

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 worry 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. 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.

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.” Whistleblower and investigative journalism - imperfect as it is - could be outlawed by a heavy-handed, politically driven group of self-appointed (or even worse, government-appointed) censors. I find that these exclusions are utterly hypocritical.

It is my belief that a healthy, functioning democracy requires freedom of speech, which means that ideas from across the ideological and political spectrum can be discussed and debated by anyone. A free press is not a perfect press, but the alternative is of value only in the minds of people whose forte is working behind the scenes and in darkness. 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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