




Speech By
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**FIGHTING ANTISEMITISM AND KEEPING GUNS OUT OF THE HANDS OF
TERRORISTS AND CRIMINALS AMENDMENT BILL 2026**

 **Dr O'SHEA** (South Brisbane—ALP) (12.27 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026. I acknowledge the work of the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee, the secretariat and the many organisations and individuals who made submissions to the committee.

This bill responds to one of the darkest moments in Australia's history. On 14 December 2025, 15 Australians, including a 10-year-old child, were murdered at a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi Beach. They were murdered for one reason alone: they were Jewish.

When I was younger I lived in Israel. I met many Holocaust survivors who had fled there from Europe after the Second World War. As a medical student I worked in a hospital in northern Israel alongside doctors of all different backgrounds and religions, united in the sole purpose of caring for and treating patients irrespective of their race or faith. It was therefore particularly shocking and shameful to me to see the rise of anti-Semitism in our beautiful country and how hatred and speech translated into attacks on Jewish Australians and their schools, homes, businesses and synagogues, ultimately culminating in the murder of 15 members of our Jewish community in the deadliest terrorist attack in our nation's history.

On that day we saw individual acts of incredible heroism—like from Chaya, a young teenager who used her body to shield two little children from the bullets, and from Ahmed, who wrestled the gun off one of the terrorists when he saw his fellow Australians being attacked. In the midst of horror, we saw the best of the Australian spirit that day, and I would like to thank all the emergency services, the surf lifesavers and the Australian public who ran towards danger and saved so many lives, often by using just their bare hands to stem the flow of blood from the gunshot wounds.

Australia is a multicultural country. Like so many of my fellow Queenslanders, I am a migrant and I am privileged to have been able to make my home in Australia alongside our First Nations peoples, the oldest continuous culture in the world. My community of South Brisbane is a vibrant multicultural community, with waves of migrants having made their homes there over the years. Coming from all different backgrounds, these new migrants left behind grievances in their home countries and worked together to build a strong, tolerant and cohesive community, and this migrant story has been repeated across our great state and country.

However, in recent years the erosion of mutual respect and division has crept into our wider community, fuelled by extremist ideology and conflict overseas. This threat to the social cohesion of our country has been evident in both the lead-up to the heinous terrorist attack in Bondi and its aftermath. This is what has happened in the past few weeks: there has been an attempted terrorist bombing of our First Nations people at an Invasion Day rally in Perth; the Muslim community at Lakemba Mosque in Sydney were targeted with death threats as worshipers prepared for the start of Ramadan; a man rammed his vehicle into the gates of the Brisbane Synagogue on Margaret Street, just around the corner

from this House; we have heard horrific reports of Islamic State supporters attacking gay and bisexual teenagers in Sydney; in Western Australia the police have uncovered the planning of a terrorist attack against mosques, police headquarters and Parliament House; and our Prime Minister has had to be evacuated from the Lodge due to a bomb threat linked to the performance of a Chinese dance group.

In a speech to the Lowy Institute a few months ago, Mike Burgess, the head of ASIO, warned that Australians were—

... losing the ability to converse with civility, debate with respect, disagree with restraint.

He advised that we needed to consider the consequences of our words and actions. He stated—

Every one of us has a role to play protecting our social cohesion. Our words matter, our decisions matter, our actions matter.

Queenslanders want a society where people of every faith and background can live without fear. As elected representatives, as parliamentarians, we have an obligation to do all in our power to ensure the safety of our fellow Australians. The Queensland Labor opposition condemns hatred and vilification in any form, and I stand here with great sadness today that there is a requirement for the need for mutual respect to be enshrined in legislation. Mutual respect irrespective of race, religion or sexual orientation is the essence of being Australian—one of the fundamental values of our Australian society—and incitement of hatred and violence to fellow Australians cannot be tolerated in Queensland.

This bill expands the existing prohibited symbols framework to include symbols used by organisations designated by the Commonwealth as terrorist organisations and known to be associated with ideologies of extreme prejudice. The bill seeks to prohibit the public display of these symbols if doing so would cause menace, harassment or offence to a person. The bill also introduces a new offence for publicly reciting or displaying prohibited expressions used to incite discrimination, hostility or violence towards a group.

These laws have been proposed as a response to chants and slogans that have resulted in intimidation of Jewish Queenslanders amidst a rise in anti-Semitism. However, it is important that any new laws prevent the public use of expressions that are weaponised to menace or harass any group in our society while not eliminating legitimate and respectful political discourse. It is essential that these laws get the balance right between protecting Queenslanders and freedom of speech.

Many stakeholders raised the extremely limited consultation undertaken as part of the review of this bill, as well as the need for appropriate safeguards for these new laws to reduce limitations on freedom of expression. Legal Aid Queensland in their submission suggested that—

... the list of symbols or expressions should be contained within a schedule to the relevant Act. Any amendments to the list of prohibited symbols and phrases would therefore be subject to consultation with the public prior to becoming law.

I see in the amendments released yesterday afternoon that the minister has now listened to expert advice and removed the regulation-making power for the proscription of a prohibited expression from this bill so that future changes will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Stakeholders also stressed the role of community engagement and education programs to address the root causes of anti-Semitism and racism in general, as well as educational campaigns to explain any new laws so Queenslanders are aware of which symbols and expressions are prohibited.

The bill also strengthens protection for religious worship, ministers of religion and places of worship, including introducing a new offence for obstructing or intimidating people entering or leaving a place of worship. In their submission, the Archdiocese of Brisbane strongly supported these provisions as addressing 'real and urgent threats'. These changes were also supported by the Islamic College of Brisbane and the Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies.

The bill introduces new offences for reckless discharge of a weapon towards a building or vehicle and the possession of 3D printed firearm blueprints, and it requires a Queensland weapons licence holder to be an Australian citizen. These are welcome changes to strengthen gun laws in this state. However, with over one million firearms registered in Queensland, I would ask the government to implement the Coroner's recommendations from the Wieambilla tragedy regarding mandatory mental health checks for weapons licence holders as well as to listen to the Alannah & Madeline Foundation which, in their submission, asked the government to—

... reinstate the crucial recommendations from National Cabinet to limit the number of firearms to be held by any one individual.

and recommended that Queensland—

... participates in the Commonwealth gun buyback in order to provide appropriate compensation to legal firearm owners.