




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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

 **Ms MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (3.48 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill. I want to begin with a simple premise: each and every member of this parliament has a responsibility to ensure our Jewish community feel safe and are safe. Indeed, we have a responsibility to ensure that all Queenslanders are safe. What happened in Bondi was an act of hate against the Jewish people. The loss of 15 innocent lives who were simply enjoying the first day of Hanukkah celebrations is a national tragedy and something that will be an ongoing stain on our national identity.

The Bondi attack shocked the nation. Such moments naturally demand reassurance, firmness and resolve from government. This is why the Labor opposition wrote to the government in December following the Bondi attack to offer our bipartisan support on drafting laws that could make a real and meaningful difference in addressing both the motive and the means by which Bondi was able to occur. That offer was ignored. Instead the government pressed ahead, introducing laws into this parliament with no real consultation, rushed through in 17 days with little regard for the unintended and unrealised consequences of a key plank of their bill.

I read these words recently and they seem apt when considering this government's actions: 'What has emerged appears more performative than principled, more political than legal, and troublingly vague at precisely the moment when precision is most needed.' When the former Labor government introduced the serious vilification and hate crime laws into parliament in 2023, we did so after nine months of deep, meaningful and widespread consultation. We recognised the complexity of the issues and the importance of ensuring that any laws would be proportionate, evidence-based and workable. These laws were roundly supported. Right now in Queensland we have existing criminal and civil protections for serious vilification under the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 and the Criminal Code. These laws already enable individuals and the Queensland police to take action against a person who knowingly or recklessly incites hatred towards, serious contempt for or severe ridicule of a person or group of persons on the grounds of race and religion. As the Queensland Law Society pointed out in their submission—

... there are existing offences that we say are broad enough to capture the conduct contemplated by this Bill.

We also have laws which Labor introduced in the Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Bill which provide for enhanced anti-discrimination and vilification protections, including on the grounds of race and religion. These reforms were developed over four years of consultation. The Crisafulli LNP government have sat on these laws for the past year, so if they were truly serious about protecting Queenslanders from hate, vilification and discrimination they would have allowed these laws to commence. This is their hypocrisy.

I now turn to some of the provisions in the bill. The bill either creates new offences relating to religious worship or increases the penalties for existing offences relating to religious worship. As outlined in our statement of reservation, the Queensland Labor opposition supports these proposed

amendments. In recent times we have seen unacceptable attacks on places of worship, most recently at the Brisbane Synagogue and the Bald Hills mosque. We strongly believe that every Queenslanders should feel safe to practise their faith without intimidation or fear, and we welcome the enhanced provisions relating to this aspect of the law.

The bill will also expand the prohibited symbols framework to include symbols of terrorist organisations and state sponsored terrorism as recognised through the Commonwealth Criminal Code and determined through a set of federal protocols and legislative criteria. The Labor opposition will support this provision, but we urge the government to take note of the concerns of our Muslim communities in relation to this provision. In particular, a number of stakeholders have raised concerns regarding the misidentification of the Shahada, which is a declaration of faith representing one of the five pillars of Islam. Regrettably, some terrorist organisations like Hamas and Isis have coopted the written Arabic script of the Shahada for their flags. Further education and community awareness must occur to ensure that law-abiding Queenslanders are not caught up in this misidentification, and we urge caution to be exercised by our police in recognising the difference between prescribed symbols and genuine religious expression.

In the time remaining I will focus on the most serious changes to the law being contemplated by this bill which relate to prohibited expressions. What we are seeing today is simply extraordinary. There is no calm and there is no method; this is just pure chaos. We have not seen these foreshadowed amendments. After weeks of defending these laws, after the Premier said 'we are delivering a strong and considered response' and after the government's own parliamentary committee recommending the legislation pass as is, we find ourselves here.

