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## **BIPARTISAN HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT SHOWS ABBOTT GOVERNMENT MUST SUPPORT FREE SPEECH BILL**

“There is no excuse for the Abbott government to not support the *Racial Discrimination Amendment Bill 2014*,” says Simon Breheny, director of the Legal Rights Project at free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

Today the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights released a report stating that the *Racial Discrimination Amendment Bill 2014* does “not raise human rights concerns”. The Parliamentary Joint Committee is a bipartisan parliamentary committee that reviews bills before the parliament in light of Australia’s human rights obligations.

The *Racial Discrimination Amendment Bill 2014* was introduced by Family First Senator Bob Day on 25 September last year. The bill seeks to remove the words “offend” and “insult” from section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, which currently makes it an offence to “offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate a person on the basis of their race, colour, or national or ethnic origin.”

“It is significant that the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights has made this decision in light of the fact that it is required to balance freedom of speech against discrimination law,” says Mr Breheny.

“This clears the path for the Abbott government to support reform of section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*.”

“It is a shame that in the wake of the recent tragedy in Paris the Abbott government did not seek to restore freedom of speech by repealing section 18C.”

“Senator Day’s bill is not a full repeal of section 18C. Removing the words ‘offend’ and ‘insult’ does not fully restore freedom of speech in Australia. But the bill is a significant improvement.”

“Senator Day’s bill is an important step towards the full repeal of section 18C. The Abbott government must support Bob Day’s bill,” says Mr Breheny.

**For media and comment: Simon Breheny, Director, Legal Rights Project on 0400 967 382 or [sbreheny@ipa.org.au](mailto:sbreheny@ipa.org.au)**