

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

Submission No: HF2

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The Brisbane Labour History Association has for decades promoted research and awareness of the history of working people and their social and industrial organisations across Queensland. Since 2005 it has published the *Queensland Journal of Labour History*.

Statement of Opposition:

Our Association strongly opposes the *Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns Out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026* in its current form.

The Association has participated in research on the history of racism in our state's past, on how it has blighted people's lives and how it has been effectively combatted.

Because of this, we believe this Bill is not well directed to combat racism. Instead, it instead threatens democratic freedoms, suppresses legitimate political dissent, and disproportionately targets communities advocating for Palestinian human rights.

Key Concerns:

The Bill purports to oppose anti-semitic terrorists but in important respects it actually seeks to ban legitimate political dissent.

Attempts to stifle freedom of political expression are often presented as necessary for public safety and order, but expand to become instruments of suppression of legitimate democratic debate.

Democracy is strengthened and societies improved by public criticism and protest. Historical examples such as female suffrage show that political dissent in Queensland's past has been integral and sometimes central to establishing now-universally valued civil and political rights. This dissent at times extended to mass direct action and militant defiance when all other avenues proved fruitless. This Bill will act against the ability for people's dissent to bring about social improvements in the future.

The Bill's scope is broad and creates extraordinary power to proscribe political speech without appropriate democratic scrutiny or oversight. If this isn't rectified, future Queensland Governments may have the ability to abuse this power.

Not only are bans and restrictions on dissent undemocratic and socially damaging, they rarely achieve their own stated objectives. In Queensland, Bjelke Petersen's ban on street marches did not prevent disruption, it made disruption more intense and frequent. Mass defiance grew, transforming the state's political culture and

giving the Labor opposition the social licence to introduce the Peaceful Assembly Act when it came to power.

The growing public awareness of the need for action on Palestine will, similarly, mean that the aims of this Bill will also lead to even more public outcry,

The explanatory notes seem to conflate antisemitism and legitimate political expression that seeks to educate about and advocate for the Palestinian people. The BLHA utterly rejects the assertion that criticising the State of Israel for its genocidal onslaught in Gaza, its ongoing and intensifying violent dispossession of Palestinian people and its discrimination towards Palestinian citizens of Israel is antisemitic. The Palestinians' demand for justice and an end to occupation and ethnic cleansing is absolutely justified and should be supported not suppressed. Australian governments at all levels should be upholding international law by condemning and sanctioning Israel for its actions.

While the Bill itself does not specify Palestinians, the drafting of the bill and the accompanying media releases expose the disproportionate targeting of members of the Palestinian community and those standing against atrocities committed by the Israeli government. Palestinians are also part of a protected group under international law. The explanatory notes ignore Palestinian Human Rights and the right to self-determination.

Conclusion:

Contrary to the claims of the Bill, it is not likely to be a successful mechanism that will safeguard the Jewish community. Rather, it is likely to create further division and erosion of public trust. It risks criminalising legitimate political expression, suppressing advocacy for Palestinian rights and undermining civil liberties.

It seeks 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 civil liberties, political participation and the rule of law.

The BLHA calls on the Committee to uphold and defend Australia's democratic foundations by safeguarding the freedom of political communication which is an implied right in the Australian Constitution.

Sincerely,

Craig Buckley, President, Brisbane Labour History Association on behalf of the Executive Committee of the BLHA.

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