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FREE SPEECH INQUIRY DISAPPOINTS IN FAILING TO RECOMMEND 18C REPEAL

"It is disappointing that the human rights committee has today failed to recommend the complete repeal of 18C as an option for reform in its freedom of speech inquiry report tabled today," says Simon Breheny, Director of Policy at free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

"While the option to replace the words "offend", "insult", and "humiliate" with the word "harass" is a step forward, deleting section 18C altogether is the only certain way to restore free speech."

"The ball is now in the Coalition government's court. We look forward to the government's response to the committee report, which ought to proceed with the full repeal of section 18C in line with the expectations of the Australian public."

The Institute of Public Affairs made one of the most [comprehensive written submissions](#) to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights freedom of speech inquiry, recommending that section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) be repealed in its entirety. Mr Breheny, and IPA Senior Fellow Chris Berg also appeared before the committee to deliver expert testimony on 31 January 2017. Section 18C currently makes it unlawful to "offend, insult, humiliate, or intimidate" another person on the basis of "race, colour, or national or ethnic origin."

"Polling released last month [showed](#) that 95% of Australians believe freedom of speech is important or very important. 48% of respondents support removing the words "insult" and "offend" from section 18C of the RDA; up three points from the previous Galaxy survey in November, while there has been a 2% decrease in the number of people opposing changes (down from 38% to 36%)."

"Section 18C reform is also a very important issue for Coalition supporters. Every division of the Liberal Party, except New South Wales, has passed a motion in favour of amending section 18C. A motion at Liberal Party Federal Council in 2016 calling for the removal of the words "offend and "insult" was also successful," said Mr Breheny.

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