

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

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Submission By: Social Responsibilities Committee, Anglican Church Southern Queensland
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Attn: Committee Secretariat

Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee (Queensland Parliament)

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

Introduction

The Social Responsibilities Committee (SRC) of the Anglican Church Southern Queensland (ACSQ) was formed in 2009 to respond to social justice issues raised within the Church, wider community, media, government and parliamentary committees, among others.

The SRC welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Queensland Parliament's Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee on the Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026 (the Bill).

We note that the Bill was introduced into Queensland Parliament on Tuesday, 10 February 2026, with submissions due by 10am Tuesday, 17 February 2026.

Given the complexity of the Bill, the multiple legal instruments it seeks to amend, and the brief submission timeline, we are regrettably unable to respond to all sections of the Bill that are of concern.

Response

While the SRC acknowledges the unprecedented and devastating circumstances under which the Bill was introduced — the mass shooting that targeted Jewish Australians celebrating Chanukah at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025 — we are unable to support this Bill.

Legislation of this kind must consider both the political moment and climate in which it is introduced and future governments who will inherit it.

Bill's complexity and intended and unintended impacts

The 77-page Bill is for "An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992, the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000, the Police Service Administration Regulation 2016, the Queensland Community Safety Act 2024, the Weapons Act 1990, the Weapons Regulation 2016, the Youth Justice Act 1992 and the legislation mentioned in schedule 1 for particular purposes..." (p.7 of the Bill).

Providing organisations and individuals with less than a week to respond to this Bill is manifestly inadequate, especially given the complexity of the Bill; that it is for amending the *Criminal Code* and multiple pieces of legislation; and, its extensive scope with serious intended (and potentially unintended) consequences for social justice advocates (including

our own) and the wider community (including for already marginalised and vulnerable community members).

We also question the lack of community consultation before the Bill was drafted and during the drafting process, as well as the rushed pre- and post-submission timeline. It is our understanding that relevant religious and multicultural groups (and their peak bodies), who will obviously be impacted by this Bill (if passed), were not consulted before or during the Bill's drafting. If the Queensland Government is genuine about protecting the safety and right to worship of these groups it is reasonable to expect that they would be meaningfully consulted.

The Bill's very brief turnaround time, the lack of consultation with the Queensland community (the very people the Bill purports to protect) and its focus on one religious-cultural group raises questions about the Bill's integrity and some of the Queensland Government's intentions for introducing it.

The Bill's objectives

The Bill's [Explanatory Notes](#)¹ state that the Bill's objectives are (in part) to:

- prohibit the use of expressions used to incite discrimination, hostility or violence towards certain groups;
- protect faith communities by ensuring people are not intimidated while accessing places of worship;
- modernise criminal offences related to religious worship to align with contemporary drafting practices and increase maximum penalties;

Given the very brief submission turnaround time, we are confined to addressing some of the issues solely related to the above objectives. We will draw upon our experience and expertise in doing so.

1. Re the objective to “prohibit the use of expressions used to incite discrimination, hostility or violence towards certain groups”

Exceptionalising antisemitism

The Bill's title commences with “Fighting Antisemitism”. The [Explanatory Speech](#)² and [Explanatory Notes](#) reference the 14 December 2025 Bondi Beach mass shooting and single out antisemitism. The Queensland Government's [associated statements](#)³ and traditional media and social media commentary also single out antisemitism and antisemitic attacks.

¹ <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Tabled-Papers/docs/5826T0141/5826t141.pdf>

² https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/events/han/2026/2026_02_10_DAILY.pdf#page=34

³ <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/104460>

Since late 2023 the exceptionalising of antisemitism — including by local, state and federal governments — has occurred in a wider context where criticism of the State of Israel is conflated with antisemitism by those whose interests this serves, especially pro-Israel lobby groups. The disproportionate influence of another nation state and its supporters on Australia's domestic and foreign policies is becoming increasingly alarming.

