

## GOVERNMENTS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO DISAGREE, BUT NOT CENSOR

1. I have no objection to any government of any nation making its disagreement known to views of citizens that differ from the government's positions on various issues. However it is contrary to the ideals for which generations of Australians have fought, including my parents who fought in World War 2, for any government to be given the tyrannical power to censor views which run contrary to those of its own, or more broadly contrary to received wisdom.
2. The censorship currently being proposed by the Albanese government is so broad that it would demolish in a stroke the edifice of civil liberty painstakingly built by successive English and English Colonial governments since Magna Carta, more than a millennium ago.
3. The proposal that social media proprietors be threatened with punishing fines if they permit "misinformation" would, if implemented, impose a chilling effect on the freedom of speech which is an **absolutely fundamental tenet** of our hard-won democracy.
4. The idea that a bunch of public servants in Canberra would scan social media sites for views that they consider incorrect is ridiculous. The low-experience individuals who would be employed in such an undertaking would judge material on the basis of their own limited experience of reality, through the generally distorted prism of political correctness which is a hallmark of the Canberra public service.
5. On average public servants are of dubious intellectual capacity and gloriously ill-suited to judge the views of their fellow citizens, most of whom live outside the Canberra cocoon. Who are they to judge the opinions of the people whose sweat, toil, enterprise and talent has generated the money with which they are paid?
6. **There is a relatively easy solution to this conundrum:** legislation could require that social media proprietors be compelled to allow "equal time" to any government to express its disagreement with any views it considers to be misinformation. Government employees would be given the opportunity to explain exactly why they consider offending views or information are incorrect, and to issue warnings to readers as to why they believe the offending views or information could be dangerous if given credibility
7. It would make Adolph Hitler proud to have a system whereby the Reich's views could not be misinformation, but any criticism of the Reich could be. Patently absurd for this to be seriously proposed. Governments often get things wrong.
8. Ditto for academics, who are sometimes qualified to comment on matters by virtue of their specialised knowledge, but far too often comment on areas outside their expertise. They too often get things wrong, as do entertainers making "good faith" statements.
9. I say again, grant the government the right to make its disagreement known, and even to label social media posts as "misinformation", but only rarely if ever give it the right to censor.