnover. Each year, around 20,000 new Australian books of all types are published, along with tens of thousands of international titles that are released in Australian editions or imported into the country. The Australian book industry provides access to over 1.4 million book and serial titles to meet the needs of a diverse range of readers, including families, students, educators, researchers, and industry professionals.

**The importance of safeguarding the quality of information in the public realm and in the scientific realm:**

In an era dominated by digital information, quality scientific publications have never been more crucial. These publications undergo rigorous peer-review, ensuring their content is credible, evidence-based, and contributes meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge. Accordingly, Australia publishers, particularly but not only scientific, technical and medical (STM) publishers, applaud the federal government efforts to improve legislation aimed at protecting the quality of

information and discussion in both the public and science committed to the production and scientific spheres.

In contrast, misinformation (false or misleading information shared without harmful intent) and disinformation (false information shared with the intention to deceive) have proliferated, often amplified by social media. These not only mislead the public but also erode trust in genuine scientific endeavours.

Quality scientific publications act as a beacon of truth in a sea of falsehoods. They provide a foundation for policy decisions, educational curricula, and public opinion. In the face of challenges like global pandemics and climate change, relying on accurate scientific information is imperative. As misinformation and disinformation muddy the waters, upholding the integrity of scientific publications is paramount for societal progress.

### **Concern about the specifics of the drafting of the legislation**

While the APA welcomes the legislation and is confident that it is not the intention of the legislation to regulate the high quality information circulated by Australian publishers, we recommend that

- The definition of a “digital platform provider” should be clarified to exclude the digital platforms used by educational publishers to provide learning materials and services to schools, VET and universities.
- As an extension of this the definition of excluded content should include text books and online learning materials.
- The definition of a “digital platform provider” should be clarified to exclude the digital platform developed by trade publishers to host book club discussions.

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**submission status:** The APA are happy for this submission to be made public