

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

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IN RESPONSE PLEASE QUOTE: bcwjcm: Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026

17 February 2026

Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee
Queensland Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Re: QTU submission: Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026

This submission of objection to the Bill is made on behalf of the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU), in accordance with established QTU policy.

The QTU supports the extension of civil liberties to all people, including the fundamental freedoms of expression and assembly.

The QTU affirms its belief that all individuals have the right to live free from any form of discrimination, including but not limited to discrimination based on race, colour, gender, age, physical appearance, marital status, pregnancy, child rearing or nursing, religion, political opinion, trade union activity, national or social origin, socioeconomic status or condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or association with, or relationship to a person identified by any of these attributes.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, I invite you to contact me directly via email at qtu@qtu.asn.au or by phone on 07 3512 9000.

Yours sincerely

Brendan Crotty
Acting General Secretary



Queensland Teachers' Union

Submission to Queensland Parliament's Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026

February 2026

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Introduction

The Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) is the professional and industrial voice of Queensland's teachers and school leaders in state schools and TAFE institutes and other educational facilities. We have promoted and protected public education throughout the state of Queensland for 137 years, advocating for our members and actively shaping policy and legislative reforms. This submission is made in support of our members, students, and the wider education community.

As a significant stakeholder in Queensland education, the QTU is committed to actively engaging in processes in which the voice of teachers ought to be heard. The QTU's submissions and participation in stakeholder consultation are informed through the Union's active membership, which includes more than 2,900 QTU Workplace Representatives as well as decision making forums like our QTU Executive, which consists of democratically elected members from across the state.

This submission is made on behalf of Queensland's educators -teachers and school leaders - who work every day to provide safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments for the state's students and to strengthen the communities in which they live and work.

The Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) appreciates the opportunity to make a submission on the *Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026* ("the Bill"). The QTU is deeply committed to defending civil liberties, political freedoms, and democratic participation for all Queenslanders. This commitment is reflected in longstanding QTU policy:

"The QTU supports the extension of civil liberties to all people, including freedom of expression and the freedom of assembly. The QTU states its belief that all people shall have the right to be free from any form of discrimination ... including political opinion, trade union activity, religion, national or social origin, sexual orientation or gender identity."

Guided by QTU policy affirming freedom from discrimination and the rights to expression and assembly, the Union supports genuine measures that protect vulnerable communities. However, the Bill is unlikely to achieve this aim and instead risks fostering social division and eroding public trust in democratic institutions.

The Union thanks the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee for the opportunity to respond to this inquiry.

Key concerns

The QTU strongly opposes the *Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026* in its current form.

We condemn all forms of racism. While the Bill seeks to stamp out antisemitism, we believe this Bill presents serious overreach that threatens democratic freedoms, suppresses legitimate political disagreement and disproportionately targets select communities advocating for human rights.

The Union acknowledges the seriousness of antisemitism and all forms of discrimination. However, the Bill as drafted would significantly and unacceptably restrict the fundamental freedoms of Queenslanders, including QTU members, without adequate safeguards, proportionality, or democratic oversight.

After reviewing the Bill, the QTU raises the following substantial concerns and recommends that the Bill be withdrawn and reconsidered through a proper consultative and democratic process.

Erosion of the rights of Queenslanders free speech and freedom of political communication

The Bill expands the concept of “prohibited symbols” to include “prohibited expressions” that may be prescribed by regulation at the discretion of the Minister (see proposed s 52C(1A)–(3A)). The Bill then proposes to criminalise public recitation, publication, distribution or display of such expressions (proposed s 52DA). Importantly, proposed s 52DA(3) places an evidential burden on the defendant to prove they had a reasonable excuse, meaning that not only could the Minister arbitrarily determine what constitutes a prohibited expression, but the burden of proof is then reversed onto the individual accused.

This represents a significant encroachment on Queenslanders’ rights to:

- freedom of political communication
- freedom of expression and
- freedom to participate in peaceful protest.

The broad, undefined nature of “expressions” creates the possibility that legitimate political slogans, protest chants, historical references or union messaging could be prohibited by regulation—without parliamentary debate. While the existing requirement to consult with the chairperson of the Crime and Corruption Commission, Human Rights Commissioner and the Police Commissioner still applies, this does not guarantee genuine consultation.

This is inconsistent with QTU policy, which affirms freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and the protection of political opinion and trade union activity.

Extraordinary powers granted without democratic oversight

The Bill allows the Minister to prescribe organisations, symbols and expressions by regulation (proposed ss 52C and 52CA), meaning future governments can unilaterally determine what constitutes prohibited political or public speech. Such decisions would not be subject to the usual scrutiny of primary legislation.

