

6th July, 2023

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

Subject: Opposition to the Communications Legislation Amendment
(Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hope this letter finds you in good health. I am writing to express my strong opposition to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023, which is currently under consideration. I believe that the proposed legislation raises significant concerns regarding freedom of expression and the potential for unintended consequences.

While I understand the need to combat misinformation and disinformation in today's digital landscape, I believe that the measures outlined in the bill are excessive and pose a threat to fundamental democratic values. Below, I would like to outline some of my key concerns:

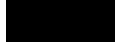
1. **Freedom of Expression:** The proposed legislation, as it stands, appears to infringe upon the freedom of expression. While combating misinformation is important, it should not come at the cost of stifling open dialogue and diverse opinions. It is crucial to strike a balance between addressing harmful content and protecting the right to express oneself freely.
2. **Complexity of Content Exemptions:** The bill's provisions regarding content exemptions are overly complex and could result in confusion and inconsistency in their application. It is essential to ensure that any exemptions are clearly defined and do not inadvertently restrict legitimate speech or investigative journalism.
3. **Scope of the Private Message Exemption:** The scope of the private message exemption needs further clarification and refinement. It is important to delineate between private conversations and public dissemination of harmful content while respecting the privacy and autonomy of individuals.

4. Size of Penalties: The bill proposes substantial penalties for non-compliance, which could have a chilling effect on digital platform services and discourage innovation. Instead of punitive measures, it would be more effective to focus on education, media literacy, and fostering responsible digital citizenship.

I respectfully request that you reconsider the provisions outlined in the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023. While it is crucial to address the challenges posed by misinformation and disinformation, I urge you to ensure that any legislation strikes a balance between accountability and safeguarding the principles of free expression and individual privacy.

Thank you for considering my concerns. I trust that you will carefully evaluate the potential implications of the proposed legislation and take into account the views of concerned citizens like myself. I am eager to see a robust and inclusive public discourse on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

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