

Secretariat,
Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100 Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

27 September 2024

Dear Members of the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

RE: Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024

We write on behalf of Australia Exits the WHO and its supporters to express our serious objections to this Bill. In light of the unfair, undemocratic and unpopular provisions it contains, we urge you to robustly reject this Bill and demand that no such Bill is introduced to Australia, now or, in the future.

If passed, this Bill will destroy freedom of speech in Australia. It will prevent people from expressing views that do not align with those of the Government and, unfairly, impose hefty fines for noncompliance.

It can, and most likely will, be used to control the information that people receive, to silence Government critics and to hide corruption in Government circles. It can, and most likely will, be used to promote corporate interests and to suppress scientific information and social movements that could benefit society in the future.

Dr Nick Coatsworth, Australia's Deputy Chief Medical Officer during Covid, has publicly expressed serious concerns about the Bill. 'Misinformation causes harm. The weaponisation of misinformation as a term to shut down debate causes even greater harm,' he is reported as saying.*

The Bill allows Government bureaucrats to determine what is 'Information' and what is 'Misinformation'/'Disinformation', decisions they are neither equipped nor trained to make.

It puts Government agencies in the role of Ministries of Truth. Yet Government agencies are the least equipped to determine what is 'Information' because of their incestuous relationships with the industries they are supposed to regulate. Large corporations play influential roles in Government, as lobbyists, as participants on regulatory committees and in the revolving door between employment in big business and in Government.

The Bill protects corporate-controlled media that prioritises profit over truth while attacking independent journalism that is more concerned with truth.

Freedom of speech is the foundation stone of Australia's democracy. This Bill threatens that foundation.

Australian voters did not give the Labor Party a clear mandate to govern at Australia's last federal election. It did not give the party a mandate to destroy Australians' freedom of speech and shackle Australia's democracy.

We encourage you to protect democracy, protect freedom of speech and protect *your family's* way of life by saying an emphatic NO to this Bill.

Please reject the *Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024* and demand that it is not returned in any form in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Debra Yuille
Karen Fox
Mianne Bagger
Jody Clune
Lyn McLean
Robert Peterson
Craig Ricketts
Duncan Symes
Shari Ware

* Dr Nick Coatsworth issues an urgent warning over Albanese's government's proposed law,
Daily Mail, 25.9.24