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DISCRIMINATION BILL STILL THREATENS RIGHTS, SHOULD BE SCRAPPED

“Labor Senators on the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee have today acknowledged that their own government’s draft anti-discrimination legislation threatens free speech. Their recommendation that Section 19 (2)(b), which made it unlawful to ‘offend’ or ‘insult’ someone, be removed from the draft law entirely is welcome,” says Simon Breheny, director of the Legal Rights Project at free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

“However the Labor Senators on the committee have nothing to say about the many other problems with the government’s draft law, such as its reversal of the onus of proof or its attacks on religious liberty and freedom of association. In some areas they even want the law to go further.

“By contrast, Coalition members of the committee have recognised the dangerous nature of the law and have recommended that it be rejected entirely. The IPA agrees.

“The government’s anti-discrimination law consolidation project has been flawed from the beginning. It should now be abandoned entirely.

“Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus must immediately clarify the government’s intentions with the bill. The Australian people deserve to know whether he intends to take away their freedom like his predecessor Nicola Roxon did.”

The IPA’s Simon Breheny, Chris Berg and Tim Wilson appeared before the Senate hearing into the legislation in Melbourne on 23 January. The IPA’s analysis is extensively quoted in the report, which is available at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate_Committees?url=legcon_ctte/completed_inquiries/2010-13/anti_discrimination_2012/report/index.htm

To read more of the IPA’s analysis of the legislation, visit <http://freedomwatch.ipa.org.au/>

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