



# Australian Citizens Party

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Don't accept the major parties' social media censorship agenda**

The Albanese government has cynically seized on the stabbing of Assyrian Orthodox Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel in Sydney to re-ignite its push to impose a censorship regime on social media.

Australians who value free speech must send a strong message to Parliament through their representatives that it is unacceptable for the government to seek to capitalise on a tragedy to impose their pre-existing agenda to control information on social media.

#### **Bipartisan censors**

This social media censorship agenda is bipartisan, starting under Scott Morrison and Peter Dutton in the previous Liberal government, and continued by the Albanese government.

Last year the public made their opposition to social media censorship abundantly clear by flooding the consultation on the exposure draft of the "Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill" with objections.

The opposition came from a broad cross-section of the public and across the political spectrum; the Human Rights Commission and the Australian Law Council identified the age-old problem with a law like this—the definition of terms like "disinformation" and "harmful".

Following that feedback the government parked the bill, but, demonstrating their ongoing intention, Communications Minister Michelle Rowland travelled to Europe to participate in EU events dedicated to contrived handwringing about the need for such laws.

Now they have seized on the first opportunity they could to try to re-ignite the agenda.

In media interviews, Michelle Rowland has resorted to outright disinformation to promote the bill, claiming to ABC AM on 18 April that "some 70 per cent of Australians are concerned about the spread of mis- and disinformation and the real-world impacts that it has".

Rowland was citing an Australia Institute exit poll from the Voice referendum, which claimed 70 per cent of respondents expressed concern about mis- and disinformation in the Voice campaign; but given that 60 per cent of Australians voted against the Voice, that exit poll clearly does not express a unified view as to what the mis- and disinformation was—the majority "No" voters certainly would not have agreed with "Yes" voter Michelle Rowland's opinion of what constituted mis- and disinformation.

It's not that there is no disinformation on social media—there's plenty of it, including arguably harmful disinformation.

But a) there's equally plenty of harmful disinformation that comes from the government and media, both of which are exempt from the law, proving it's about control, not reducing harm; and b) as follows from a, the danger of enacting laws to censor information outweighs the dangers of disinformation.

#### **Existential crisis**

The real problem the government is seeking to address is the existential crisis of the collapse of trust in both government and the mainstream media.

The cause of that crisis is one they do not wish to address, namely their betrayal of the Australian people on myriad fronts, especially economic and foreign/defence policy, which is why the public don't believe them any more.

Put simply, they—meaning both major parties—have repeatedly lied about:

- decades of economics policies, which they always promised would deliver prosperity but instead have increasingly enriched and empowered corporations at the expense of the people, leaving Australians in massive debt, unable to afford and provide basic housing, and fearing the future will not be better for their children;

- foreign and defence policies which have pushed us into forever wars that we were told were for freedom and democracy but which never were, and are now leading us into national bankruptcy for a war of annihilation with, bizarrely, our biggest and best trading partner China.

For the government to address this existential collapse in trust, the major parties would have to change their policies to earn back the trust, but that would require breaking with the vested corporate interests who are the only beneficiaries of their policies.

Foremost among those corporate interests are the corporate mainstream media, the most concentrated in the world, which have aided and abetted the government in its lies; for example, witness the media's appalling smears of whistleblower publisher Julian Assange, who cannot be accused of mis- and disinformation as WikiLeaks has never published anything that wasn't true.

The current leadership of these parties seem incapable of changing their policy direction voluntarily, however.

So instead, like every regime in history that ever lost its grip on power, they are blaming the collapse in trust on supposed "misinformation" and "disinformation" and seeking to stamp it out through censorship.

They are targeting social media because, as messy as it is, it gives the people an opportunity to spread views which the establishment parties and media would previously have been able to suppress.

And, as usual, they are telling us it's for our own good because the misinformation and disinformation they are seeking to censor is "harmful"—by their definition.

This is a fight for a principle. Make your opposition loud and clear to your MP and Senators.

[Click here to look up your MP.](#)

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