

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

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Submission to the Community Safety and Legal Affairs Committee.

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

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1. Introduction

As the peak representative body for 47 Muslim organizations across Queensland, Queensland Muslims Inc. is dedicated to religious education, community advocacy, and development. Through our close collaboration with Muslim communities throughout the state and our interstate networks, this submission directly captures the specific legal and social concerns our members have raised regarding this Bill.

2. Our Position on the Bill

We strongly oppose the newly introduced Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026 in its current form.

We unequivocally condemn all forms of genuine racism, including antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Indigenous racism, and anti-Palestinian racism. We firmly believe there is no hierarchy in racism— all bigotry must be challenged with equal force.

However, we are deeply concerned that this Bill represents a dangerous overreach that threatens democratic freedoms. Rather than genuinely combating hatred, it risks suppressing legitimate political dissent and disproportionately targeting communities advocating for Palestinian human rights.

3. Key Concerns

3.1 Problems with How the Law is Written

- **Vague Rules:** The bill allows the government to ban words by making regulations, instead of clearly listing them in the law itself. This means the rules could change over time and are uncertain.
- **Risk of Government Abuse:** The power to ban political speech is too broad and lacks oversight. Future governments could potentially abuse this power.
- **Hurts Political Debate:** The bill restricts the implied right to freedom of political communication in the Australian Constitution. It could unintentionally punish people for legitimate protest and political discussion, especially if they offend someone rather than directly encourage violence.
- **Unfair Police Powers:** The bill gives police the power to search people without a warrant for these new speech offenses. This is a major privacy invasion and could scare people away from protests.

3.2 Unfair Impact on Specific Communities

- **Ignores Cultural Context:** Banning specific words ignores their normal meanings in languages like Arabic (e.g., the word 'intifada'). This unfairly targets minority communities.
- **Oversimplifies Complex Phrases:** Some political phrases (e.g., "From the river to the sea") have multiple meanings depending on context. Criminalizing them oversimplifies complex political issues.
- **Disproportionately Targets Palestinians:** While the bill is officially about antisemitism, the public announcements focused on phrases used in pro-Palestinian protests. This creates a perception that it is designed to unfairly target Palestinians and their advocates.
- **Ignores Palestinian Rights:** The bill conflates antisemitism with legitimate advocacy for Palestinian human rights and self-determination. It ignores the rights of Palestinians, who are also a protected group.
- **Silences a Genuine Movement:** The bill fails to recognize the growing public movement in Queensland supporting Palestinian rights. Instead of criminalizing this sentiment, the government should be engaging in dialogue.
- **Erodes Trust and Deepens Division:** By being seen to target a particular ethnicity, the bill risks damaging community trust and increasing social division.

3.3 Human Rights and Fairness Concerns

- **Rights Violation Not Justified:** The government hasn't properly proven that these harsh measures are the only way to achieve its goal. Less extreme options should be considered first, as required by the Human Rights Act.

- **Unequal Protection:** The bill focuses on only one type of prejudice (antisemitism) while ignoring others like Islamophobia or racism against Indigenous Australians. To be fair, laws should protect all communities equally.
- **Flawed and Rushed Process:** The public was given less than a week to comment on such a significant bill. This is an affront to the democratic process and prevents proper consultation with the communities that will be most affected.
- **The Naming of the Law with Reference to “Antisemitism” Is Not Appropriate:** While antisemitism must be addressed decisively, singling out one form of hatred in the title of standalone legislation may create perceptions of unequal protection. Queensland is home to diverse communities who experience racial and religious hatred, including Muslim Australians, First Nations peoples, and other minority groups. Legislative framing should reflect a universal commitment to combating racial and religious hatred in all its forms. We recommend consideration of broader, inclusive terminology that reinforces equality before the law.

3.4 Additional Concerns Regarding Key Provisions

- **Clarification of the Scope of the Term “Antisemitism”:** The term “antisemitism” has a specific contemporary meaning referring to hostility toward Jewish people. However, its linguistic origins relate to Semitic peoples more broadly. To ensure legal certainty, the legislation should clearly define its intended scope. Ambiguity in terminology may create confusion regarding coverage and enforcement. Clear statutory definitions are essential to ensure fairness and prevent misinterpretation.
- **Concerns Regarding the Proposed Banning of the Phrase “From the River to the Sea”:** This phrase is interpreted differently by different communities and individuals. While those who object to this phrase erroneously interpret it as a call for the destruction of Israel, others understand it as a call for equal rights and freedom for all people within a geographic region. Given these divergent interpretations, prohibiting this phrase risks suppressing lawful political expression. Any restriction should be based on demonstrable incitement to violence or hatred, assessed contextually rather than categorically.
- **Concerns Regarding Interpretation of the Phrase “Globalise the Intifada”:** The Arabic term “intifada” literally translates to “shaking off” and often refers to resistance against oppression. The means of this “shaking off” can vary depending on context and who is doing the resisting—for some, “intifada” means Gandhian non-violent resistance, while for others engaged in resistance this “shaking off” may mean violence. This applies to both people of Arab descent and their non-Arab allies. Thus, as with other politically invoked phrases, interpretation depends on context and intent. Criminalising language in isolation is overreach. Legislative focus should remain on incitement, threats, or demonstrable harm.
- **Concerns Regarding the Banning of Certain Symbols:** Some symbols proposed for prohibition may carry both legitimate religious or cultural meaning and extremist associations. For example:

- The swastika, though nefariously appropriated by the Nazi Party, remains a sacred symbol in Hinduism, with the swastika shape found on Hindu temples, scriptures and art for hundreds of years.
- The Shahada (Islamic declaration of faith), appearing on the national flag of Saudi Arabia, is a core religious expression that is being misused by extremist groups.
To further illustrate our point about how symbols are contextual, we note that the Jerusalem Cross is both the insignia of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (i.e. the Catholic Church) and a symbol used by white supremacist groups.
We recommend that any prohibition be narrowly tailored, context-based, and include clear exemptions for religious, academic, historical, and legitimate cultural use.
- Proposed Firearms Laws – Support with Structural Recommendations: Queensland Muslims Inc supports strong and effective firearms regulation. However, we recommend that firearms reforms be introduced separately from antisemitism (along with other anti-racism) provisions to ensure focused scrutiny and technical precision. Given rapid technological developments—including modular devices and emerging weapon technologies—firearms legislation should include adaptable definitions and mechanisms for timely amendment.

5. Recommendations

Our specific requests to the Committee are:

1. Extend the consultation period to allow for proper scrutiny of the proposed laws.
2. Ensure the law protects all communities equally, not just one group.
3. Avoid blanket bans on political language and make sure the context of what is said is always considered.
4. Consider whether less restrictive legislative alternatives could achieve the stated objective. Safeguard legitimate religious and cultural expression.
5. Separate and technically future-proof firearms reforms.

6. Conclusion

We support efforts to combat hatred in all forms and stand in solidarity with all communities facing discrimination:

1. We oppose the Bill: It is an overreach of political power, is structurally biased, and creates extraordinary powers without proper democratic oversight.
2. It won't achieve its goal: The Bill will not effectively safeguard the Jewish community. Instead, it is likely to create more division and erode public trust.
3. It unfairly targets free speech: The Bill risks criminalizing legitimate political expression and suppressing advocacy for Palestinian rights, which undermines basic civil liberties.
4. Good laws need certain qualities: To be effective, any law must be carefully written, clearly defined, applied evenly to everyone, sensitive to context, and proportionate to the actual harm it is trying to stop.

We call on the committee to uphold and defend Australia's democratic foundations by safeguarding the right to political communication.