

Having read through the Exposure Draft Communications Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 and guidance note, I would like to register my strong opposition to these amendments on the grounds that they pose a serious threat to free speech.

Of particular concern are;
religious freedoms, public discussion of contentious ideas, cutting edge science, alternate medical treatments and medical treatment where people (expert or otherwise) have opinions that differ from advice accepted by the government of the day.

I note that the legislation excludes government. On science and medical matters governments seek advice from experts in the field, however experts do not always agree, and science is not always settled. This legislation allows governments to cherry-pick the expert opinion that suits an agenda and label anything else as false and therefore misinformation. Quite often investigation, scientific enquiry and ongoing review overturn previously accepted "facts". Furthermore, experts, whether advising government or posting alternate views are not infallible and are open to bias or influence from powerful organisations.

Division occurs and society goes backwards when we cannot openly debate ideas. Online mediums are the modern means of public, and to some extent, professional discourse. They should be used to gauge what matters to the public and what it thinks, not stifle opinion.

Similar to peer review processes, an open environment allows misinformation, disinformation to be publicly decried and discredited.

Opening up big tech to big penalties will see them mitigate risk and over-react by removing public forums or censor them out of existence.

I see this issue as the most important issue of current times and will vote for any party that opposes it.