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NEW POLL REVEALS AUSTRALIANS BELIEVE FREE SPEECH UNDER THREAT

Australians believe that freedom of speech is the human right most under threat today in Australia, a new poll has found. Asked to choose which right they felt was most under threat, 39 per cent of Australians chose freedom of speech.

“With anti-free speech laws like section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act* still in force, it is no surprise that Australians are worried about freedom of speech,” says James Paterson, Deputy Executive Director of the free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

“When Australians see journalists like Andrew Bolt hauled off to court for simply writing an article which offends someone, they are right to be concerned that their own free speech is under threat.

“This result demonstrates there is widespread community concern about freedom of speech in Australia. The federal government should reconsider its decision to abandon Tony Abbott’s pre-election promise to repeal section 18C,” says Mr Paterson.

After freedom of speech, Australians nominated ‘basic human rights’ (32 per cent), ‘freedom of religion’ (27 per cent), ‘democracy’ (20 per cent), ‘equal rights for women’ (17 per cent), ‘an independent judiciary’ (16 per cent), ‘the rule of law’ (16 per cent), ‘freedom from arbitrary arrest’ (12 per cent) and ‘trial by jury’ (6 per cent) as the human rights most under threat today.

The 39 per cent of Australians concerned about freedom of speech compares to 36 per cent of Canadians, 41 per cent of Americans and 51 per cent of Britons.

The poll, conducted by the UK-based pollster Ipsos MORI, was commissioned by the Magna Carta 800th Commemoration Committee. It surveyed 1,002 Australian adults between 6 January and 20 January 2015. The full results of the poll, including results from 23 countries, are available [here](#).

It follows a 2011 poll by Galaxy, commissioned by the IPA, which found that 82 per cent of Australians believe protecting the right to free speech is more important than protecting people from being offended. The full results of that poll are available [here](#).

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