

## Submission on the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

To the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts:

As a stakeholder, expert and community member, I object to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

The proposed bill undermines freedom of speech by attempting to 'balance' that fundamental right with the notion of combating so-called 'misinformation'. This is a flawed approach as fundamental rights cannot be balanced against anything, rather they are undermined.

Determining what qualifies as so-called 'misinformation' is subjective and entrusting a government agency to decide truthfulness raises concerns and is foolish at best. This is all too visible in the extremist views expressed by our current "e-safety" Commissioner.

Speech, in the form of disinformation and misinformation, cannot cause harm, and defining harm based on subjective criteria is simply incorrect and a doorway for corruption to enter.

This bill grants inappropriate and excessive control to authorities and will lead to censorship and corruption.

Alternative approaches should be explored that do not infringe upon freedom of speech if, and only if, the Government can define what the supposed threat is.