

Misinformation bill

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

I am writing to express my deep anger and outrage regarding the draft bill titled "Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023".

This bill is arguably the worst piece of proposed legislation ever introduced to parliament.

As an Australian citizen, I believe this bill is a direct attack on independent media organisations, journalists, and bloggers, subjecting them to a complex web of reporting standards and misinformation reports that have the potential to ruin their reputations.

The provision that Government-authorized publications are excluded from this harassment is deeply concerning. It is evident that this exemption will create an unlevel playing field, making it unprofitable and eventually impossible for independent voices to stand against the favoured government-approved journalists. This selective treatment raises serious questions about the integrity of these authorized journalists and their respective publications. It doesn't take much imagination to see that they may be "bribed" for favourable news coverage or incentivised for maintaining supportive perspectives, especially in relation to this very bill.

Under the so-called "MisSpeak" legislation, misinformation and disinformation reports about non-approved competitor journalists will likely proliferate, putting their reputations at stake. Conversely, these government-approved journalists and their affiliated publications will reap financial benefits in the long term. This is simply unfair. It undermines the principles of a free and independent media, which is essential for a thriving democracy.

Misinformation is, indeed, a concern in our society. However, I strongly believe that addressing it through a bill that targets independent media organizations is not the solution. The responsibility to combat misinformation falls on individuals, media literacy programs, and encouraging critical thinking among the public. This bill fails to take into account these factors and instead focuses on stifling non-approved voices.

In conclusion, I urge the Department to reconsider the provisions outlined in the "Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023". This bill, in its current form, threatens the integrity of independent journalism and the crucial role it plays in our democratic society. I implore you to prioritize freedom of the press and ensure that all journalists, regardless of their affiliations, are treated fairly and equally.

Thank you for considering my feedback.

Sincerely,

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