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NEW CYBER REGULATOR NOT THE ANSWER TO BULLYING

“The government’s proposed anti-cyberbullying laws represent a serious threat to freedom of speech and digital liberty,” Chris Berg, Policy Director with free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs, said today.

The government proposes to set up a ‘Children’s e-Safety Commissioner’ which would have the power to remove ‘harmful’ content from social media sites.

Mr Berg placed a submission into the Commonwealth government’s discussion paper on the Coalition’s Policy to Enhance Online Safety for Children. It was co-authored by the Director of the IPA’s Legal Rights Project Simon Breheny.

“Let’s call the government’s proposal for what it is: a new censorship power vested in a Canberra bureaucrat,” said Mr Berg.

“Bullying is a very serious problem. But the Children’s e-Safety Commissioner will do nothing to assist children who are being bullied.

“There are a large number of existing laws which already cover any conduct which could be considered cyberbullying.

“The Commonwealth Criminal Code already prohibits menacing, offensive, and insulting conduct on the internet. On top of that there are defamation laws, anti-stalking and harassment laws, and laws which protect against threats of harm,” said Mr Berg.

“Children and their parents need better education about what remedies and protections are already available to them, not a new bureaucracy.

“The Abbott government maintains it was elected to pursue a ‘freedom agenda.’ One of the best things the government could do for freedom right now would be to abandon this worthless but dangerous social media censorship scheme,” said Mr Berg.

The IPA submission to the Children’s e-Safety Commissioner inquiry is available at <http://ipa.org.au/publications/2241/enhancing-online-safety-for-children>

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