

Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026

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Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026

Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee

George Street

Brisbane Qld 4000

Via email: jicsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee

Cairns Regional Council welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026, in particular the measures aimed at strengthening community safety and social cohesion across Queensland through:

- The prohibition on the public use of hate symbols;
- Prohibition of expressions that incite discrimination, hostility, or violence toward certain groups; and
- Protections for faith communities to ensure safe access to places of worship.

Our beautiful city is home to diverse cultural, faith, and community groups, each bringing unique traditions, strengths and perspectives that contribute greatly to our region's vibrant identity, economic growth and social resilience. Cairns is also a key regional hub for Australia's humanitarian settlement program, with large established communities from refugee backgrounds. Cairns Regional Council invests significantly in supporting multiculturalism through the provision of capacity building opportunities and grant funding for community associations to share their traditions and cultures with the broader community. We also work with community partners to support new arrivals to learn about their new home, connect with their communities and ensure they can participate fully in the Cairns community.

Successful multiculturalism and sustained social cohesion require intentional and robust policy and investment at all levels of government. As a local government authority, Council plays a key role in fostering safe, inclusive, and cohesive communities. Council supports the objective of the proposed reforms and provides the following comments for the Committee's consideration.

1. Strengthening the prohibition on public use of hate symbols

Council supports strengthening prohibitions on the public display of hate symbols that are clearly associated with extremist ideologies, promoting violence, racial hatred, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and any other forms of racial or religious discrimination. To ensure effectiveness, transparency and enforceability, Council urges the Committee to ensure that:

- Prohibited symbols are clearly and exhaustively defined and are supported by a transparent regulatory mechanism for designation;
- The legislation provides clear guidance regarding what constitutes “public display”;
- Appropriate exemptions be included for legitimate academic, artistic, journalistic, cultural, or educational purposes.

2. Prohibiting expressions that incite discrimination, hostility or violence

Council supports measures to prohibit expressions that intentionally incite discrimination, hostility, or violence against individuals or groups based on protected attributes. Queensland already provides protections under:

- The Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld);
- The Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld).

Council supports reforms that strengthen these protections where necessary, provided that:

- The threshold for “incitement” is clearly defined and limited to serious conduct creating real risk of harm;
- The legislation distinguishes between harmful incitement and lawful, albeit controversial, public discourse;
- Enforcement powers are proportionate and supported by clear prosecutorial guidance.

Clear statutory language will be essential to ensure consistency of application, fairness and protections for all and to reduce the risk of uncertainty or unintended consequences.

3. Human rights compatibility

Council emphasises the importance of ensuring compatibility with the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld), particularly the protection of freedom of expression. Limitations on expression should be demonstrably justified, proportionate, and targeted at preventing genuine harm.

4. Protecting faith communities and safe access to places of worship

Faith communities are integral to Queensland’s social fabric and contribute significantly to civic life. Council supports legislative measures that ensure individuals can access places of worship free from intimidation, harassment, or obstruction. Protecting safe access to places of worship must include:

- Clearly defined safe access provisions around places of worship;
- Strong and enforceable penalties for intimidation or harassment;
- Collaboration between the Queensland Police Service, local governments, and faith leaders to ensure effective implementation.

5. Legislative clarity and certainty

Legislation must clearly articulate extension to all forms of religious prejudice, hostility, or discrimination and the language used throughout the title and body of the legislation should reflect this application.

6. Investment in social cohesion

Council urges the Queensland Government to invest in social cohesion, early intervention and prevention to ensure a holistic approach to preventing religious and cultural discrimination, including consideration of the recommendations within the Australian Human Rights Commission's 'National Anti-Racism Framework: A roadmap to eliminating racism in Australia'.

7. Implementation considerations for Local Government

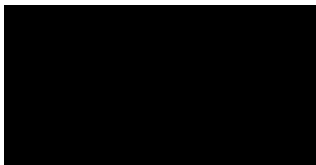
Local governments are often at the forefront of responding to community tensions and supporting affected communities. Effective implementation will require coordination between State agencies, local governments and community stakeholders. Accordingly, Council recommends that local governments be consulted regarding any new compliance or reporting responsibilities arising from the legislation. Council urges the Committee to consider the following measures;

- Adequate investment in community education, engagement, and preventative initiatives to support sustainable social cohesion;
- Clear public guidance and messaging to support community understanding of the reforms;
- Mechanisms to monitor the impact of the legislation, manage complaints and review its effectiveness over time.

Cairns Regional Council is committed to supporting social cohesion and building a connected and welcoming community for all. We support legislation that helps make our community safer and stands against racial and faith-based discrimination and hatred. We encourage the Committee to carefully consider the recommendations articulated in this submission and look forward to working with all levels of government to protect all faith-based communities from harm.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission.

Yours sincerely



Cr Amy Eden
Mayor