



Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (12.10 pm): Hate speech of any kind is not tolerated in Queensland, or anywhere else for that matter. Queenslanders deserve, and they also expect, to be able to go about their daily lives in their communities without being vilified or attacked. Everyone deserves that respect. I acknowledge that this is not always the case for some people in our community. I, and the Queensland Labor opposition, stand with them to call out all forms of hatred, violence, vilification and anti-Semitism in Queensland.

The legislation before us today is primarily in response to the tragic event which occurred at Bondi in New South Wales on Sunday, 14 December 2025 which shocked the whole nation. This horrific and vile event took the lives of 15 innocent people, injured more than 40 others and impacted the lives of thousands of people. I, like all Queenslanders, will remember them and the lifelong pain this hideous act has caused their families, friends and the community.

We all have a responsibility to take steps to ensure our community is rid of hatred. Not just those who are in this chamber but all Queenslanders have a responsibility to be respectful to each other, accepting of individual backgrounds, and appreciative of our vibrant and diverse multicultural communities in Queensland. Not one politician in the Queensland parliament—or in any parliament—has a monopoly on wanting to ensure our communities and faith-based communities feel safe and are safe.

As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to ensure the laws which are being considered and passed by this chamber are evidence based, are sound and will actually achieve the desired outcome and not give false hope. That is why our Labor leader wrote to the government on 17 December 2025 offering bipartisan support to work through any proposed legislation as a result of not only the Bondi event but also the tragic Wieambilla event we saw in Queensland. We did this in good faith, to work with the government of the day to bring all Queenslanders along on the journey to ensure we had strong, workable laws that all Queenslanders understood and accepted. However, the Crisafulli LNP government has taken the path of division over consensus, a path of political expediency over good governance. The LNP government not only rejected our offer of bipartisanship; it could not even muster the energy to respond to our good-faith letter.

The Labor opposition will always back action that protects Queensland's multicultural communities and keeps guns out of the wrong hands. What we will not do, though, is give the attorney-general—Liberal, Labor and in particular the current Attorney-General—the most extreme unchecked power in the country to criminalise phrases, either spoken or in writing, that they alone decide are offences.

It was clear from the committee process, truncated as it was, that the bill goes too far on criminalising freedom of speech and not far enough on gun reform. You cannot be tough on crime if you are a government that is weak on gun reform, but you can be tough on crime without being reckless

with freedom. The bill deals with many elements. We believe that the gun reforms in the bill are a good start but need to go further. However, let me be crystal clear: I, and the Labor opposition, do not support or condone acts of violence, hatred or vilification against the Jewish community or any other community in Queensland. We all have a common goal; however, it is clear that we—and many Queenslanders—have different ways to achieve it.

The opposition supports other elements of the bill that will protect religious worship. These increased penalties and new offences bring them into line with modern community standards in Queensland. Queenslanders should be able to go about their lives and attend religious services and faith-based activities without fear, knowing they are protected. That is why we will support the new measures in this bill, but legislation is only one tool. As the Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies said—

No piece of legislation can stop anti-Semitism or, for that matter, racism generally ...

That is why we are calling on the government to implement wraparound supports and early intervention programs through adequate funding to address the root causes and impacts of social tension where early intervention can make a lasting difference.

The Queensland Labor opposition does not believe that the reforms in this bill go far enough and are a missed opportunity to keep Queenslanders safe. It is clear that the Premier is too scared of his party room to make any serious and meaningful reforms to weapons licensing here in Queensland. I am advised that there has been around \$280,000 of donations to the LNP from pro-gun advocates, firearms dealers and members of the firearms industry and groups over the years, so it does not take a genius to work out why the LNP do not want to undertake any meaningful weapon and gun reforms in Queensland. The Alannah & Madeline Foundation said in their submission—

We are deeply dismayed that this Bill ignores the options agreed by National Cabinet. It ignores the prioritisation of public and individual safety and the prevention of the misuse of weapons ...

They go on to state—

It is unclear to us on what basis the Queensland Government has determined not to act on the specific recommendations from the State Coroner—a recommendation which, if implemented, would likely save lives.

It is disappointing that gun safety advocacy bodies did not even get a chance to put their case forward during the public hearings in respect of the bill. I table articles outlining this issue.

Tabled paper. Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 19 February 2026, titled 'Gun laws under fire: Groups demand change' [246](#).

Tabled paper. Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 20 February 2026, titled 'Safety switch on gun laws: Two pro bodies called up but Port Arthur group denied' [247](#).

The Crisafulli LNP government have not implemented the agreement of National Cabinet to sign up to a national gun buyback scheme, and the LNP continue to drag their heels on implementing recommendations from the Wieambilla coroner's report. At the time of this announcement, the Minister for Health said he was implementing a new ministerial directive to make mental health reporting mandatory in respect of high-risk patients. It is my understanding that public health officials already have an obligation to report health matters to the weapons licensing authority; however, this approach is only as good as someone presenting to a public health facility displaying mental health issues with the mental health practitioner knowing they are a weapons licence holder. It precludes those weapons licence holders or those who seek a licence who do not present at a public health facility or, if they do, do not present mental health symptoms.

