

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

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Submission By: Jon Henshaw
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****Submission to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee****

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

****Author:**** Jon Henshaw

****Email:**** [REDACTED]

****Phone:**** [REDACTED]

****Location:**** Queensland

****Submission type:**** Individual (private citizen)

Introduction

I am writing to make a submission opposing the Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026.

I am a law-abiding Queensland citizen who has never been charged with, nor convicted of, any criminal offence. I am also a former member of the Australian Defence Force, having served for seven years. During my service, I was prepared to defend Australia and the freedoms that underpin our democratic society, including the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

I am deeply concerned that this Bill, while well-intentioned, unfairly punishes compliant citizens for the actions of a very small number of offenders and introduces broad powers that risk eroding long-standing civil liberties.

Punishing the Law-Abiding for the Actions of Criminals

This Bill significantly expands offences, penalties, and regulatory burdens that apply to the general public—particularly licensed firearms owners—despite the fact that licensed holders are overwhelmingly law-abiding and statistically unlikely to commit violent crimes.

Criminals and terrorists, by definition, do not follow laws. Increasing penalties, licensing restrictions, and compliance requirements for people who already comply does not meaningfully address criminal behaviour. Instead, it shifts responsibility and consequence onto ordinary citizens who have done nothing wrong.

If individuals commit crimes, they should be punished as individuals. Collective punishment of lawful citizens undermines confidence in the justice system and creates resentment rather than safety.

Freedom of Speech and Expression

I am a strong advocate for freedom of speech.

Freedom of expression must include the right to say things that others may find offensive, uncomfortable, or confronting. That is not a flaw in a free society—it is a strength. Societies grow by allowing ideas to be challenged, debated, and exposed to scrutiny, not by suppressing them.

Provided speech does not directly incite violence or criminal acts, it should not be criminalised. Restricting speech based on offensiveness or subjective harm risks creating vague and overly broad offences that chill legitimate discourse, dissent, and debate.

As a former ADF member, I was willing to defend the right of Australians to speak freely—even when I disagree with what is being said. That principle should not be weakened by legislation that expands criminal liability based on interpretation rather than clear intent to cause harm.

Expansion of Police Powers and Criminal Offences

The Bill introduces new offences relating to preparation, planning, possession of materials, and expression, many of which rely heavily on interpretation and intent rather than completed criminal acts.

While law enforcement must have tools to address genuine threats, these powers must be tightly constrained and proportionate. Broad offences risk capturing innocent behaviour, lawful expression, or speculative intent, particularly when combined with increased penalties and expanded surveillance and controlled operation powers.

Strong laws must be precise. Vague or expansive drafting undermines the rule of law and creates uncertainty for ordinary citizens.

Firearms Regulation Concerns

Queensland already has some of the strictest firearms laws in Australia. Licensed firearms owners are subject to comprehensive background checks, mandatory training, stringent secure storage requirements, inspections, and ongoing compliance obligations.

I support the requirement that firearms licences be restricted to Australian citizens. Firearm ownership is a serious responsibility, and it is reasonable that this responsibility be limited to those who have a permanent and enduring legal commitment to Australia.

However, other proposed restrictions—such as the expanded consideration of historical matters irrespective of context or outcome, and the significant escalation of maximum penalties for offences already covered by existing law—do not address the primary source of firearm-related crime. Criminal misuse of firearms overwhelmingly involves unlicensed individuals and illegally obtained weapons, not compliant licence holders.

Measures that further burden lawful owners risk discouraging compliance and cooperation with authorities, while failing to meaningfully disrupt criminal supply chains or reduce illicit firearm use. Effective firearms policy should focus on criminal behaviour and illegal possession, rather than imposing additional punitive measures on those who already operate within the law.

Conclusion

I do not support this Bill in its current form.

While antisemitism, terrorism, and violent crime must be addressed firmly, this must be done without sacrificing the rights and freedoms of law-abiding Australians. Laws should target criminals, not compliant citizens. Speech should be countered with debate, not criminalisation. Security must be balanced with liberty.

I urge the Committee to reconsider the scope, drafting, and proportionality of this legislation and to ensure that fundamental freedoms and the presumption of individual responsibility remain central to Queensland's legal framework.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

****Yours sincerely,****

Jon Henshaw