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## ***Catholic Women's League Australia Inc***

Member Organisation of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO)  
NGO Consultant (roster) status with the Economics and Social Council of the United Nations

*"Be joyful in hope, patient in trouble, and  
persistent in prayer."* Romans 12:12.

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**Submission to the  
*Communications Legislation Amendment  
(Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023***

We oppose the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023*.

### Truth

The *Combating Misinformation and Disinformation Bill* purports that the Government is the sole arbiter of truth. Something is either true, or it isn't, and the Government should not give itself the authority to decide what is misinformation or disinformation. Governments change, and political parties are mostly opposed to each other's versions of the truth. Would a change of government mean a change of what is true?

"Controlling" the truth is opposed to the action of love.

"Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth."  
1 Corinthians 13:6

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## Censorship

The Bill would allow the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to make decisions on what is deemed misinformation and disinformation. It also enables tech companies to police – without limit – individuals on the content of what they share on digital platforms. Both of these scenarios would be a case of overreach.

## Exemptions

How are exemptions possible unless the Government sees itself, and the mainstream media, as infallible? The Government and the mainstream media are indeed capable of making mistakes or being wrong, and have apologised on occasion. Given that fact, how can it then impose this bill on the rest of society, yet stating that they themselves are error-free.

## Threat to freedom of speech

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "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."

Therefore, this bill is a direct threat to freedom of speech. The bill would act in exact opposition to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

## Right to express our Faith

Under this bill, people of faith could be restricted, silenced and punished for their views on topics such as euthanasia, abortion, conception and the beginning of life, IVF, bioethics, gender ideology, sexuality, the definition of harms (including spiritual harms) and their tenets of belief and tenets of faith.

## Recommendation

We are available to provide a verbal presentation pursuant to this proposed legislation. We recommend freedom of speech is allowed to continue without suppression, which in turn will protect the truth through vigorous debate. Existing legislation already captures calumny, libel, racial and other vilification. Therefore, other legislation has not previously been required and is not required now.

**Ann Pereira**  
**President**  
**CWLA**