

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

**Submission No:** 050

**Submission By:** The Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland

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16 February 2026

**QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE**

Justice, Integrity, and Community Safety Committee (the Committee)  
Parliament House  
Cnr George and Alice Streets  
**BRISBANE QLD 4000**

Dear Members of the Committee,

**Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland's Submission in Relation to the Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026**

ECCQ unequivocally supports strong and effective measures to address all forms of hate speech and hate conduct. However, reforms of this magnitude must be developed through careful consultations, evidence-based policy design and a clear assessment of unintended impacts.

ECCQ recognises that Jewish and Muslim communities in Queensland are experiencing heightened concern about antisemitism and Islamophobia. Similarly, other multicultural communities are also expressing fear about how elements of this Bill may be framed or enforced. As such, effective reforms must respond to both realities.

To inform its Submission, ECCQ consulted a cross-section of communities, including representatives from Jewish, Muslim and Palestinian communities. Through this engagement, community leaders expressed concern that aspects of the Bill, particularly the proposed speech and symbolism provisions, may be perceived as politically charged and may operate to curtail lawful political expression.

Leaders from Muslim communities, including Palestinian communities, explicitly emphasised during consultation that they reject antisemitism, Islamophobia and all forms of racism or bigotry against any community, regardless of faith, ethnicity or nationality. Their concern with the Bill is not with protecting Jewish Queenslanders from harm, which they support, but with what they perceive as the risk of selective treatment of particular expressions in a way that could undermine principles of equal protection and ultimately weaken social cohesion.



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Laws of this nature must be neutral in design and consistent in application across all communities. At a time of heightened national tensions, it is critical that new legislation strengthens safety and social cohesion without unintentionally deepening divisions or eroding public trust.

Government has a unique responsibility to act as a stabilising force in times of social strain. The way legislation is framed, consulted on and communicated can either build calm and reinforce equal protection, or deepen uncertainty and division. In this instance, the speed and limited consultation associated with the Bill have contributed to community unease and risk undermining the very cohesion the reforms seek to strengthen.

Queensland's existing criminal and anti-discrimination framework already provides substantial powers to deter and prosecute the public display of hateful and extremist symbols.

Where offences rely on reasonableness tests linked to emotional impact, clarity of threshold becomes especially important. Laws that rely on undefined reasonableness standards, particularly where 'offended' is included alongside more serious harms such as 'menaced' or 'harassed', require careful calibration to ensure they protect community safety without capturing conduct that falls below the level of genuine harm. Without clearer statutory guidance as to what constitutes a reasonable expectation of offence, there is a risk of inconsistent interpretation or uneven enforcement until judicial authority provides settled guidance.

ECCQ supports laws that protect all faith communities by ensuring people are not intimidated while accessing places of worship. Attacks, harassment and vandalism directed at religious institutions have a profound impact not only on physical safety but also on community wellbeing and sense of belonging. Stronger penalties for wilful damage to places of worship and learning send a clear message that faith-based targeting will not be tolerated and that such conduct is treated as a serious offence with broad community impact.

ECCQ submits that legislation of this kind must be clearly framed and implemented as protecting all faith communities and all people, consistently and without discrimination, and must be accompanied by transparent guidance, community education, and mechanisms for monitoring impacts and enforcement patterns to safeguard against uneven application.

Complementary investment in community cohesion and interfaith dialogue is therefore essential. In practice, this should include genuine consultations with diverse faith and multicultural communities prior to implementation; culturally safe communication explaining what the law does and does not cover (including explicit reassurance about lawful peaceful



protest and legitimate religious or cultural symbols); and structured partnerships with faith leaders, schools, youth services and multicultural organisations to support prevention and early intervention.

While addressing hate conduct is important, the rapid expansion of criminal offences, particularly speech-based offences and potential Adult Crime, Adult Time (ACAT) classifications, carries significant unintended risks.

Broad or selectively defined speech offences risk creating a chilling effect on legitimate political, educational and cultural expression. Australian human rights bodies have consistently emphasised the need to balance hate-speech regulation with the implied freedom of political communication. If communities are uncertain about what language may attract criminal liability, individuals, particularly young people, may self-censor rather than engage in dialogue about identity, racism and geopolitics. This undermines civic participation and weakens social cohesion rather than strengthening it.

ECCQ recommends that the Queensland Government pause the Bill and undertake genuine consultation. This pause should enable meaningful, culturally informed consultation with multicultural and faith communities, youth and education sector stakeholders, and human rights experts, including sufficient timeframes for engagement and feedback. Experience demonstrates that bringing diverse community leaders together in structured consultation during periods of strain strengthens mutual understanding, reinforces shared civic values and contributes directly to social cohesion.

ECCQ looks forward to continuing to work constructively with the Queensland Government to ensure that measures to combat hate are effective, proportionate, consistent, and fairly applied while also addressing the root causes and impacts of societal tensions where early interventions can make a lasting difference.



Lisa Ward  
Chief Executive Officer



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Chairperson

