

Dear Sirs, Madams,

Massive ethical, intellectual and pragmatic challenges are being angled at Australia at this time.

Compared to the USA, which has enshrined Free Speech, our protection of the right to open communication of differing views is relatively weak and subservient to the threat of libel and slander laws, occasionally resulting in the fearful pulping of a book by a commentator such as Bob Ellis prior to publication. Australian journalists can also come under legal threat if protecting sources vital to the exposure of news important to the community. Relatively recent anti-vilification laws were progressive, but now the coalition seems to have lost its bearings with the sedition provisions of the proposed Anti-Terrorism Act.

If we're not free to openly and vigorously discuss the pros and cons of such vital issues as Greenhouse gas emissions policy, the sustainability of life on the planet if we follow current practice, the hidden exploitation of the weak, including animals, for profit, the waging of war in Australia's name on foreign soil, Immigration Department treatment of asylum seekers and Australian citizens and proposed legislation such as the so-called 'Workplace Choices,' we're in dire straits indeed.

The proposed 'sedition' provisions should be removed from the proposed legislation. Current law in this area is more than sufficient. I would strongly encourage law-makers instead to move towards enshrining free speech as a foundation stone of democracy itself.

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