

I am a local to the beautiful region of [REDACTED]. I am a proud parent to three teenagers and a teacher of young children in a local primary school. Whilst I and my family are largely private in the conduct of our lives, we appreciate having a voice and freedom of speech and democracy in Australia.

I strongly reject this proposed legislation. It has serious and detrimental implications for free speech in Australia. The draft exposure says it is about keeping Australians safe from “harm”. But the government will cause harm by silencing Australians! The Commonwealth is responsible for protecting the rights of the individual, not suppressing them.

This bill is a direct challenge to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

The recent history of the government attempting to define what is “misinformation” should cause grave concerns about this bill. During the pandemic, the Australian public was told that staying indoors and minimising contact with other humans outside of their family was imperative. Victorians were 'locked up' for weeks on end because we were told it would keep us safe from the virus. Yes, we largely avoided the virus in 2020 but most Victorians have since had it with little to no ill-impact. However, the toll from this misinformation to Victorians is being felt in the rising mental health statistics and in the apparent lack of social skills and resilience in our children and young people. The 'lockdowns' did more harm than good, yet those who questioned and critiqued this were censored on social media. It has become obvious to everyone the government was wrong in locking Australians up, and the “misinformation” was right!

This one example shows why giving the government even more power is a recipe for disaster.

This bill must be thrown out.

Cath Crouch

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