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IPA WELCOMES CALL FOR SENATE INQUIRY INTO 18C

The free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs today welcomed Senator Nick Xenophon's call for a Senate inquiry into section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

"A Senate inquiry would help break the deadlock in parliament over section 18C and provide both sides of the argument with an opportunity to outline the cost and consequences of limiting freedom of speech," said Simon Breheny, Director of Policy at the IPA.

Section 18C makes it unlawful to "offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate" someone on the basis of their race, colour, or national or ethnic origin.

"The renewed political attention into the harm of Section 18C is particularly necessary now that we have seen the travesty of justice that is the four QUT students who have been dragged through the courts for posting opinions online."

Four Queensland University of Technology students are currently the subject of a legal claim under section 18C. A complaint made against them by a former administrator at the university is currently before the Federal Circuit Court - more than three years after one of the students posted the following comment on Facebook: "Just got kicked out of the unsigned indigenous computer room. QUT stopping segregation with segregation."

"Laws which restrict freedom of speech have no place in a liberal democracy such as Australia. Section 18C must be amended."

"Senator Xenophon should be congratulated for encouraging the debate about reform of section 18C and freedom of speech in Australia," said Mr Breheny.

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