It is time the Crisafulli LNP government stop being weak, unshackle themselves from their firearm lobby overlords and the right-wing conservatives in their party room and deliver real, positive gun reform in Queensland that will protect Queenslanders. As the brother of a serving police officer I say it is time to implement mandatory mental health checks for weapons licence holders in Queensland. This will protect Queenslanders and protect our hardworking police officers on the front line every day. It is time Queensland signed up to the national gun buyback scheme, because any reduction in the number of weapons and firearms in Queensland—there are over a million—makes our community safer. In fact, the CCC said—

... we live in a borderless environment.

And—

... anything that provides a coherent, consistent, national inter-operative policy is actually going to be a positive step in allowing law enforcement to cooperate.

This is not about taking firearms away from law-abiding citizens such as farmers, sporting shooters, pest controllers and so on. This is about Queensland not being the weakest link in the armour against gun reform and it is about a government putting aside their internal differences and

doing what is right for Queenslanders. This is about putting in place barriers to minimise and stop situations like what happened at Wieambilla and Bondi—something the LNP laws would not have stopped or changed.

The Queensland Police Union has called for much stronger investment by the Crisafulli government in firearms investigations and compliance activities and also outlined that strong legislation and stiff penalties alone are insufficient to deter terrorists and criminals and keep guns out of their hands. It is time that the Crisafulli LNP government delivers further investment in weapons licensing and also provides them the appropriate tools such as through mental health checks to keep Queenslanders safe.

If the government were serious about stamping out vilification and hate crimes in Queensland they would not have paused the laws in the respect-at-work bill. The Queensland Council of Unions stated that the respect-at-work reforms also included enhanced vilification protections, including on the grounds of race and religion, to protect Queenslanders. The Law Society calls for the implementation of changes to Queensland's anti-discrimination laws contemplated by the respect-at-work legislation. It is time the Crisafulli government stopped playing politics with this matter and unpaused the laws already considered by this House which would strengthen antivilification and anti-discrimination protections for all Queenslanders.

I now turn to the prohibited expressions element of the bill. Many Queenslanders have told us the bill should be called the 'Criminalising Freedom of Speech Bill'. First, let me start with what was in the bill and what was considered by the committee before the Premier was rolled by his backbench in yesterday's LNP party room meeting. The LNP's bill was set to give extraordinary powers—basically unchecked before they are used—to the Attorney-General to prescribe phrases to be banned, either spoken or in writing. While I accept that the Attorney-General would need to consult with the Crime and Corruption Commission, the Human Rights Commission and the Queensland Police Service, the Attorney-General only has to consult, and if any of them do not agree, the Attorney-General can still ban a phrase. The Department of Justice said—

It is a matter for the Attorney-General to be satisfied of. The Attorney-General will be able to satisfy herself using evidence that she sees fit to meet the test.

The Attorney-General could wake up one morning and say, 'Oh, I don't like expression A and expression B', do a google search to satisfy herself, consult with the three government funded agencies that do not have veto powers and then slip out a new regulation that afternoon banning an expression. Under laws introduced, an expression can be lawful at the start of the week and banned by the end of the week without Queenslanders being any wiser. I say this because I am informed that when the government recently banned a number of new symbols under the existing legislation there was no press release and no fanfare; they were stumbled upon on the Queensland Legislation website. Which Queensland regularly checks that website? I do not even check that website and I am a politician. While I accept that the parliament can move a disallowance motion after the regulation is made to have a debate about the merits of it, there is no public scrutiny of any proposed new expressions prior to them being banned.

There were many submitters to the parliamentary inquiry raising concerns with the overreach of ministerial powers given to the Attorney-General. The Bar Association said—

the arrogation of the power to ban phrases to the responsible Minister involves problems of both policy (lack of debate) and practicality (lower likelihood that people will be aware what they are not allowed to say)

The Institute of Public Affairs stated—

The bill sets a dangerous new precedent of authorising a government by declaration to outlaw words.

The Archdiocese of Brisbane stated—

Where expressions may be prescribed by regulation, safeguards must be especially robust. The Bill provides insufficient statutory criteria governing when expressions may be prescribed.

For once I agree with Campbell Newman when he described the laws as a significant abuse, and on 7News said—

This can be used against people in the future by their political opponents who happen to be in government.

And—

I think every Queenslander should be very, very worried about it.

The laws give the attorney-general of the day extraordinary powers with very few checks and balances. While I understand the Attorney-General has said that there will be a commonsense approach, the actions of this government to date do not give me or Queenslanders any hope and comfort of a commonsense approach. As outlined in our statement of reservation, these LNP laws, due

to their subjective nature and their ability to be used with minimal scrutiny, leave the door open for abuse by any government or attorney-general, in particular the current Attorney-General. This overreach reeks of an LNP government that has failed to learn the lessons of the Fitzgerald era. As the Queensland Council of Civil Liberties Vice-President Terry O’Gorman said about the laws—

This is up there with the excesses of the Bjelke-Petersen government.

