

Ask your Senators to block Labor's Orwellian "Misinformation Bill"



How is this democracy!?

The overwhelming majority of 98 submissions[1] from the Australian public strenuously oppose the Albanese government's foreshadowed "Communications Legislation Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation)" MAD bill. Any objective perusal of the debate about the MAD bill in Hansard [2] shows that the government clearly lost the argument on both the 6th and 7th

November. In spite of losing the argument, the MAD Bill was still carried 78 votes to 66. Every Labor member voted for the bill, whilst the Greens, the Independents and every member of the Opposition voted against it.

This coming week, the MAD bill will be put to the Senate. If the Liberal/National Party, the Greens and the Independents uphold their commitment to oppose this bill, it will be voted down and buried (and so should the Albanese government at the Federal election due next year).

If not, Australia could well become a police state, much like what is now the case in the UK and Canada and a number of European countries. There, ordinary citizens, who have made posts against the war in Ukraine or the genocide in Gaza, have had their houses invaded and ransacked by armed police and their computers and phones seized.

If the MAD bill becomes law, a faceless bureaucrat within the Australian Government Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) will determine what content on any web-site or social media platform is 'misinformation' or 'disinformation' and what is not. Huge penalties will be imposed on the owners of platforms on which 'mis/disinformation' is found.

Superficially, it appears that the wealthy corporations who manage most of the online platforms - and not ordinary people making contributions to those platforms - will be subject to the punitive measures of the MAD bill.

However, those ordinary Internet contributors will quickly find that the platforms on which they were previously able to express opinions on Gaza, Ukraine and other issues of concern to them - peace, the threat of war, whether conventional or nuclear, the environment, miscarriages of justice, etc. - will no longer be able to do so, because the web platform owners will be too afraid of ruinous penalties.

The MAD bill is clearly contrary to Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted at the UN General Assembly of 10 December 1948 in Paris. Article 19 states:

"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."

Censorship is also contrary to the First Amendment to the United States' constitution which was adopted on 15 November 1791. The amendment states:

"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."

The fact that free speech has not yet been similarly protected by our own Australian Constitution is the result of either oversight by past legislators or wanton neglect. This must be rectified as soon as possible.

How you can help

Obtain the PDF file of this leaflet and print your own copies and distribute them to neighbours, letterbox them, and hand them out at large protests, for example at the weekly protests against Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. These protests commence each Sunday at 12pm outside the Victorian State Library.

Contact your state Senators and ask them to speak and vote against the "Combating Misinformation and Disinformation" (MAD) bill whenever it is put to the Senate this coming week.

18 October 2024, updated 16 Nov 2024

Footnotes

[1] https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/MisandDisinfobill/Submissions

[2] I inadvertently did not meet the deadline in making my own submission - it can be found at <https://candobetter.net/james-sinamon/blog/6905/reject-combatting-misinformation-and-disinformation-bill> .

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