

Dear Officer, responsible for the Misinformation Bill Review,

Please accept our submission regarding the proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023:

Firstly, we 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 Christians, we 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.” We find that these exclusions are utterly hypocritical and a dangerous dystopian control of free speech.

It is our 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. This is why we respectfully urge you to consider both the alarming scope and potentially very serious implications of this bill – and so we accordingly recommend its complete revision that preserves free speech and liberty. It is not the role of any government to control and dictate what information is to be considered as misinformation. This is the making of a 1984 Orwellian type of society.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted signature line]

[Redacted signature block]