

MEDIA RELEASE

Inquiry into freedom of speech really isn't

Canberra, 8th November 2016

EFA is disappointed that the Attorney-General has ignored the major threats to freedom of expression in Australia in framing the terms of reference for the parliamentary inquiry he announced today.

The extremely narrow terms of reference for this inquiry mean that it is not 'an inquiry into freedom of speech' as the Attorney's media release claims.

There are many serious threats to free expression in 21st century Australia, including our archaic and inconsistent defamation laws, section 35P of the ASIO Act, censorship of the Internet and the chilling effects of mass surveillance.

EFA Executive Officer Jon Lawrence said today, "if the Attorney wants to call his inquiry one into 'freedom of speech' then he needs to include the major threats to free expression in the terms of reference. The issues around section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act hardly qualify as major threats to free expression."

About EFA

Established in January 1994, Electronic Frontiers Australia (EFA) is a national, membership-based non-profit organisation representing Internet users concerned with digital freedoms and rights.

EFA is independent of government and commerce, and is funded by membership subscriptions and donations from individuals and organisations with an altruistic interest in promoting civil liberties in the digital context. EFA members and supporters come from all parts of Australia and from diverse backgrounds.

EFA's major objectives are to protect and promote the civil liberties of users of digital communications systems (such as the Internet) and of those affected by their use and to educate the community at large about the social, political and civil liberties issues involved in the use of digital communications systems.

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