This creates an unprecedented mechanism for decision-making overreach. If not rectified, a future Queensland government could exploit these powers to suppress dissent, political criticism or union advocacy.

The QTU strongly opposes any legislative approach that permits undue political influence over public discourse, particularly where it circumvents necessary democratic safeguards.

Lack of definitions and the risk of overreach

While the Bill has been presented publicly as “combatting antisemitism”, the legislation itself contains **no specific definition of any antisemitic term, phrase, or symbol**.

Instead, it provides the Minister with power to define any “expression” by regulation.

The absence of specificity:

- undermines the stated intent of the Bill
- raises serious concerns about executive discretion
- makes it unclear which communities are being protected and
- risks politically motivated use of the regulatory power.

Such uncertainty opens the possibility for arbitrary or discriminatory enforcement. As a union representing tens of thousands of educators, the QTU opposes legislation that empowers governments to define permissible political language without transparent scrutiny or democratic safeguards.

Significant expansion of police powers without safeguards

The Bill expands warrantless search powers in relation to prohibited symbols and expressions (amendments to Section 30 and 32 of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000).

It also introduces powers enabling police to detain and search individuals if they *suspect* the person has used or displayed a prohibited expression or symbol.

The threshold for suspicion is unclear and subjective, raising serious concerns about:

- arbitrary policing
- profiling
- disproportionate impacts on marginalised groups
- effects on protest and public assembly.

QTU members frequently participate in peaceful political protests—including marches, rallies and community actions. These expanded powers pose an unacceptable risk to members’ rights to assemble and express political opinions without fear of detention.

Such overreach is contrary to the rule of law, which requires clear offences, proportionate policing powers and accountability.

Inadequate consultation and an undemocratic process

The Bill was released with less than a week permitted for public submissions. Given its expansive and far-reaching impact on civil liberties, policing powers and political freedoms, such a rushed timeline is incompatible with democratic principles.

The QTU asserts that:

- proper consultation is essential for legislation affecting rights and liberties
- rushing such a Bill through parliament undermines public trust
- the Bill must be withdrawn to allow for comprehensive community, legal, civil society and human rights scrutiny.

This concern is compounded by the Bill's complexity—spanning amendments across the Criminal Code, Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 and multiple other statutes.

Impact on protest rights and union members

Queensland has a strong history of peaceful protest, in which QTU members have regularly participated—whether related to educational matters, social justice, environmental concerns or human rights.

By criminalising undefined “expressions” and empowering police to detain individuals based on suspicion alone, the Bill presents a grave risk to all who participate in public demonstrations.

QTU members must be able to engage in democratic advocacy without fear of criminal liability or arbitrary police action.

Summary of recommendations

- 1 The Queensland Teachers' Union urges the Parliamentary Committee to recommend that this Bill be withdrawn in its current form.
- 2 The QTU calls on the Committee to ensure that a comprehensive, transparent and consultative review process is undertaken to:
 - ensure protections against antisemitism and other forms of hate speech are effective and appropriately targeted
 - safeguard rather than erode civil liberties
 - ensure all regulatory powers are subject to parliamentary scrutiny
 - prevent executive overreach
 - protect the rights to peaceful protest and political communication and
 - ensure full compliance with Queensland's human rights and anti-discrimination frameworks.

The QTU stands ready to contribute constructively to any future process that balances community safety with the democratic freedoms essential to Queensland's identity.

Conclusion

The QTU has a long-standing commitment to standing with communities targeted by discrimination, hostility or violence. Guided by our policy affirming the rights of all people to live free from discrimination and to exercise freedom of expression and assembly, we recognise the importance of genuine measures that protect vulnerable groups. However, the Bill, despite its stated purpose, is unlikely to provide meaningful safeguards for the Jewish community and instead risks deepening social division and weakening public confidence in democratic institutions.

The Bill represents an overreach of executive power and embeds structural bias that threatens civil liberties. Its broad and discretionary provisions risk criminalising legitimate political expression, including advocacy for Palestinian rights, and have implications for freedom of political communication—rights that the QTU's policy explicitly upholds and defends.

In line with our commitment to civil liberties and democratic accountability, the QTU opposes the Bill's attempt to restrict free speech and establish extraordinary powers without sufficient scrutiny or oversight.

We therefore urge that the Bill be withdrawn and subjected to a comprehensive, transparent review of its implications for civil liberties, political participation and the rule of law.

We call on the Committee to uphold Australia's democratic foundations by ensuring that the fundamental right to political communication - central to both public debate and the work of unions - is fully protected.