

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

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

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Introduction

I am an 82-year-old convert to Islam who has worked in disaster and conflict areas of the world for two decades after retiring from my university role. I have been directly involved in aiding the people of Gaza and the West Bank. I am very shocked at the overreach and the potential negative legal and social impact of aspects of this Bill. We do not want to go back to the bad anti-democratic and authoritarian Queensland of Bjelke Peterson and Campbell Newman. This Bill, by prohibiting certain phrases that have been used in calling for an end to the genocide and ethnic cleansing in Gaza, seems to discriminate against one group in favour of another without a level playing field. Basically all faith and ethnic communities should have equal protection.

Absolutely support the provisions that are aimed at keeping guns out of the hands of the wrong people and while unequivocally condemning all forms of genuine racism, including antisemitism, anti-Islam hate, anti-Indigenous racism, and anti-Palestinian racism the provision so this bill, rather than genuinely combating hatred, risks suppressing legitimate political dissent and disproportionately targets communities advocating for Palestinian human rights.

Overbroad “hate symbol” and “expression” offences

- The Bill expands section 52C to cover “prohibited symbols and expressions” with criminal penalties where conduct “might reasonably be expected to make a member of the public feel menaced, harassed or offended,” with up to 2 years’ imprisonment.
- It creates a new offence (s 52DA) for public recital, distribution, publication or display of “prohibited expressions” on the same very low threshold of

causing someone to feel “offended,” again punishable by up to 2 years’ imprisonment.

- Although there is a “reasonable excuse” defence for artistic, religious, educational, historical or public-interest purposes, this is subjective and puts the burden on speakers, chilling robust debate, protest, and religious or political expression, including criticism of Israel and Zionism that some may label “antisemitic.”

Vague, expandable category of “prohibited expressions”

- The Bill lets the government declare “prohibited expressions” without tight statutory limits, opening the door to politicised expansion over time (for example, slogans or chants used in Palestine solidarity protests).
- Because the test is how a hypothetical member of the public “might reasonably” feel, minority political speech is especially at risk: controversial but legitimate advocacy can be criminalised if a complainant or police argue it is “hostile” or “menacing.”

New “preparation or planning” offence is dangerously broad

- The new Criminal Code s 540A (“Preparation or planning to cause death or grievous bodily harm”) criminalises preparatory acts with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.
- The definition of “preparation or planning” is not tightly confined to clearly imminent terrorist conduct; it risks capturing loosely associated behaviour (online searches, association, possession of certain materials) and becomes a powerful tool for pre-emptive policing against already-over-policed communities.
- Queensland already has extensive counter-terror and serious-violence offences; layering another vague preparatory crime invites overreach and discriminatory enforcement rather than genuinely increasing safety.

Expanded police powers and surveillance with weak safeguards

- The Bill “reforms” controlled operations legislation and “expands the scope of offences that may be investigated through the use of controlled operations, controlled activities and surveillance device warrants.”
- It also strengthens information-sharing with the ADF and maintains broad electronic service provisions for consorting warnings and banning notices.
- This dramatically widens covert police powers into areas of speech, protest and association linked to the new antisemitism provisions, without corresponding new oversight or accountability mechanisms, further eroding privacy, freedom of assembly and due process.

The Bill should be rejected, not “fixed”

- The gun-control elements (higher penalties for firearm theft, reckless discharge offences, control of 3D-printed weapons, storage requirements) can be re-introduced in a narrow, stand-alone weapons bill that enjoys broad community support.
- In contrast, the antisemitism-branded provisions entrench a vague, politicised speech regime, expand pre-emptive criminalisation and surveillance, and enable discriminatory enforcement, especially against Muslims, Palestinians and other racialised communities.
- Because these problems are structural—overbroad offences, vague definitions, and expanded police powers tied to opinion and association—the safer course is to reject this Bill in its current form and demand a tightly focused, rights-compliant approach to both antisemitism and public safety.

Problems with How the Law is Written

- Lack of judicial review and avenues to appeal putting too much absolute power in the hands of a politician that can easily be abused.
- The bill allows the government to ban words by making a regulation, instead of clearly listing them in the law itself. This means the rules could change over time and are uncertain.
- The power to ban political speech is too broad and lacks oversight. Future governments could potentially abuse this power.
- The bill restricts the implied right to freedom of political communication in the Australian Constitution. It could unintentionally punish people for legitimate protest and political discussion, especially if they offend someone rather than directly encourage violence.
- Unfair Police Powers: The bill gives police the power to search people without a warrant for these new speech offenses. This is a major privacy invasion and could scare people away from protests.

Unfair Impact on Specific Communities

- Banning specific words ignores their normal meanings in languages like Arabic (e.g., the word 'intifada').
- Banning certain political phrases (e.g., "From the river to the sea") ignores the actual meaning ascribed to them as it means equal rights to everyone living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. It is wrong to accept that these phrases offend certain groups without context and

ignoring the fact that the governing political party in Israel also uses this phrase.

- **Disproportionately Targets Palestinians:** While the bill is officially about antisemitism, the public announcements focused on phrases used in pro-Palestinian protests. This creates a perception that it is designed to unfairly target Palestinians and their advocates.
- **Ignores Palestinian Rights:** The bill conflates antisemitism with legitimate advocacy for Palestinian human rights and self-determination. It ignores the rights of Palestinians, who are also a protected group.
- **Silences a Genuine Movement:** The bill fails to recognize the growing public movement in Queensland supporting Palestinian rights. Instead of criminalizing this sentiment, the government should be engaging in dialogue.
- **Erodes Trust and Deepens Division:** By being seen to target a particular ethnicity, the bill risks damaging community trust and increasing social division.

Human Rights and Fairness Concerns

- **Rights Violation Not Justified:** The government hasn't properly proven that these harsh measures are the only way to achieve its goal. Less extreme options should be considered first, as required by the Human Rights Act.
- **Unequal Protection:** The bill focuses on only one type of prejudice (antisemitism) while ignoring others like anti Muslim hate or racism against Indigenous Australians. To be fair, laws should protect all communities equally.
- **Flawed and Rushed Process:** The public was given less than a week to comment on such a significant bill. This is an affront to the democratic process and prevents proper consultation with the communities that will be most affected.

Recommendations:

1. Extend the consultation period to allow for proper scrutiny of the proposed laws.
2. Ensure the law protects all communities equally, not just one group.
3. Avoid blanket bans on political language and make sure the context of what is said is always considered.
4. Consider whether less restrictive legislative alternatives could achieve the stated objective. Safeguard legitimate religious and cultural expression.

5. Separate and technically future-proof firearms reforms.

Although efforts to combat hatred in all forms and stand in solidarity with all communities facing discrimination I

- Oppose the Bill because it is an overreach of political power, is structurally biased, and creates extraordinary powers without proper democratic oversight.
- Believe it won't achieve its goal: The Bill will not effectively safeguard the Jewish community. Instead, it is likely to create more division and erode public trust.
- It unfairly targets free speech as it risks criminalizing legitimate political expression and suppressing advocacy for Palestinian rights, which undermines basic civil liberties.
- Believe the bill will be ineffective as it is not carefully written, is not clearly defined, does not apply evenly to everyone, is not sensitive to context, and is not proportionate to the actual harm it claims to be trying to stop.

The Queensland Parliament must uphold and defend Australia's democratic foundations by safeguarding the right to political communication.

Fadlullah Wimot