The government are scrambling at the last minute because they got caught out giving themselves unchecked power to trample on freedom of speech in Queensland. They realised the community was on to them, so they have now decided to put their prohibited expressions directly into the legislation. This action means that in the future the decision to continue to impinge on freedom of speech will be more scrutinised and subject to committee processes and public consultation, but not in this instance. We have just gone through a parliamentary committee process but, in fact, we were not able to interrogate these phrases because they were not in the bill. When one of the committee members specifically asked how one of the phrases would satisfy the legislative requirements, the Department of Justice responded—

There are no expressions that are prescribed through the bill. I do not think it is appropriate for me to comment on any potential or hypothetical expressions given that that would be a matter for government in terms of what they prescribe.

When the committee member indicated it was not hypothetical in that government have announced their intention to proscribe two phrases, the chair called the committee member argumentative, so we find ourselves with amendments which we still have not seen that have been rushed in with no public consultation or scrutiny through the parliamentary committee process. This is clearly outrageous. The people of Queensland deserve better. Our Jewish community deserves better than the haphazard, chaotic mess the government has created. This needs to be put to the people of Queensland to have their say and not put through as some last-minute amendment because LNP members have overridden the Premier in their party room and are spooked about freedom of speech. We knew they would be spooked because the champions of freedom of speech realised they were on the wrong side of this debate. What they really meant was 'we support freedom of speech until we don't and need to use it to wedge the Labor Party'—except it looks like they did not wedge us: they wedged themselves.

What happened to force the government to move these amendments? On 18 February the Premier insisted his government's reforms were very tight and very specific and would stand the test of time. He addressed the National Press Club on the same day. When questioned on whether he would reconsider these laws in the face of overwhelming criticism from significant stakeholders regarding impinging on freedom of speech, he said that these laws would stand up. He also said that the arguments from critics would not hold up and that the government found the right balance. These are the Premier's own words 11 days ago, so what has happened? It looks like the Premier has been rolled by his own party room.

We have been very consistent. We said that we would consider the laws in a calm and considered manner, and this is what we have done. We read all 412 submissions. When the Queensland Human Rights Commission, the Archdiocese of Brisbane, the Anglican church, Muslim organisations, legal and academic experts, unions, respected multicultural organisations, the Institute of Public Affairs and even Campbell Newman consistently raised the alarm on these laws, we listened. We also met with the Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies in a meeting that was productive, frank and respectful.

The Premier said that he was going to be calm and methodical, but today they have made a significant amendment to this legislation that was not consulted on through the shortened committee process—an amendment that the people of Queensland and stakeholders were not allowed to consider because it was not in the original bill, and an amendment that clearly his own LNP committee were not aware was coming because they recommended the original legislation be passed. How embarrassing for those committee members who were forced to defend the original legislation. How disrespectful to the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Justice, which briefed the committee on the premise of the original legislation.

In the short time we have become aware of these amendments, we also do not know what basis the government is using to bring forward these expressions in the legislation. My questions to the Minister for Police, who has foreshadowed amendments, are many. Has the government used the existing provision to determine the two prohibited expressions that will now be in the legislation? What evidence has the government relied on to satisfy these elements? What criteria or guidelines is it using? How will the government determine what is extreme prejudice? How often will an expression need to be used to satisfy the government that it is regularly used? How many or what proportion of a relevant group would need to see the expression as being solely or substantially representative of an ideology of extreme prejudice? We have so many more questions about what the government is doing. One of the things we also know is that this is going to be a very difficult offence to prove and difficult and costly to detect, investigate and prosecute.

Social harmony is built not by suppressing speech but in how we protect disagreement without fear. I do not deny the reality or seriousness of anti-Semitism—it exists and we must confront it, and of course it must be prosecuted when it crosses into vilification or violence—but it is clear that this legislation may ultimately fail our Jewish community because it will create more division, more confusion and more fear in our communities. We needed clarity and we got ambiguity. We needed reassurance and we got deepening mistrust. I am again reminded of these words: 'In moments of national trauma, governments are tested not by how loudly they act but by how carefully they think.' What is clear in these most crucial of times is that the Crisafulli LNP government has prioritised politics over principles.