

I strongly object to the proposed legislation which will heavily penalise digital platforms to force them to censor what is posted on them. Does ACMA and the government have the God-like power to determine what is true?

During the Covid lockdowns and mandates any one questioning the official line was deemed guilty of misinformation but many of the 'conspiracy theorist's' claims were later proved to be correct.

Recently, it has been admitted that the government intervened at least 4,213 times to censor posts about Covid on digital platforms.

The present Labor is hardly committed to the search for truth as recently Labor and Greens senators voted down a proposal to investigate the excess deaths that have occurred after the pandemic.

ACMA's record is not trustworthy either. Around 2005 ACMA and Labor senator Stephen Conroy were engaged in a move to impose ISP filtering of websites. This was being done supposedly to stop child pornography. However, this was expanded to include other websites. People began to realise that there was a secret blacklist of sites considered objectionable. In January 2009, a user of Whirlpool complained about an anti-abortion website that showed pictures of aborted babies. It is believed this was done in order to find out the extent of ACMA/government censorship. ACMA determined the website to be prohibited or potentially prohibited content. No investigation was done to determine if the photos were real. So much for ACMA's devotion to the truth. ACMA issued Whirlpool's web host Bulletproof network with a notice to remove a link to this anti-abortion website at the risk of facing an \$11,000 fine per day! Needless to say Whirlpool complied.

Later in 2009 Wikileaks published the secret Blacklist. Along with controversial material, blocked websites include a dentist, bus companies, poker sites, Christian groups, tourist operators and multiple Wikipedia sites! Minister Conroy considered this transparency to be 'grossly irresponsible'.

The proposed bill is full of inconsistencies and hypocritical as the government is exempt from censorship. Yet there are no exemptions for on line content published by religious or faith based organisations.

The destruction of the Catholic Calvary hospital in the ACT shows the hostility to Christian values on the part of the Labor/Greens ACT government. Though this hospital was highly regarded by the public, these politicians hated the fact that it would not be involved in abortion and euthanasia. Labor is intent on pushing abortion at all costs - ignoring the scientific evidence that the life in the womb is a human being. Instead, it prefers an arbitrary notion of 'personhood' which could be used to rationalise killing even after birth.

I therefore, do not believe this government has any credibility in determining what is true or false.

The wording of the intent of the legislation is also concerning. It defines 'Misinformation' as misleading or false content that causes 'harm'. It stipulates that 'harm includes hatred against a group in Australian society on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical and mental disability, 'Harm to the health of Australians' and 'harm to the environment'. It is not clear what content may constitute 'harm'.

Clearly this situation is wide open to abuse. Anyone critical of 'The Voice' could be falsely accused of racism. Similarly, Climate Change sceptics may be censored in the name of protecting the environment.

The last thing we need is more internet censorship. Facebook, in particular, already excessively censors and de-platforms websites, particularly those who are conservative, religious or simply questioning the mainstream narrative. I regularly visit several websites that have been banned by Facebook. None of these sites urges violence or any anti-social behaviour. Yet they have been de-platformed due to complaints by critics unwilling to engage in the contest of ideas - instead preferring censorship.

as regards to countering disinformation by foreign interest hostile to Australia, surely we do not need the wide ranging over-reaching powers proposed in the legislation. The best way to deal with this disinformation is to call it out, pointing out its motivations and errors of fact. Blanket censorship is not the answer. The fact that many censored posts have turned out to be true has made the public suspicious of any censorship.

To sum up the proposed legislation is a gross attack on free speech and should not go ahead.

Yours sincerely  
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