It is highly problematic and concerning that Premier David Crisafulli and Attorney General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Integrity Deb Frecklington have [announced](#)⁴ in a joint statement that phrases associated with the Free Palestine movement, such as “From the river to the sea [Palestine will be free]”, will be prohibited, with a two-year maximum penalty imposed for “Distributing, publishing, displaying or reciting” such phrases. This decision fails to account for the fact that any given slogan may have multiple meanings (depending on who is using it and in what context) and criminalises legitimate political expression in a democratic country. The singling out of slogans solely associated with the Free Palestine movement, including the [classification](#)⁵ of such phrases as “terrorist slogans”, is highly pejorative and racist because:

- It equates advocating for the end of what the United Nations reports as the [genocide](#)⁶, [apartheid](#)⁷ and [occupation](#)⁸ of Indigenous Palestinians with terrorism.
- Overlooks the fact that many local and national Jewish groups, including the [Jewish Council of Australia](#)⁹, are “concerned about the rising discourse in Australia, promoted by Israel lobby groups, which conflates antisemitism with support for Palestinian human rights”.
- Suppresses advocacy for what the [United Nations](#)¹⁰ recently reaffirmed as “the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including their right to live in freedom, justice and dignity”.

Alarmingly we are seeing first-hand the exceptionalising of antisemitism in Queensland Police Service (QPS) media statements. For example, two days after the Bondi Beach mass shooting that targeted the Jewish community, the street-facing wall of a Brisbane mosque was disgracefully vandalised with a swastika and the words [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (asterisks are our own). Despite this, the QPS media statement, which was emailed

⁴ <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/104460>

⁵ <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/104460>

⁶ a-hrc-60-crp-3.pdf

⁷ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/israels-55-year-occupation-of-palestinian-territory-is-apartheid-special-rapporteur-for-the-situation-of-human-rights-in-the-palestinian-territory-occupied-since-1967-statement/>

⁸ Palestine: International law obliges Israel to end occupation, says rights panel | UN News

⁹ <https://www.jewishcouncil.com.au/2024/02/jewish-council-launches-expert-voice-antisemitism-racism-in-australia>

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/right-of-the-palestinian-people-to-self-determination-hrc-5apr24/>

to the editor of our Diocese's *anglican focus* news site upon her request, only mentioned the antisemitic graffiti, stating that:

"Initial information indicates that between 8pm 17 December and 3am 18 December, an unknown person has spray painted several antisemitic words and symbols onto a building near Telegraph Road."

It was only following the editor's emailed feedback that the QPS media statement was revised to include both "Islamophobic and antisemitic graffiti".

This exceptionalising of antisemitism by the QPS is not an isolated incident and it is important to note here that the QPS media team is part of the Communications, Culture & Engagement Division, which sits under the Office of the Commissioner. We also note that the Bill was introduced by the Hon Daniel Purdie, who has been the Minister for Police and Emergency Services since 1 November 2024.

In December 2024, a Morningside man was charged for allegedly displaying an electronic sign featuring offensive racial vilification, with the sign [reportedly stating](#)¹¹ [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Even though the offensive sign targeted "Jews, Muslims and Africans" the media statement on the [QPS website](#)¹² only makes specific reference to "antisemitism", stating that:

"There is no place for anti-Semitism or prejudice or hatred of any kind."

We contrast this publicly accessible statement on the QPS website with a QPS media statement emailed to our news site's editor regarding the 5 September 2025 incident when the Islamic College of Brisbane was sent a highly distressing bomb and stabbing threat, which included an utterly offensive message and what appeared to be a photo of two pipe bombs. The full text of the message is as follows (asterisks are our own):

"I hope this email finds you [REDACTED] well. I'm writing this because I'm going to inform you I'm going to [REDACTED] on 5/09/2025. I've had it with you [REDACTED] ruining our gene pool and stealing our jobs. I'm either gonna im [sic] going [sic] to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and that place at you're [sic] [REDACTED], Australia you [REDACTED]"

Despite the explicitly racist and Islamophobic wording of this threat, the QPS media statement that was emailed to our news site's editor upon her request bewilderingly said the following:

"The Queensland Police Service takes offences of this nature seriously. There is nothing to suggest this was religiously or racially motivated."

