

Response to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023

We have a right to free speech, the right to access all alternative viewpoints, and a right to make our own decisions about what is right or the truth. This Bill seeks to trade these fundamental freedoms for some presumed “protection from disinformation”. This so called “protection” is a THREAT to our freedom.

This Bill would be right at home in a “Nanny-state”, a totalitarian regime, or in George Orwell’s novel 1984. In fact similar laws already exist in some communist countries to restrict dissenting viewpoints. The fact that this Bill is even being considered is frightening, as it shows we are already being governed by those with totalitarian principles.

The assumption is made that we need “protection from disinformation”, and this assumption is being passed off as a fact and is used as the justification for this Bill. What constitutes disinformation is highly subjective, open to the whim of whoever holds the power. We don’t need protection from alternative viewpoints, we need to protect our right to access alternative viewpoints and decide for ourselves. Greater HARM comes from losing this freedom, and the potential abuse of power that a governing body could inflict.

We only have to look at the behaviour of those in power during the pandemic to illustrate this. Governments, media, online platforms all did their best to censor dissenting viewpoints, all with the justification that it protected society from disinformation. However, many of these censored viewpoints later turned out to be correct. This type of censoring behaviour was wrong and harmful, yet this bill wants to enshrine this into law.

This Bill is a threat to our freedom. The power to judge what is right or wrong information belongs to the individual not to some centralised authority with the potential to abuse their power.