



Australian Citizens Party

Craig Isherwood, National Secretary

PO Box 376, COBURG, VIC 3058

Phone: 1800 636 432 **Email:** info@citizensparty.org.au **Web:** citizensparty.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

23 September 2024

Say no to Albanese's Orwellian 'disapproved information' censorship Bill

Just one week to make a submission to the Senate inquiry to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024—do it ASAP (details below).

The Albanese government is trying to pull a swifty, giving Australians barely a week to make submissions to its rushed Senate inquiry into its bill to censor social media of anything the government deems to be “harmful” mis- and disinformation.

Oh the sinister irony—limiting time for public engagement on a law to limit public engagement!

Don't let the government get away with it—submissions close in one week (30 September), so drop everything and make a submission ASAP to the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee's inquiry into the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2024 [Provisions].

Silencing dissent

The purpose of this law is to empower the government to shut down the mass-dissemination of ideas and information that is possible now, due to modern technology and social media, in a way that neither governments nor establishment mainstream media companies can control.

Until recently, if you wanted to publicise ideas the mainstream media wouldn't cover, you had to spend significant sums of money and weeks or months publishing and distributing your own publication.

Now anyone can make a social media post that, if it strikes the right chord, can go “viral” and inform hundreds of thousands and millions of people within minutes, hours and days.

In the past, authoritarian governments would find and smash printing presses to silence dissent; today, the Albanese government is trying to pass a law that won't stop anyone from making social media posts, but will force social media companies to stop those posts from being seen.

What is 'mis/disinformation' and 'harm'?

The problem with all laws that curtail free speech, which has been debated for centuries, is who gets to define what is mis- and disinformation, and what is harmful?

It's not that mis- and disinformation don't exist, or that they're never harmful, but the wise conclusion from these centuries of debate is that censorship doesn't work—it just drives disapproved ideas and information underground.

That is why after WWII, the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Article 19 declares:

“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.”

Centuries of experience shows that the only way to combat harmful mis- and disinformation is with more information—having an open discussion with the public about what is false and true.

However, for this to work, governments and other authorities must have credibility, and that's the problem—they don't.

After decades of neoliberal betrayal of the people to serve corporate interests and feather their own nests, and rushing into evil wars based on official lies, governments and establishment parties have lost the trust and confidence of the people.

Instead of addressing this collapse in trust, the government is pushing this bill to crack down on disapproved information, for which they exempt all government communication from the definition of misinformation—straight out of George Orwell's 1984 and the Ministry of Truth.

Most disturbingly, the bill defines serious harm to include:

- Harm to an electoral or referendum process—allowing scope for a fake “Russian interference”-type pretext to suppress anything that contradicts the government's narrative in elections and referenda;
- Harm to the “efficacy of preventive health measures”—no public debate about lockdowns, medical mandates, etc;

- “Vilification” of “groups”—which today could be used to suppress advocacy for Gaza that some politicians falsely label “antisemitic”;
- “Imminent harm”, i.e. before the fact, to “public confidence in the banking system or financial markets”—no criticism of the lying, cheating, stealing, gouging, abusing Big Four banks!

So government lies like weapons of mass destruction, or robodebt, are not mis- or disinformation, but everyday people criticising the banks or expressing a different opinion on foreign policy is!

Make a submission now!

Stopping a law like this requires demonstrating to Parliament that the public will not be apathetic in their response to this. The only way to do that is with mass public engagement in the process, starting with everybody, literally everybody, making a submission to this inquiry expressing strong opposition to this bill.

A submission is just a letter emailed or uploaded to the Committee. It can be as short or as long as you like—one sentence or multiple pages of detailed arguments—which expresses your opposition and why. The most important thing is that you actually prioritise doing it ASAP. The Australian Citizens Party suggests you include two things in your submission:

1. Express your opposition to the bill and anything that censors free speech;
2. Demand public hearings into the bill—with such a short inquiry, the government likely isn’t planning on public hearings, so the public must demand them, and if that requires extending the inquiry, so much better.

Email your submission to:

Committee Secretary Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Or, upload it to the portal at the inquiry’s website below.

Resources

Click here for the Senate inquiry’s website, with details for emailing and uploading submissions:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/MisandDisinfobill

Click here to read “[Albanese gov renews push for global internet censorship](#)”, which reveals the international agreements behind this agenda.

Click here to read “[Labor’s reasons for a disinformation law are based on ... disinformation!](#)”, which exposed the lies of government-funded organisations that claimed the ACP’s campaign against bank closures in regional Australia was a foreign-backed disinformation campaign and therefore would come under the terms of this bill.