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COALITION'S CYBER-BULLYING COMMISSIONER A THREAT TO FREE SPEECH

"The Coalition government's proposed Children's eSafety Commissioner is a threat to freedom of speech and entirely counter to the government's 'Freedom Agenda'," said Chris Berg, Policy Director at free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

Mr Berg, along with IPA legal rights director Simon Breheny, is the author of a new report *A Social Problem, not a Technological Problem: Bullying, Cyberbullying and Freedom of Speech*, released today by the Institute of Public Affairs.

The Coalition's proposed Children's eSafety Commissioner will have the power to rapidly take down harmful material from social media websites.

"This is an explicit censorship power. It is astounding that a government which pledged to restore free speech in Australia would be proposing to create a new bureaucracy specifically tasked with censoring the internet.

"Days before the 2013 federal election the now communications minister Malcolm Turnbull said: 'We don't support censoring the internet.' Has he changed his mind?"

The new IPA report finds that the Children's eSafety Commissioner is confused about the nature of cyberbullying, and will do little to protect children from harm.

"Bullying is a very real problem, but there are already many legal remedies against bullying.

"The most important thing a bullied child can do is tell their parents about their victimisation. Education, not censorship, is the most effective weapon against the harm of bullying.

"The Abbott government must abandon this proposed new bureaucratic censorship body.

"Anything less would reveal its freedom of speech credentials to be hollow," said Mr Berg.

A copy of *A Social Problem, not a Technological Problem: Bullying, Cyberbullying and Freedom of Speech* can be downloaded here.

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