

18<sup>th</sup> August 2023

## **Public submission regarding:**

The exposure draft of the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023.

To whom it may concern,

## **Summary comment.**

I hereby firmly reject this proposed amendment to the ACMA legislation as per the title, and any monitoring and censorship by the government. The right to free speech is the most fundamental right we have as Australians.

Challenging authority and holding government to account must not be impeded in any way.

This legislation is egregious in every way and shows complete contempt for the electorate.

By this legislation, the government is setting up an Orwellian “Ministry of Truth”, where the government determines what is true and allowed speech/information and makes vassals of social media organisations, where Social Media businesses are coerced to censor the voices of their users under threat of punitive actions.

With utter hubris, this amendment exempts the government itself, and its bureaucracies, together with mainstream media from the scope and penalties of the legislation. Such indemnity can never be allowed.

## **Definitions:**

Let us define the terms, mis/dis & mal-information.

**Misinformation** is erroneously incorrect information, where there is no intent to deceive, where the purveyor is inadequately appraised of the facts.

**Disinformation** is incorrect or partially true information, where there is intent to deceive, such as propaganda or other deceptive information, but falls short of intentionally causing harm.

**Mal-information** is true information, which may be exaggerated, disseminated with the intent to cause harm. Examples include doxing, swatting and revenge porn, or publishing personal confidential information.

## **Comments**

**Misinformation** cannot and should never be stopped, but correction can be offered by ALL participants in the conversation, not just the arbiters of truth. It is essential that all, and most especially official communications are challenged in a democracy.

**Disinformation** is disseminated by entities with perceived superior credibility, such as governments, bureaucracies, educational institutions, businesses and associations.

It is proposed in the legislation that the main sources of disinformation, as listed above, be exempt from the legislation.

The Australian experience from the Covid 19 fiasco has shown us that those listed above were the main sources of disinformation, deliberately deceiving the public into accepting a need for measures such as border closure, mask wearing, lockdowns and vaccination with a novel, experimental substance, which had scant trial data and as it turns out unsupportive trial safety and efficacy findings.

Control of disinformation is covered under the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) legislation as misleading and deceptive conduct. There is no need for additional controls. The government and its agencies should be subject to ACCC legislation in an equitable application.

**Mal-information** is controlled under defamation laws and privacy provisions.

### **Conclusions:**

This legislative amendment is unnecessary and any protections required are already covered by existing legislation, provisions and common law.

The legislation is an egregious attack on individual free speech and cannot be allowed or tolerated in a democracy. The proposed legislation shows the hubris of the government and its utter contempt for the people who elected them. There is no way that the people can trust a government which has already secretly censored through the Facebook post manipulation as exposed in the FOI 4293.

The book 1984 by George Orwell was meant as a warning to the proletariat, not as a blueprint for a government intent on creating a tyrannical dystopia!

It is better that ten people are misinformed than that one is deceived through censorship.