

I wish to express our deepest opposition to the proposed ACMA misinformation/disinformation bill.

This proposed bill attacks the most fundamental principles of our democratic society, namely freedom of speech, freedom of opinion and the right to share diverse ideas, all of which have helped create our tolerant Australian culture.

Our concerns include the following

1. What actually constitutes misinformation/disinformation?
History demonstrates clearly that the determination of misinformation/disinformation is speculative and generally subjective. In reality, genuine wisdom and truth are usually contained within a range of opinions. To classify a particular point of view as misinformation is arbitrary and may exclude valuable insights inherent in a specific perspective. In short, it is blatantly restrictive and unjustifiable to classify one opinion as truth and a contrasting understanding as harmful misinformation.
2. Who decides what is misinformation/disinformation?
It is highly problematic and dangerous, as proposed, to delegate this responsibility to a panel, whether a panel of six or six hundred for that matter. As already stated, knowledge and truth often reside within the spectrum of opinions. To cancel or ban this diversity is to condemn Australians to ignorance and destroy rigorous debate.
3. Another concern is the absolute over-reach specified in the proposed penalties for perceived misinformation/disinformation. Suffice to say, the punishment certainly does not befit the "crime".
4. The ultimate double standard in this bill is the exemption afforded to government and academia. This hypocrisy is an insult to the integrity and intelligence of the average Australian.

To illustrate, let us consider the COVID period. Political, scientific and medical "truth" changed on a regular basis. Paradoxically, individuals and groups were condemned for holding alternative opinions, many of which, on reflection, have been validated. In truth, misinformation was evident across the board. This double-standard bill has the potential to mask genuine misinformation from government or academia, or, at least, undermine our confidence in both institutions.

This bill is an affront to our freedom and reflects the *modus operandi* of totalitarian regimes, rather than that of our democratic society. With respect, we entreat Parliament to scrap this Draconian bill.