

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

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My name is Madeleine Orr. I am a Social Work student from Brisbane, and an active member of my local community. I am writing as a private citizen, and on behalf of my friends and colleagues who share my concerns with the proposed bill.

I 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. Having completed a degree in Linguistics with a focus on the sociology of language, I understand that hate speech constitutes a genuine harm, and that some regulation of speech is necessary in order to protect the safety of minority groups. However, by criminalising the use of slogans used by the Palestinian human rights movement, this Bill in its current form creates a precedent for the suppression of legitimate, non-violent political dissent.

My key concern with the Bill is its potential to be weaponised by future Queensland Governments and police to enact targeted suppression and criminalisation of legitimate political speech. In particular, the Bill's conflation of antisemitism (bigotry against Jewish people) and criticism of the state of Israel could be used to disproportionately quash the political speech and expression of Palestinian Australians.

The introduction of this Bill was extremely rushed in terms of both parliamentary debate and opportunity for submissions from the public. It is easy, in the aftermath of tragedy, to rush towards a strong response as a means of reassuring the public. However, acting rashly in this case will only create opportunity for further division and anti-democratic action. We have seen the results of the criminalisation of non-violent criticism of Israel in the UK's designation of Palestine Action as a terror group. We cannot follow down this path of denial of legitimate speech rights. This Bill will only stand in the way of the goal of effective political dialogue, where all communities and all interests are represented, so that we can move forward as a nation towards greater equality and safety for all.

To conclude, the Bill is an overreach of political power and structurally biased. It risks criminalising legitimate political expression, suppressing advocacy for Palestinian rights and undermining civil liberties. I strongly oppose this Bill as an attempt 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.

I call on the Committee to uphold and defend Australia's democratic foundations by safeguarding the fundamental right to political communication.

Sincerely,
Madeleine Orr

