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FREE SPEECH DOES NOT EQUAL VILIFICATION

Statement from National Congress of Australia's First Peoples Co-Chairs, Les Malezer and Jody Broun

The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples is reviewing yesterday's judgement in the Bolt case to ensure positive results derive from this landmark decision.

The Congress understands this judgement as an important reminder for us all – there is no room in a modern and responsible Australia for racial vilification.

We must be prepared to fight to protect freedom of speech by also protecting people who are culturally different and vulnerable in our community.

Australian society and law is built upon principles of equality and non-discrimination and persons in public and mainstream media must have an appreciation of these social norms.

Freedom of speech is not a license to foster intolerance and racial hatred, but a cornerstone of liberty which must be protected and not abused.

We thank our brothers and sisters who brought this before the courts.

It reinforces that there must be respect for another's identity as a fundamental principle and that it is, in fact, protected by law.

This also serves as a stark reminder that legislative protection such as the Racial Discrimination Act is in fact a necessary component of a liberal democracy, and not a burden upon any class of people.

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