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GILLARD BACKDOWN ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS A VICTORY FOR FREE SPEECH

The Institute of Public Affairs, the organisation that led the public campaign against the Gillard government's proposed changes to anti-discrimination laws, said today that the decision to withdraw the legislation was a victory for freedom of speech in Australia.

The Australian newspaper is this morning reporting that the government will not be proceeding with the draft *Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Bill 2012*. Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus confirmed the backdown last night.

"This is a huge win for freedom of speech" said Simon Breheny, director of the Legal Rights Project at the IPA.

"The idea that the Gillard government would try to make it against the law to offend someone because of their political opinion was outrageous.

"Once the Australian people understood what was at stake it became clear that the community would not tolerate this sort of attack on the fundamental principle of freedom of speech.

"The outrageous threat to freedom of speech was just one of many problems contained in the draft bill.

"Other fundamental problems included reversing the burden of proof for cases of alleged discrimination and an entire regime designed to make it easier for complainants to sue.

"The IPA has always argued the draft bill could not be cured with amendments. The government's decision to withdraw the bill is an admission we were right," said Mr Breheny.

The IPA was the first organisation to raise concerns about the freedom of speech implications of the proposed laws. "Proposed Law A Further Attack on Free Speech" by Simon Breheny was published in *The Australian* on 23 November 2012, the same week the draft laws were released.

<http://ipa.org.au/sectors/legal-rights-project/news/2790/proposed-law-a-further-attack-on-free-speech>

For media and comment:

Simon Breheny, Director, Legal Rights Project, 0400 967 382

Chris Berg, Director, Policy, 0402 257 681