



IPA Welcomes Review Into University Free Speech Code Implementation

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Free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs has welcomed the announcement by Education Minister Dan Tehan that former Deakin University Vice-Chancellor Sally Walker will review the implementation of the of the free speech code devised by former High Court Judge Robert French AC.

“The cases of Peter Ridd, Drew Pavlou and UNSW’s latest shameful actions have highlighted without doubt that there is free speech crisis at Australian universities. Dan Tehan should be commended for recognising this,” said Gideon Rozner, Director of Policy at the IPA.

“It is disgraceful that only half of Australia’s universities have implemented the code. A free speech code is necessary to protect freedom of intellectual inquiry for both students and academics.”

In 2019 an IPA-commissioned [survey](#) of 500 domestic students found:



- 41% of students felt they were sometimes unable to express their opinion at university
- 31% of students had been made to feel uncomfortable by a university teacher for expressing an opinion
- 59% of students believed they were sometimes prevented from voicing their opinion on controversial issues by other students.

“Australia’s universities are clearly failing to live up to their moral and legal duty to safeguard free expression,” said Mr Rozner.

“Removing funding from universities who fail to uphold free speech is a big stick approach. But given the clear evidence of the failure of our publicly funded universities to protect free and open intellectual inquiry, this bold step should be on the table.”

Both the IPA and the NTEU have raised alarm that the recent decision by the Federal Court in the case of Peter Ridd shows that contractual provisions guaranteeing intellectual freedom do not protect academics against censorship by university administrators.

“The core mission of universities is to engage in free intellectual inquiry via free and open debate. Anything other than Australian universities agreeing to the full implementation of the French model code would be a betrayal of that very important mission,” said Mr Rozner.