

We The People  
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We the People 245 The 18C Thought Police



Good day to you. The Australian Racial Discrimination Act 1975 holds section 18C which says that, *it is unlawful to do an act in public which is likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate because of race, colour or ethnic origin*. This may sound worthy at first pass but in my view nothing could be further from the truth. Recent articles by journalists Frank Furedi and Brenden O'Neill create a compelling case to completely dismiss the entirety of section 18C as these laws do not simply set standards but they police people just like the **Thought Police** in George Orwell's book 1984. These are odd and unusual laws that censor verbal communication and regulate behaviour or at least try to. My view is that you cannot successfully engineer society through the legislature. You cannot stop people thinking and it tends to just drive discordant ideas underground.

The basis for this is because section 18C in effect suppresses freedom of speech and in the end so called hate speech should be defeated in a battle of ideas, not in legislation. If you hide the play ground bully nothing changes until people openly decide it's unacceptable and despatch the bully through free speech. That's what overturned slavery in the United States. Consider the words of Fredrick Douglas, the great 19th Century black American writer and one time slave. In his 1860 essay 'A plea for free speech' he said *"Liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one's thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist. That, of all rights is the dread of tyrants. It is the right which they first of all strike down as they know its power"*. Compare that stirring beautiful ode to freedom of speech, written by a man who suffered forced servitude and floggings, with the *denigration of freedom of speech* by comfortable arm chair tweeters today. Freedom of speech is not a threat to people, it is a threat to power and wrong. On section 18C too many are talking about a trade off between free speech and abuse. There can be no trade off because freedom of speech allows us to confront discrimination openly in the public realm of ideas and argument.

Internationally the moral crusade against discriminatory speech has acquired a momentum of its own to a point that it's policing continually expands into new areas of public life. It's political correctness gone mad where qangos and administrators are employed as unqualified, ill informed and ignorant moral watch dogs for society. Recently it was discovered that the European Parliament has quietly introduced a rule preventing expressions of hate speech in its own chambers. This covert introduction of special powers can be used to prevent the broadcast of discriminatory speech or offensive utterance *as they see it*. We may as well burn the books which express ideas we don't like but then again that's been tried and failed. Last year in England the Nottinghamshire Police decided to treat misogyny as a hate crime on par with racism and xenophobia. Soon reports of wolf whistling, car horns and cat calls directed at women provided much needed evidence that discriminatory speech could now be a simple cheeky or mischievous gesture. The arbitrary character of a law that attempts to protect individuals and groups from feeling insulted and offended has fostered a climate where the denunciation of discriminatory speech has become a medium for shutting down genuine discourse and scoring political points to the apparent benefit of a few at the direct expense of the many.

Changing a few words in the Act from one thing to 'harass' is of no real use because the Professor Triggses of this world may soon seize on **harassment** and expand its potency resulting in a net social loss yet again. Section 18C of the Australian Racial Discrimination Act must be scrapped entirely not only because it is censorious but because in treating the majority groups as children who need to be told what to say, it does more to insult, humiliate and offend the majority than any racist throwback ever could a minority. Next time someone calls you racist, bigoted or a feminazi publically, then tell them you have been, offended, insulted, humiliated and intimidated and that you will be taking out an 18C complaint against them. For it is pure rubbish and authoritarian dictatorship and mind control to prevent people from expressing themselves.

**Until next time this is Kent Bayley**