

Dear Misinformation-Bill Reviewers,

As my submission to the inquiry into the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023, I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding this draft legislation.

Whilst some may believe that the solution to “misinformation” or “disinformation” is more centralised control, I believe that it is far better to let people share their beliefs, respectfully disagree, freely debate on issues, and make up their own minds about matters. It behooves us all to be respectful of each other and not be quick to take offence at differing opinions and beliefs - that we may live in harmony and peace with each other.

This draft bill, however, will effectively shut down the sharing of many ideas and create so much legal uncertainty for online platforms that they will be forced to censor anything which might be considered controversial. This would be disastrous. We should have the freedom to counter one another with intelligence and thereby sharpen each other, and grow in wisdom.

Throughout human history, hotly contested or even nearly universally disbelieved ideas have turned out, years later, to be the truth, for example, many scientific discoveries now enshrined as facts – such as the spherical Earth, the circulation of blood through the body, the sun as the centre of the solar system, etc. – were nearly unanimously opposed by almost all the leading scientists of the time. Let us not make the same mistakes of shutting down civil discourse, and marginalising or cancelling those who hold different views, as was done to Galileo Galilei because he did not hold the then common belief that the sun and other planets revolved around the earth.

Thus it is very disconcerting to leave the making of decisions about what should or should not be classed as misinformation or disinformation to a few people. Would they not need to hold qualifications and have experience in the manifold disciplines and sub-disciplines of life in order to be able to rule on what is truth, misinformation or disinformation? – an impossible feat for a few in one lifetime. What truth would they adhere to? The greater the magnitude of a matter, the greater ought to be the freedom of debate to arrive at the truth. It looks like this bill is saying the government is contemptuous of free speech, hating opportunities for civil discourse to take place or is fearful of what may be said, and it must either be dumped or at least heavily revised to remedy the major flaws it is built upon.

Yours sincerely,

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