

---

21 June 2019

## DR PETER RIDD CONDEMNS FREE SPEECH CRISIS AT UNIVERSITIES

Marine Geophysicist, Dr Peter Ridd, has said his experience with James Cook University, and the slow take up by universities to the free speech model code proposed by former High Court chief justice Robert French, demonstrates there is a crisis of free speech at Australian universities in an interview with the Institute of Public Affairs' [Looking Forward](#) Podcast, released today.

Dr Peter Ridd was sacked by James Cook University for misconduct for questioning in the IPA's publication *Climate Change: The Facts 2017* the climate change science around the Great Barrier Reef and for public statements made on the *Jones & Co Sky News* program. He recently won his battle against JCU in the Federal Circuit Court.

Peter Ridd said that his experience "demonstrates there actually is a crisis, and the way you can tell there's a crisis is; the reaction of the universities [to the French Review]."

Dr Peter Ridd questioned whether his case would actually have an impact on academics ability to stand up for freedom of speech.

"For every Peter Ridd, there's another few hundred people who would dearly love to have said something but they're just not."

"Because they're actually going to say, 'Well, I would need to get \$260,000 worth of other people's money and go through that'. So they are not going to, they [academics] will see my case as not being an indication that academic freedom exists. It's actually that academic freedom definitely does not exist is the lesson that should be learnt from that and the reaction to universities of French's [Review] is another example of that."

Dr Ridd said that universities fundamentally do not believe in free speech. "It doesn't matter how much damage it does to the reputation, because JCU's reputation, especially in North Queensland, has taken a heck of a beating. And even that, they don't believe in intellectual freedom... they believe that they are on the side of the angels."

IPA Director of Policy, Gideon Rozner, said, "Dr Ridd's frank assessment of the state of free speech on campus should be sobering for all of us. It is great that the Federal Circuit Court has upheld Peter's contractual right to academic freedom, but we must ask how many other academics are being muzzled and are not coming forward."

"Every university in Australia must follow the lead of the University of Western Australia and implement the model free speech code recommended by the French Review. Australian taxpayers pay billions each year to support universities as public squares of higher learning and intellectual inquiry. They should be places where all ideas can be aired and fiercely debated," said Mr Rozner.

Looking Forward is a weekly Podcast of debate and discussion about politics and ideas, produced by the IPA with co-hosts RMIT Senior Fellow, Dr Chris Berg and Editor of the IPA Review, Scott Hargreaves and each week joined by two other guest panellists.

For media and comment: Evan Mulholland, Director of Communications, on 0405 140 780, or at [emulholland@ipa.org.au](mailto:emulholland@ipa.org.au)