

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

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SUBMISSION TO THE QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Regarding the *Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026* (Qld).

About the Australia-Palestine Mental Health Network:

The Australia-Palestine Mental Health Network (APMHN) is part of a collective of international networks that have formed in solidarity with, and under the guidance of, the **Palestine-Global Mental Health Network** (PGMHN). The PGMHN launched in 2019 and advocates for the mental health needs of Palestinians under illegal occupation and apartheid and has chapters that span over 20 countries: Australia, Belgium, Brasil, Canada, Chile, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Iraq, Ireland, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, South Africa, Sweden, The Netherlands, Tunisia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

We are a global, decolonial mental health movement bringing together lived-experience advocates, clinicians, researchers, and organisers to challenge genocide and systematic oppression, support collective care, and mobilise for mental health justice. We fully endorse the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) and anti-normalisation practices as stipulated by the BDS movement leadership as a nonviolent, principled strategy rooted in international law and anti-racist values.

Mental health is inseparable from social, political, and material conditions. The violence Palestinians endure is not limited to the genocide in Gaza, but extends across *all of historic Palestine* as manifestations of a single system of settler colonialism, apartheid, and occupation that produces collective and intergenerational trauma. As mental health professionals and advocates, ethical practice requires naming harm and standing in solidarity with those most impacted (Veronese & Kagee, 2025).

Statement of Opposition:

APMHN strongly opposes the newly introduced *Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026*. As a member of a global collective across nations, cultures and faiths, we unequivocally condemn all forms of genuine racism and

discrimination. We are guided by our principles of justice, freedom and dignity for all peoples and stand in solidarity against oppression worldwide. This includes the protections of all people within Queensland from racism, discrimination, and injustice.

We believe this Bill is a dangerous overreach that threatens democratic freedoms, suppresses legitimate political dissent, and disproportionately targets communities advocating for Palestinian human rights. It violates international laws of which Australia is signatory and contradicts freedoms within the Australian constitution.

It is worth noting that the Bill's framing of Israel as a state deserving of special legislative protection stands in stark contrast to its extensively documented record of violations of international law. Israel has systematically violated the Oslo Accords, under which neither side was to take steps that would change the status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, by nearly doubling the settler population from approximately 115,000 to over 700,000 and continuing to expropriate Palestinian land, demolish homes, and fragment Palestinian territory into non-contiguous enclaves. B'Tselem, Israel's own leading human rights organisation, concluded in its landmark 2021 report that Israel operates an apartheid regime from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, a finding subsequently echoed by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. In August 2024, B'Tselem published a further report titled "Welcome to Hell," documenting the systematic torture, sexual violence, starvation, and abuse of thousands of Palestinian prisoners across more than a dozen Israeli detention facilities, followed by a January 2026 update, "Living Hell," confirming that at least 84 Palestinian prisoners had died in custody since October 2023. UN experts have described Israel's use of torture against Palestinians as a preventable crime against humanity. UNICEF has documented the widespread ill-treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention, and Israel remains the only country in the world that automatically and systematically prosecutes children in military courts, detaining between 500 and 700 children per year, subjecting them to interrogation without legal counsel, physical violence, and coerced confessions. It is not lost on us that the Queensland government seeks to protect the reputation of a state whose conduct has been the subject of an ongoing genocide case at the International Court of Justice, while proposing to silence the communities most directly harmed by that conduct.

The APMHN situates mental health as inseparable from structural conditions, such as apartheid, displacement, and collective trauma, as core determinants of wellbeing. Within that framework, legislation affecting political expression is not merely a legal matter but it is a mental health issue. If the government is resolute in ensuring every Queenslander can celebrate their culture and live their lives free from hatred and violence, by centring this legislation on antisemitism, this will create greater fracturing within the community as it creates inequality in prioritising the safety of one group above others.

Key Concerns:

1. Political Communication and Psychological Safety

From an APMHN perspective, restrictions on political communication are not abstract civil liberties questions. They directly affect:

- Collective meaning-making
- Community mourning and rage and processing in a healthy way
- Trauma narration
- Advocacy as coping and resistance processes
- Peacebuilding

Research in liberation psychology and community trauma work consistently shows that **narrative suppression compounds trauma**. If Palestinian voices within Queensland, and those advocating in solidarity, perceive that they cannot safely articulate experiences of oppression, the following risks arise:

- Silencing trauma narratives
- Internalised stigma
- Heightened hypervigilance and fear
- Fragmentation within diasporic communities
- Moral injury among professionals asked to “stay neutral”
- A significant negative impact on social cohesion as a whole for the communities of Queensland

For a movement grounded in solidarity and ethical witnessing of a genocide, any law that restricts speech risks undermining **collective healing practices**.

