

Written Representation 108

Name: Kwek Suat Yee
Doctor

Received: 5 Mar 2018

To the Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods,

I write as a concerned citizen, on behalf of myself, regarding the green paper on fake news. I do not have any financial or other interest in this subject matter

Firstly and most importantly, the green paper does not have a clear definition of the problem it seeks to tackle. Automated bots, "hyper-biased" news, fake accounts, paid advertisements--while the green paper speaks of them under the umbrella term of "fake news", the actual content of them may range from outright lies, to partisan opinions, to uncomfortable truths. It is important to define what exactly Deliberate Online Falsehoods should refer to, before enacting any form of legislation.

The green paper seems to concern itself largely with threats against Singapore's racial and religious harmony, and its sovereignty. However, there is already existing legislation that could apply to such threats- -for instance, the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, or the Sedition Act. Before enacting new legislation, perhaps we could first review the ways that existing laws have been and could be used, and also the situations where they could not or were not applied. This can set the ground more clearly in terms of what role the government expects any new legislation to play, and in what scenarios.

Finally, given the scope of social media, messaging platforms, and the internet, no amount of legislation will stop people from finding misinformation, or having misinformation find them. The key is in having them judge for themselves what is false and what is true, what is biased and what is more neutral, what are good sources and what are suspect. And that comes from education, not legislation.