Clearly these views were so concerning for the LNP’s backbench that they were ready to cross the floor and vote against it. That is what we were hearing anyway. Those voices were so loud that they have been forced to flip-flop on a position the Premier, Attorney and police minister have spent two weeks defending. All of a sudden, after a meeting yesterday, they flip-flopped and changed it. Well done to the backbenchers! Maybe it was the LNP caucus finally standing up for their values, like the member for Mackay did last time we were in this chamber. What an absolute champion!

The LNP’s values page on their website states—

Freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, freedom of expression and freedom of association as the building blocks of a robust and fair society.

In a speech in this chamber in 2019 the member for Nanango said—

On the issue of human rights there is nothing more precious than the right to freedom of speech.

In 2019 in this chamber the now Deputy Premier said—

What we want is freedom of speech. We want the ability for members to talk about issues important to members’ electorates.

He certainly showed that this morning! Hasn’t that quote aged well? The Premier might have used the early weeks of parliament to slip his abortion gag past his party room, but he could not quite sneak this one through. The Premier’s division, chaos and crisis has turned a chip into a crack throughout the backbench.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order in relation to relevance and the long title of the bill. I seek your guidance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr McDonald): I am paying attention. Make sure you stay relevant to the bill.

Mr BUTCHER: Thank you for your advice. I am speaking to foreshadowed amendments, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Premier and his ministers have been trying to pressure a position out of us for the last two weeks, but maybe they should have been more concerned about being on the same page as their backbench. The Premier and the Attorney-General said they would only prescribe two phrases. However, the Minister for Police let the cat of the bag the other week, when 7News reported him as saying, ‘The parliament of the day will have, will determine in the future if any other slogans or phrases will be included.’

The consultation for this bill was an absolute sham, and now there have been amendments released at the last minute—we have not seen them as they have not been distributed—that completely change its intent.

An opposition member: They are still drafting them!

Mr BUTCHER: I will take that interjection. Obviously the LNP are still drafting those so we will wait and see. The two phrases now proposed have not been examined by the committee. In fact, the deputy director-general in the Department of Justice said—

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.

That is from the department. Apparently, it was not appropriate for us to ask questions then and we do not have the opportunity at all to ask questions now.

In a question to a witness the LNP’s own chairperson asked, ‘Would you accept that phrases can mean different things to different people,’ and I thank the chair for asking that question. It is a great question. Rather than being calm, methodical and consultative, the LNP have trashed the parliamentary process and any other opportunity for meaningful consultation.

For those reasons and based on strong feedback through the submissions and consultation with Queenslanders, or lack thereof, we cannot support the proposed vilification and hate speech laws in their current format, noting that we do not have the amendments before us at the moment. They propose

to strip away Queensland's freedom of speech while not actually addressing the issue of anti-Semitism, gun violence and terrorism. In a last-minute feat of political gymnastics, the Premier has lost the plot.

I am proud to be part of a united team, led by the Leader of the Opposition, as it is our team that will always stand up for Queenslanders. Instead, what we see from those opposite is chaos and division. We have seen it and we have heard it from regional National Party members of the LNP who are upset with this bill because it attacks their freedom of speech. I thank all those National Party members from regional Queensland for standing up to the Premier. We have heard rumours that the likes of the members for Bonney and Clayfield are upset that the bill does not go far enough in respect of gun reform, which I am sure is what their communities want. I understand that the member for Mirani ruled out any changes to gun reform so we will watch with interest as he crosses the floor, just as the courageous member for Mackay did during the last sitting on another matter dealing with freedom of speech. The LNP are divided on this matter. The ALP are united and we are strong. We believe in freedom of speech, we believe in gun reform laws and we believe that more work needs to be done on strengthening vilification and hate speech laws in this parliament.

The tragic day of 14 December 2025 will be in the minds of Queenslanders each and every day for months and years ahead. We owe it to current and future generations to get these laws right, not rush them. We must ensure we have strong, evidence-based laws that will work and that will stand up to constitutional and legal challenge. Unfortunately, the Crisafulli LNP government has introduced laws that the overwhelming majority of submitters to the truncated committee process believe need further work in respect of the vilification and hate speech provisions. We believe that they need more work, but that does not mean that action should not be taken to stop hate speech in the community. However, the proposal put forward by the LNP raises more questions than answers. I move—

That the words 'now read a second time' be deleted and the following words inserted:

- '1. withdrawn and redrafted to remove the following provisions and elements with the remaining elements contained in a separate bill, to be reintroduced and considered during this week's sitting:
 - (a) elements of clause 4 that deal with expressions;
 - (b) clauses 7, 19 and 20.
2. the removed elements in 1. be referred back to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee to undertake full and proper examination and report back to the House by 17 April 2026.'