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IPA WELCOMES PM SUPPORT FOR INQUIRY INTO 18C

The free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs today welcomed the Prime Minister's comment that a parliamentary inquiry into section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 would be a "reasonable" way of having an "open and calm, cool discussion of the issues" relating to freedom of speech.

The Prime Minister on 3AW this morning said that the government would consider a proposal put forward by West Australian Liberal Senator Dean Smith for a parliamentary inquiry by the human rights committee.

"This would help break the deadlock in parliament over section 18C and provide people with an opportunity to outline the 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" a person 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 in light of complaints against Bill Leak, and several students at QUT. These cases show that section 18C restricts freedom of speech and freedom of the press."

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 Section 18C must be repealed."

"The Prime Minister should be congratulated for encouraging debate about reform of section 18C and freedom of speech in Australia," Mr Breheny.

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