Dear Misinformation Bill Review,

We are writing to make a submission regarding the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. We find this proposed legislation deeply concerning, even going so far as to say that it is an assault on the bedrock principles of a democratic society.

The bill grants excessive power to the Australian Communications and Media Authority to regulate and restrict the public's ability to access diverse perspectives and make informed judgments (based on unacceptably broad definitions of "misinformation", "disinformation" and "harm"), while at the same time exempting all governmental publications from scrutiny.

The vagueness of the standards as well as the severity of the proposed fines threatened in this bill will cause digital platforms to actively shut down any discussions or opinions which could possibly be considered controversial – limiting the public's ability to challenge prevailing narratives and engage in meaningful debate.

This would be terribly unfortunate, because a society that values free speech must be willing to protect even the most unpopular opinions – as long as they are stated in good faith and are not threatening or libellous – because the exchange of ideas is essential for intellectual growth, societal progress, and the protection of individual rights.

Might we suggest that rather than resorting to government intervention and regulation and relying on a fallible centralized authority to determine what is and what is not acceptable, we should trust in the capacity of individuals to exercise critical thinking and personal responsibility when assessing controversial ideas. Anything more than this should have no place in a free country.

We urge the Department to safeguard the marketplace of ideas, foster a society where diverse viewpoints can coexist, and champion the unalienable right of every individual to freely express his thoughts and beliefs in good faith. This is why we call on you to strip this bill of its Orwellian-style control.

Yours sincerely,

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