¹¹ "Brisbane man jailed for displaying racist, 'Jew-hating' Temu sign", *The Courier Mail*, 23 May 2025

¹² <https://mypolice.qld.gov.au/news/2024/12/12/man-charged-with-racial-vilification-offence-morningside/>

These sample QPS media statements illustrate not only jaw-dropping double standards that privilege the physical and cultural safety of one group (that is the Jewish community) over others (these being the Muslim and African communities), it points to a worrying discriminatory culture in the QPS (and possibly the wider Queensland Government) that normalises Islamophobia.

As Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, Aftab Malik, says in his 2025 [strategic framework](#)¹³: "The normalisation of Islamophobia is so widespread that many incidents go unreported (p.7)."

Such dismissing and concealing of Islamophobia by the QPS, which are arguably intentional, directly impact the mainstream media's reporting and community perceptions. Furthermore, such dismissing and concealing of Islamophobia by the QPS would arguably skew the QPS' data collection and subsequent reporting of racial and religious vilification, including its reporting to the Queensland Government (and its agencies), to the media and to other organisations.

As reported by Aftab Malik, the Islamophobia Register Australia [documented](#)¹⁴ a 740 per cent increase in reported incidents of Islamophobia in the fortnight following the Bondi Beach terror attack — this is despite the widely documented heroic action of Syrian Muslim Ahmed el Ahmed. The 2025 *Islamophobia in Australia Report 5*, which covered the 2023 to 2024 period, [documented](#)¹⁵ a significant spike in in-person Islamophobic incidents, explaining that:

"The findings reveal a disturbing surge in Islamophobic incidents, with 309 in-person incidents reported—more than double the annual average of previous reporting periods...A particularly distressing aspect of the report is the disproportionate targeting of Muslim women and girls, who constitute nearly 75% of victims. From verbal abuse and physical assaults to the desecration of religious spaces, Muslim women bear the brunt of Islamophobia, often while navigating public spaces, workplaces, and educational institutions (p.8)."

Racism in all its forms is egregious, including antisemitism and Islamophobia — both of which have increased since late 2023. All forms of racism must be equally acknowledged and addressed in a democratic country.

¹³ <https://www.oseci.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-09/national-response-final-report.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/jan/02/islamophobia-surged-bondi-attack-australia-muslim-community-ntwnfb>

¹⁵ <https://islamophobia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Islamophobia-in-Australia-Report-5.pdf>

Effectively fighting racism

The website of the Jewish Council of Australia (JCA), which was founded in early 2024 as an alternative Jewish voice — comprising over 1,000 Jewish academics, historians, human rights lawyers and writers — [explains that](#)¹⁶:

“The only way to effectively fight antisemitism is by committing to work in solidarity with other groups facing bigotry and discrimination to fight all forms of racism.”

In a media release in [January](#)¹⁷, the Jewish Council of Australia explained that:

“Approaches which centre on criminalisation...cannot meaningfully address racism and antisemitism as they treat racism as an individual pathology to be punished rather than a systemic problem that must be prevented through education, leadership, accountability and sustained community investment.”

In the same media release, JCA Executive Officer Dr Max Kaiser [stated](#) that:

“Racism is not defeated by expanding police powers...or weakening safeguards on free expression. It is defeated by addressing root causes, investing in prevention, and building trust and solidarity across communities.”

We acknowledge the diversity among Jewish Australians and support the [Jewish Council of Australia's](#)¹⁸ call for an “evidence-based, whole-of-society approach” to addressing racism in all its forms, rather than exceptionalising one form of racism that may in turn support a wider pro-Israel agenda.

Like the [Jewish Council of Australia](#)¹⁹ we support the implementation of the Australian Human Rights Commission's [National Anti-Racism Framework](#)²⁰ at local, state and federal levels. We thus call for the Bill to be set aside and for the National Anti-Racism Framework, which involved extensive community consultation in its development, to be adopted.