2. Conflation of Antisemitism and Palestinian Advocacy

APMHN explicitly rejects racism and aligns with anti-racist values. Antisemitism is real, harmful, and psychologically devastating. It must be addressed within our community. However, from a mental health ethics standpoint, conflating hatred toward Jewish people with critique of state policies creates a dangerous clinical and social ambiguity. Mental health professionals have an ethical principle of “first do no harm”. The proposed legislation does not draw clear distinctions between racism and political critique. The concern is proportionality and clarity of the proposed legislation, not the legitimacy of combating hate. The Queensland Government’s actions in proposing this Bill risks conflating anti-racist commitments with suppression of liberation discourse.

The Bill’s messaging about the causes of the Bondi attack are misleading. Social cohesion and safety within our community is maintained when we hold ourselves and others to moral and ethical standards. Our governments have not fulfilled their obligations under the Convention to Prevent and Punish Genocide. This complicity to genocide erodes trust in our government institutions to act in line with community expectations and models to its citizens that such an erosion of our collective humanity permits them to also act in ways that are harmful to others.

Why this matters psychologically:

- It invalidates lived experience.
- It reframes trauma testimony from Palestinians as extremism
- It may retraumatise Palestinians by equating their grief or protest with hate

For mental health clinicians working with Palestinian clients (or Jewish anti-occupation clients), clarity is essential. Ambiguity in law can create:

- Professional fear of speaking openly.
- Institutional self-censorship.
- Reduced capacity for trauma-informed advocacy

3. Perceived Targeting and Collective Trauma

The proposed legislation does not consider the social framing of its wording or the intentions of such wording. This legislation disproportionately targets Palestinian communities and their supporters. This can activate historical trauma, diaspora surveillance anxiety, collective grief responses, and community withdrawal. Suppressing political expression does not reduce distress; it often displaces it into somatic symptoms, anxiety disorders, and interpersonal conflict. For communities already experiencing racialisation and securitisation narratives, further criminalisation of political expression can compound intergenerational trauma patterns of silencing and punishment. Open democratic dialogue is a protective factor that reduce mental harms.

4. Democratic Process and Trust

APMHN emphasises transparency, collective accountability, and care for all members of our community. This legislation process is reactive, with minimal consultation and consideration. As such, it reinforces powerlessness and undermines institutional trust within the community. It increases polarisation and conflict, and reduces a willingness by the community to engage constructively to reduce racism within Queensland.

Trust is a public mental health asset. When marginalised groups perceive procedural exclusion, it contributes to cynicism, disengagement, and increased stress within and across groups in the community. If the intention of the Bill is to increase social cohesion (itself a determinant of population mental health), then it is imperative that deliberative processes that include the voices of marginalised groups are valued and adhered to.

5. The Ethical Position of Mental Health Professionals

The amendments proposed in the Bill raise dilemmas for mental health professionals working within Queensland.

- Can clinicians ethically name systemic violence if doing so risks legal or professional repercussions?
- Does silence constitute complicity?
- How do professionals balance anti-racism commitments with solidarity to liberate all peoples from oppression?

From a trauma-informed standpoint, neutrality in the context of oppression is not psychologically neutral. Survivors of violence often interpret silence as abandonment. It is critical to ethical practice that professionals protect all vulnerable communities, maintain clarity between racism and political critique, prevent incitement of violence towards any person or group, and ensure there are safe spaces for collective grief and advocacy.

The Bill does not align with the ethical position of mental health professionals to follow evidence-based best practice principles, to protect and heal people, and prevention of mental health harms within our community.

6. Inconsistency with International Law

The proposed Bill, along with the Commonwealth's proscription of "terrorism", directly contravenes UN Resolution 2625, which legitimises armed resistance in the context of an illegal occupation. One potential consequence of the proposed Bill is that residents of Queensland who wish to abide by international laws will face the threat of punishment for displaying symbols of legal armed resistance groups. This not only creates an internal moral conflict for individual citizens but also erodes any belief in the morality of the leaders of the Queensland government as they attempt to enact laws that directly suppress support for a people who are experiencing a genocide.

On the world stage, in the view of people who hold to the values of humanity, this Bill projects the Queensland government as a protector of a rogue state currently perpetrating a genocide. The average Queensland citizen does not want their individual reputations to be tainted by the immorality and inhumanity of their own state government. As the community's "elected representatives", this title is supposed to be carried with the honour of upholding not only your voters' values and interests but also those of humanity as a whole.

Conclusion:

APMHN, and its global network across 20 countries, has consistently advocated against racism in the face of genuine hate and violence. Contrary to the claims of the Bill, it is not likely to be a successful mechanism that will safeguard the Jewish community but is likely to create further division within our community, increase mental health harms, and reduce the important democratic processes of advocacy and social justice.

APMHN strongly opposes this Bill as an attempt to restrict free speech and create extraordinary powers without proper democratic scrutiny. The Bill must be withdrawn to allow for a comprehensive review of its impact on the mental health of Queenslanders, our civil liberties, political participation and the rule of law.

APMHN calls on the Committee to uphold and defend Australia's democratic foundations by safeguarding the fundamental right to political communication.



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