Freedom of speech has become politically prominent and contested in Australia in recent years, most notably through the long-running debate about the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) s 18C. Public discussion about freedom of speech has tended to be narrowly focused. There are many areas of law which restrict or regulate freedom of speech, many of which are longstanding and well-known. Amongst the most significant, well-established and pervasive is the tort of defamation. The purpose of defamation law is to strike a balance between the protection of reputation and freedom of speech. Defamation law then is the common law cause of action with freedom of speech as a central interest. Given the renewed focus in Australia on freedom of speech, it is an opportune time to revisit the issue of defamation law reform. The last New South Wales Law Reform Commission report on defamation was released over twenty years ago; the last Australian Law Reform Commission report on defamation was released almost forty years ago. Much has changed in the intervening decades. The national, uniform defamation laws, commencing in 2006, were principally directed to achieving the goal of uniformity, rather than substantive law reform. There is then still scope for further reform. This lecture outlines the case for defamation law reform and the principles that should inform future reform processes.