The Australian Constitution

While we acknowledge that the Bill provides several excuses to the offence regarding the “Recital, distribution, publication or display of prohibited expressions” the legislation (if passed) risks breaching the implied freedom of political communication in the *Australian*

¹⁶ <https://www.jewishcouncil.com.au/who-we-are>

¹⁷ <https://www.jewishcouncil.com.au/2026/01/media-release-jewish-council-urges-pause-on-rushed-and-dangerous-hate-speech-bill>

¹⁸ <https://www.jewishcouncil.com.au/2026/01/media-release-jewish-council-urges-pause-on-rushed-and-dangerous-hate-speech-bill>

¹⁹ <https://www.jewishcouncil.com.au/2026/01/media-release-jewish-council-urges-pause-on-rushed-and-dangerous-hate-speech-bill>

²⁰ <https://humanrights.gov.au/resource-hub/by-resource-type/reports/race/anti-racism-framework>

*Constitution*²¹. Limiting the prohibited expressions offence by prohibiting only certain phrases does not address this problem. For example, we hold that criminalising phrases such as the “From the river to the sea [Palestine will be free]” would burden this implied freedom.

2. Re the objectives to “protect faith communities by ensuring people are not intimidated while accessing places of worship” and “modernise criminal offences related to religious worship to align with contemporary drafting practices and increase maximum penalties”

The [Anglican Church Southern Queensland](https://anglicanchurchsq.org.au/)²² is a long-established, mainstream Christian Church serving a geographical area of 500,000 square kilometres across Southern Queensland, with over 175 active clergy and more than 130 parishes (many with multiple worship centres). The ACSQ also proudly includes congregations that are wholly Torres Strait Islander, Sudanese, South Sudanese and Cantonese. The ACSQ is also proudly part of formal and informal ecumenical, interfaith and multicultural networks.

Thus, the legislation, if passed, would have direct and serious impacts on our Church’s operations and functions.

It is relevant to note in this submission that in the lead up to several interfaith prayer vigils for Palestine and community Q&A panel events that we have co-hosted during the [genocide](#)²³ — including in our Cathedral — members of pro-Israel lobby groups have sought to shut down these gatherings via internal and external channels. That each of our gatherings has appropriately included Jewish representatives among the prayer leaders and speakers has likely enabled the gatherings to continue as planned. In addition, at some of these events, members of the pro-Israel lobby have sought to loudly and/or angrily derail the proceedings, including in our Cathedral. Despite this, we do not support further criminalising “Disturbing religious worship”, including by increasing maximum penalties — we instead prefer restorative justice practices.

Given the above, the Social Responsibilities Committee of the Anglican Church Southern Queensland calls upon the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee to withdraw the Bill and engage in meaningful consultation with us and other Queensland faith groups regarding alternatives.

²¹ <https://www.aph.gov.au/constitution>

²² <https://anglicanchurchsq.org.au/>

²³ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-crp-3.pdf>

Recommendations and conclusion

The exceptionalising of antisemitism in this Bill and in the Bill's Explanatory Notes and Explanatory Speech (worryingly in the context of wider QPS exceptionalising, at least since December 2024) and the classification of phrases used by the Free Palestine movement as "terrorist slogans":

- institutionalise unequal protection
- create structural biases
- normalise Islamophobia
- potentially breach the implied freedom of political communication enshrined in the *Australian Constitution*
- violate the inalienable right of Palestinian people to self-determination, while suppressing the advocacy of such rights (including our own advocacy).

As a geographically and operationally large Church that will experience direct and serious impacts on our operations and functions (and thus on our people) if the Bill is passed, we call for meaningful consultation so alternatives can be discussed.

The Bill must be withdrawn to allow for wider community consultation and for a comprehensive review of its impacts on civil liberties, political communication, and implications for rights enshrined in other instruments, including the *Australian Constitution*.

We support the implementation of the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Anti-Racism Framework (at local, state and federal levels), which involved extensive community consultation in its development.

In the event that the Bill progresses, we are keen to offer our input at the public hearing on Thursday, 19 February 2026.

Yours sincerely,

The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt
Chair
Social Responsibilities Committee
Anglican Church Southern Queensland

Endorsed by:

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