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POLL: AUSTRALIANS WANT MORE FREE SPEECH, NOT LESS

“Fairfax-Nielsen polling published today in Fairfax newspapers showing 88% support for laws against conduct that “offends, insults or humiliates” is contradicted by Galaxy Research polling, which shows that 82% of Australians value the right to freedom of speech more highly than the ‘right’ not to be offended,” said Simon Breheny, Director, Legal Rights Project at free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

Section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act* makes it unlawful to “offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate” a person because of the race, colour, nationality or ethnicity of the person.

Polling conducted for the Institute of Public Affairs by Galaxy Research in September 2011 found that 82% of Australians think protecting freedom of speech is more important than protecting people from being offended. The poll surveyed 1052 people from around the country.

The Galaxy Research poll question for the Institute of Public Affairs in September 2011 was:

In your opinion, which of these two options is the most important? That the government protect the right to free speech, or that people are protected from being offended?

Right to free speech	82%
Protection from being offended	15%
Don't know	3%

The Fairfax-Nielson poll question this week was:

Do you think it should be lawful or unlawful to “offend, insult or humiliate” a person because of their race or ethnicity?

Unlawful	88%
Lawful	10%

“These polls show that when Australians are asked about freedom of speech they recognise the importance of this liberal democratic right,” said Mr Breheny.

Details of the Galaxy Research poll can be found at the following link:

<http://www.ipa.org.au/sectors/ideas-liberty/publication/1928/82-per-cent-of-australians-think-freedom-of-speech-is-more-important-than-the-right-not-to-be-offended>

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