

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

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I object to the stated objective of the Bill 'to prohibit the use of expressions used to incite discrimination, hostility or violence towards certain groups'. This objective presents two grave and unnecessary risks.

- First, it risks exercising powers in a discriminatory manner. I am yet to hear any specific public comment in relation to this bill about the potentially anti-semitic practice of Christian teaching or inquiry into local history. However, I expect Muslim teaching and leadership and First Nations-led organising and truth-telling to be disproportionately scrutinised under the proposed legislation.
- Second, it risks escalating hostility towards people who may be involved in a practice which might ameliorate hate, either in the form of conceptualising a way forward, or doing the difficult work of political organising.

"It is dishonest to refuse to face the fact that the basic root of modern antisemitism lies squarely in the New Testament." (James Parkes in 'Encountering the New Testament, from www.yadvashem.org)

As I engaged in interfaith dialogue in Australia at the turn of the century, I became exposed to Jewish people who pointed out to Christians that the Gospels, themselves, are anti-semitic documents, and most strikingly, the Gospel of John (which many Christians understand as the gospel of love). This line of thought is articulated in 'Yad Veshem', the website of the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre.

"It is obvious that a deep antipathy to certain groups of Jews exists in Christian Scripture. Whatever we believe about the intention of the original writers, the dangerous power and antisemitic potential of what they wrote must be recognized." (Gareth Lloyd Jones in 'Encountering the New Testament' from www.yadvashem.org)

It would be a grave oversight of the current legislation to ignore this important observation. Such an oversight would result in a discriminatory piece of legislation.

The Yav Vesham approach to 'neutralise' the anti-semitic potential of the Gospels was embraced by the Mennonite theologian William Klassen in his book 'Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus' (2004). Klassen's book explores the increasingly antagonistic rhetoric in the Gospels towards 'the Jews', specifically in relation to the character of Judas Iscariot. Remarkably, he concluded that the study of Judas Iscariot (i.e. effectively the scholarly scrutiny of escalating anti-semitic thinking) was a crucial element in enabling the pursuit of peace in the Palestine/Israel conflict.

Protestants

It is important to recognise the demographic and geographic context of this legislation. There is a growing expectation that Australians are able to answer the question "Who's your mob?" I have come to the conclusion that 'my mob' are protestants who trace their ancestry back into 19th century colony of Queensland. The more I explore this identity, the more I find that I am related to those 'protestants'. Being of 'protestant' stock here seems to be a more defining identity than ethnicity. Being 'protestant', regardless of current belief, is to be part of a group whose identity is bound to a sustained, and often bloody struggle for free speech.

Protestants mobilise publicly and politically in many different ways. This mobilisation is sometimes motivated by Christian and Jewish sacred texts, sometimes by institutional affiliations and it is sometimes motivated simply by moral or economic judgement. Protestants are enormously jealous of our right to interpret sacred texts, and to articulate this interpretation in public. Biblical texts related to 'Gaza', 'From the River to the Sea', and 'Promised land' are currently available for the many avenues of protestant scrutiny. These texts raise important questions about the colonial attributes of God and the role of genocide in colonisation. They articulate a relentless stigmatisation of 'Gaza'. They resource our understanding of the colonisation of Australia. This scrutiny finds its voice in theological study, Biblical interpretation and preaching, public dissemination and political mobilisation related to the implications.

As a young Evangelical, I was regularly exposed to preaching about the first chapter of the book of Joshua, to inspire courage and zeal. Studied in its context, as advocated by Yav Vesham, this chapter begins with the phrase 'from the river to the sea'. The text then moves towards the affirmation of genocide in the subsequent narrative. For protestants, it is impossible to disentangle a scriptural analysis from a political slogan. In this example, the phrase 'from the river to the sea' inhabits the entire continuum from translation from the Hebrew, through its interpretation in English, and into its various appropriations and applications in contemporary public life.

Lang Park

One of the most famous protestants in Queensland is the Reverend Doctor John Dunmore Lang. Lang's missionaries established 'Zion's Hill' mission at Nundah, and named Kedron Brook (based on the introductory remarks to Chapter 18 of the Gospel of John). Chapters 18 and 19 of the Gospel of John are the texts where references to 'the Jews' reach their crescendo of intensity in the Gospels of the Christian Bible. In his 1847 pamphlet, 'Cookland', Lang likened colonial families to the Hebrew patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Lang was a local pioneer in

the articulation of Christian phrases-cum-metaphors. His phrase/metaphors enabled and encouraged a deadly discrimination, hostility and discrimination, regardless of Lang's intentions (as per Yav Vesham essay). Inquiry into local history is essentially engaging with the discrimination, hostility and violence of the past and rendering it publicly in words that engage directly with the prevailing discrimination, hostility and violence of the present. It is not appropriate for the state to legislate either how these words are formulated, what words can be chosen, or how they are to be received.

The colonial history of Queensland has been shaped by, what has been described by the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre, as 'a dangerous power' with 'anti-semitic potential'. That specific 'dangerous power' continues to be overlooked in today's important struggles against and amidst discrimination, hostility and violence. The current Bill will establish an even more dangerous social setting by emboldening and protecting unaccountable accusations, and by stifling and undermining the many difficult processes of communication and organisation against discrimination, hostility and violence.