

# IPA MEDIA RELEASE

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## IPA SAYS 'NO SECRET DEALS' ON FREE SPEECH

Media executives and the federal government have no right to secretly negotiate and agree to curbs on free speech, according to the free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

"Freedom of speech is a right that belongs to all Australians. It is not something that should be negotiated away in a secret political compromise between the Prime Minister and a handful of media bosses," says Chris Berg, director of policy at the IPA and the author of a recent book on freedom of speech, *In Defence of Freedom of Speech: From Ancient Greece to Andrew Bolt*.

"The Prime Minister should not have sent a private letter to media companies offering to negotiate more regulation of the media. It should have been immediately released to the Australian public because it is their rights the government is proposing to curtail.

"Freedom of speech is not just an individual's right to express themselves, but also their right to hear other views. Any new restrictions on the media are as much of an attack on ordinary Australians as it is on media companies.

"This is just another chapter in the Gillard government's awful track record on freedom of speech which has included five simultaneous government inquiries into news media organisations and seen Australia fall to 30<sup>th</sup> on the Reporters Without Borders' *Press Freedom Index*.

"The case has not been made that the Australian media needs more regulation. In fact, following the Andrew Bolt case and numerous spurious ACMA investigations, it is clear that the media actually needs less regulation," concludes Mr Berg.

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