

Australian Government
2 July 2023
Department of Infrastructure,
Regional Development, Transport,
Communication and the Arts

RE: New ACMA Powers to Combat Misinformation and Disinformation Via the proposed:
'Communication Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

To whom it may concern,

I would like to provide feedback in relation to the above proposed legislation.

This proposed legislation provides grounds for censorship for any source of information that is not: "*(a) content produced in good faith for the purposes of 14 entertainment, parody or satire; 15 (b) professional news content; 16 (c) content produced by or for an educational institution*". This implies that anything that is not: produced by the government, or a government run educational institution, or a government sanctioned media outlet, is potentially deemed by the government to be 'misinformation', thereby giving the government the powers to declare what is true and what is not true.

The proposed legislation also states that any information that is deemed to cause 'harm' towards any "*group in Australian society on the basis of 9 ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, 10 religion or physical or mental disability*"; thus this infers that everyone's personal opinions must be silenced should they be rendered offensive or intolerable to someone or any minority group; but it is differences in opinions and the ability to hear and acknowledge other people's positions and points of views which makes a society healthy and functional: "I disagree with what you have to say but will fight to the death your ability to say it": whether or not people agree or find offence in someone's opinion or position on something should not prohibit their individual right to be able to say it. The censoring of opinions other than that of the government and the mainstream media was also what we saw during the time of COVID: if you didn't agree with the government's recommended measures you were deemed a "conspiracy theorist" or "a boof head" or you were killing others by not getting the vaccine yourself to protect them. This kind of censorship cannot happen again in a supposed free democratic country like Australia.

Another form of censorship mentioned in the new proposed legislation is any information that causes the "*disruption of public order or society in Australia*" which implies anything that disrupts the government's imposed order; " - like not disobeying COVID regulations – going out for a walk without a mask, sitting in a park during the lockdowns, going to a protest rally during the lockdowns.

Another form of censorship mentioned in the proposed legislation is "*12 (c) harm to the integrity of Australian democratic processes or of 13 Commonwealth, State, Territory or local government 14 institutions*" - which means? Anyone who questions the integrity of the democratic process will be silenced?

The proposed legislation also states that misinformation and disinformation is any content that states anything the government deems "*(d) harm to the health of Australians*" – thus the government is

implying here that it alone knows what is and what is not harmful to the healthy of Australians, and is thus making the health decisions for the Australian people, via censorship of any other health information other than what it deems as the right health information which is not harmful. We have seen through the recent COVID pandemic. At the time lots of information about the pandemic and the vaccines was censored as it was deemed to be 'false information', yet these past 2yrs since, a lot of it has turned out to be true –e.g. with regards to the vaccines not being tested to stop transmission or infection, & the virus lab leak: all these 2 ½ years ago were deemed 'conspiracy theories' because they didn't agree with government sources of information. Additionally government information silenced doctors and prevent prophylaxis treatment like: hydroxychloroquine, Ivermectin and Vitamins C,D and Zinc as treatments because if it had been known that these treatments had existed, the vaccines couldn't have been granted emergency use authorisation.

This proposed legislation is extremely dangerous as it declares the Australian Government as and it's controlled media outlets as the sole source of truth. The kind of censorship the Australian people experienced during the COVID era should never be allowed to happen again – let alone be enshrined in legislation. This bill (if these amendments are successful), is the first step in Australia officially becoming a totalitarian state. The first step to totalitarianism is censorship, as we have seen in many totalitarian regimes like China and 1930s Germany. George Orwell warned us about this in his novel 1984.

Those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it.

Regards,

Christine Barber

