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CENSORSHIP NO SOLUTION TO CYBERBULLYING: IPA

"The anti-cyberbullying laws reported to be introduced today by the federal government are a threat to free speech and will do little to prevent harmful bullying," said Chris Berg, Senior Fellow with the free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

Media reports indicate the *Enhancing Online Safety for Children Bill 2014* could see social media sites like Facebook fined \$17,000 a day for failing to take down "offensive" content targeted at children.

"This is a censorship power, pure and simple, and entirely counter to the government's 'freedom agenda'," said Mr Berg.

"Nor will this new law offer Australian kids any significant protection against harmful bullying," said Mr Berg.

"There are already a wealth of Commonwealth and state laws which penalise stalking and harassment online, including those that can impose jail terms for menacing and harassing somebody online.

"Bullying is a serious problem. But the scholarly evidence shows clearly that children who are bullied online are bullied at school as well.

"Policy that treats cyberbullying as distinct from the broader bullying problem will provide little protection to vulnerable kids, and presents a danger to free speech," said Mr Berg.

Chris Berg is the author of the report *A social problem, not a technological problem: Bullying, cyberbullying and public policy*, along with Simon Breheny, director of the Institute of Public Affairs Legal Rights Project, available [here](#).

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