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## TAXPAYER FUNDED SUBMISSIONS DISTORT INQUIRY AS RACIAL HATRED CLAIMS BLOWOUT

"Contributions to public debate from taxpayer-funded, ideologically-biased groups distort the public policy process," says Simon Breheny, Director of Policy at free-market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

Research by the Institute of Public Affairs has found that of the 157 pro-18C submissions given by groups to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights freedom of speech inquiry, 42 were government funded and 13 were various government agencies and bodies.

"A large number of submissions to the inquiry favouring no change to section 18C are from government agencies or taxpayer-funded groups. The position of these groups is completely out of step with the public - polling clearly shows Australians overwhelmingly favour change."

"This is a sock puppet arrangement where government departments give money to organisations to advance the anti-change argument. This process can give the appearance of public support for changes when the reality is that Australians understand the damage caused by section 18C in cases like the one against the QUT students."

"Parliamentary inquiries should encourage interaction between the parliament and members of the public, not government bureaucrats and their government-funded proxies. Submissions from taxpayer-funded organisations may skew the committee process towards the retention of section 18C and give a false reading of the true mood of the public."

[As reported in the Australian today](#) the Australian Human Rights Commission currently has 70 'open' racial hatred claims as uncovered by a freedom of information request by the Institute of Public Affairs. As of March 2016, there was only 18 'open' with the Commission.

"'Commissioner' is the perfect title for Tim Soutphommasane, who appears to spend all his time commissioning complaints under section 18C. Soutphommasane's incessant solicitation appears to have led to a massive increase in the number of complaints being handled by the Human Rights Commission. No doubt the next step will be for the AHRC to cry poor, and lay claim to an even larger pile of taxpayer's money," said Mr Breheny.

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