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## **ABBOTT GOVERNMENT'S CHANGES TO RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ACT A WIN FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH – INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

“The Abbott government’s announcement this morning that it will amend the *Racial Discrimination Act* is a victory for freedom of speech in Australia,” said Simon Breheny, Director, Legal Rights Project at free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

In a speech to the Institute of Public Affairs in August 2012 the then Opposition Leader, Tony Abbott promised to repeal section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*.

"Today's announcement is almost as good as a full repeal of section 18C of the Act. While a full repeal of 18C would have been preferable, the government's proposal goes 95% of the way towards ensuring what happened to Andrew Bolt won't happen again," said Mr Breheny.

Under the government's proposals it will no longer be unlawful to offend, insult, or humiliate someone because of their race. It will also be a defence to a claim of racial vilification that the comment was made in the course of discussion of political, social, and cultural matters.

Mr Breheny said that the Abbott government should be congratulated for standing up for freedom of speech and not giving in to the left-wing human rights lobby that opposed any change to the *Racial Discrimination Act*.

"Freedom of speech is a core element of political freedom in this country - those who wanted no change to the legislation showed they were willing to sacrifice Australians' political freedom," said Mr Breheny.

### **Available for media and comment in Canberra:**

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