

Albanese's Online Safety Amendment is a threat to your free speech

The dystopian world envisioned by George Orwell in *1984* could well become our reality in the very near future as a consequence of the passage in Parliament last November of the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age)* law. From December, any Social Media platform – on Twitter/X, on Instagram on Facebook, etc., found guilty of allowing access to children under the age of 16, can be fined up to 5% of its gross yearly income – a truly onerous amount that would quickly force each social media platform, whether it approved or not, to prevent children under 16 from accessing its site. Verification of the age of people 16 years old and over could not easily be achieved without the use of the Digital ID that the Australian government is trying to force us to use. Once this occurs, Australian government agencies or their outsource overseas corporations will be able to know, regardless of our age, each and every time we post to social media and its content.

How much longer after that before what we view online or post online is designated a “thought crime” by the Australian government?

United States, 1792: First Amendment enshrines the right to free speech

In the United States, the right to free speech has been guaranteed by its Constitution. In 1792, The US Congress enacted what was to become the known as the First Amendment to the US Constitution:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Whether by design or oversight, *no similar provision for the right to free speech has ever been put into the Australian Constitution*. As a consequence, from December 2025 Australians face the prospect of being denied the right to express their genuinely-held beliefs through Social media – on Twitter/X, on Instagram on Facebook, etc. Who knows how much longer it will take until the Online Safety Act is extended to the expression of offline communication – leaflets, magazines, books, protests, speeches on street corners?

How would would JFK have responded to the “Online Safety Amendment?”



In his famous *Speech against Secret Societies* of 27 April 1961, United States President John F. Kennedy spoke passionately for the right of US citizens to free speech:

“It is the unprecedented nature of this challenge that also gives rise to your second obligation--an obligation which I share. And that is our obligation to inform and alert the American people--to make certain that they possess all the facts that they need, and understand them as well--the perils, the prospects, the purposes of our program and the choices that we face.

“No President should fear public scrutiny of his program. For from that scrutiny comes understanding; and from that understanding comes support or opposition. And both are necessary. I am not asking your newspapers to support the Administration, but I am asking your help in the tremendous task of informing and alerting the American people. For *I have complete confidence in the response and dedication of our citizens whenever they are fully informed.*

“I not only could not stifle controversy among your readers--I welcome it. This Administration intends to be candid about its

errors; for as a wise man once said: 'An error does not become a mistake until you refuse to correct it.' We intend to accept full responsibility for our errors; and we expect you to point them out when we miss them.

"Without debate, without criticism, no Administration and no country can succeed--and no republic can survive. That is why the Athenian lawmaker Solon decreed it a crime for any citizen to shrink from controversy. And that is why our press was protected by the First Amendment-- the only business in America specifically protected by the Constitution- -not primarily to amuse and entertain, not to emphasize the trivial and the sentimental, not to simply "give the public what it wants"--but to inform, to arouse, to reflect, to state our dangers and our opportunities, to indicate our crises and our choices, to lead, mold, educate and sometimes even anger public opinion.

"This means greater coverage and analysis of international news--for it is no longer far away and foreign but close at hand and local. It means greater attention to improved understanding of the news as well as improved transmission. And it means, finally, that government at all levels, must meet its obligation to provide you with the fullest possible information outside the narrowest limits of national security--and we intend to do it."

September 2024: Misinformation and Disinformation (MAD) Bill defeated

In 2024 the Albanese government made a barely concealed effort to take from us this right to free speech with its so-called Misinformation and Disinformation Bill. There was a public uproar and because a majority comprised of the Liberal/National Opposition and cross-benchers oppose the MAD bill it was defeated.

November 2024: Online Safety Amendment rammed through, days after its introduction

However, barely two months later, on 20 November 2024, the government tried again to take away free speech, this time under the guise of supposedly protecting children under the age of 16 from violent content, material concerning drugs and suicide and pornography on the Internet.

In barely 9 days, commencing on Monday 20 November and concluding on Thursday, the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age)* law was introduced to Parliament and made law. In spite of only 24 hours being allowed for public submissions, 98 were made, nearly all of which opposed the Amendment. When it was put to the House of Representatives on Wednesday 27, none of the public submissions were discussed. A gag motion was carried to prevent any arguments opposed to the bill being put. The motion to oppose the bill was carried. The whole process lasted barely more than one hour.

On the following day, the bill was put to the Senate where the proportion opposed to the Amendment was larger than in the house. So some discussion had to be allowed. However time allocated for debate was restricted to only 90 minutes and much of that limited time was taken up by government ministers speaking in support of that bill.

How you can help to stop Albanese's planned 24x7 surveillance state

Given that only a small handful of our parliamentary representatives have, so far, spoken up against the Online Safety Amendment or have even just voted to allow members opposed to that bill to speak, the only way left to us is to continue to publicly voice our opposition at protests such as today's *March For Australia*. Hopefully further protests will be organised until such time as we get a government that acts to stop high immigration until such time as housing supply is adequate and our natural environment can be properly protected.

Political Parties opposed to the Online Safety Amendment must be voted for in future elections and those who supported this legislation must be voted out. Two such parties who oppose the Online Safety Amendment are former Senator Gerard Rennick's People First Party (<https://peoplefirstparty.au/>) and the Citizens Party (<https://citizensparty.org.au/>).

See also *Online Safety Amendment - Make your Parliament accountable and transparent* at <https://candobetter.net/james-sinamon/blog/7110/online-safety-amendment-make-your-parliament-accountable-and-transparent>