

# Submission to the Committee on the Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2023

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Dear Misinformation Bill Review,

Dear Committee,

I speak against this Bill. It diminishes not only Australia but what it means to be Australian. Freedom of speech is fundamental for every one of us. It is a critical prerequisite for the healthy functioning of a peaceful democracy, where every voice is equal and allowed to be heard equally. Intellectual wordsmiths and uneducated boring folk alike, all need to be heard, and all need to be free to speak without looking over their shoulder at who is going to cancel us or attack us because they don't like what you are saying. Or indeed having our voice wiped from the public square because others don't like our thoughts or have labelled them as unworthy to speak because they don't align with a particular set of beliefs or the current mantra of the day by those in power.

As a nation we need to always remain tolerant of what every person thinks and says within the bounds of current well-established law. Of course, you cannot allow someone to falsely scream "Fire", in a crowded cinema and true "Hate Speech" is clearly recognised as such, and in all those cases there are existing laws correctly positioned to deal with those events. But this Bill is about something completely different. It is about a government, a government captured Institution, a Social Media Platform, a powerful lobby group or in the worst potential case, a future dictator, being put into the insane position of deciding what is True, what is false, what is dangerous and what is not. And then lording over the public by only allowing those that agree with them to be visible and heard. This whole idea is the very definition of a slippery slope. It will drive free speech below ground, and further destroy public trust.

I urge the Committee and our leaders considering allowing this Bill to become law, to deeply reflect on the timeless wisdom expressed by Evelyn Beatrice Hall in her famous quote:

I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it".

The solution to "Bad Speech" is never censorship. It is "Good Speech" and plenty of it, in direct and immediate reply. All the "Bad ideas" need to be tossed into the vat with the good ideas. Fully debated and explored. Weighed for their merit and the truly good speech, good ideas, will float to the top and be accepted by the majority. This is democracy. Censorship, silencing of any other view is the basis of totalitarianism.

When we look back in History, the regimes that embraced censorship, that used it as a tool to control, by force, they always turned out to be the "Bad Guys". Communism, Marxism, Socialism, and Totalitarianism always immediately resorted to massive censorship of its people. It never turned out well. Current generations, comfortably brought up in Australia, do not seem to be aware that 100 Million people were slaughtered last century by these regimes, where no offending voices were permitted, at the pain of death. This is why this Bill is such a slippery slope.

Lastly, I would like to point out the obvious, that this bill is absurd in quite a few aspects. The opportunity for abuse of this law is enormous, and difficult to quantify. That media platforms, and the public would "Self-Censor" anything and everything in a guessing game of "what might offend the current Government". Do we want ourselves and future generations being scared of Government? Is that the aim? Because this is supposed to be a representative Government. We elect Governments to carry out our will, not for us to fear and hide our thoughts and words from Government.

And finally. Today's Truth is tomorrow's embarrassing mistake. If Covid has taught us anything it is that no matter how many Politicians or others stand in the public view and scream, "Line up and take the experimental shots, it will stop you catching Covid and make you safe. It will stop you passing it on to your grandmother and killing her. And by the way, it is a conspiracy theory that the virus was a result of "Gain of Function Research" and escaped from a Wuhan Lab. All of this rhetoric demanding what is "true", (according to some), has no effect on actual reality. On actual "Fact", as opposed to someone's "Truth" being of the current belief of those in power at that time.

What massive harms to individual people and our society as a whole could have been avoided during Covid alone, if smart people reporting "Facts" were not silenced, shadow banned, cancelled, ridiculed and attacked? If they were allowed to report facts, have them scrutinized, evaluated, peer reviewed and weighed and if they turned out worthy, were allowed to be classed as "Truths"?

Surely this is the path to a healthy society and the best possible outcomes. Not the ACMA or any other body becoming God like, and being given the dangerous gift of deciding what is Misinformation, what is Disinformation and ultimately, what is "True".

The bill is misguided. Please oppose it.

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