



Speech By  
**James Martin**

**MEMBER FOR STRETTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 5 March 2026

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

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (12.47 pm): What happened at Bondi on 14 December was a national tragedy. Fifteen innocent lives were taken in an act of hatred and anti-Semitism. More than 40 others were injured. Families were shattered. A community was traumatised. A day meant to mark the start of Hanukkah became a day of grief that will live in our national memory forever. The Queensland Labor opposition condemns anti-Semitism in all its forms and we condemn hatred in all its forms. Everyone deserves to be safe, everyone deserves to feel safe and everyone deserves respect.

In the wake of such horror, all of us in public life have a responsibility to lower the temperature of debate, to avoid inflaming divisions and to instead focus on healing wounds and strengthening the bonds that allow our diverse communities to live well together. Social cohesion is not automatic. It is a dynamic process that demands constant care, investment and effort to build bridges between groups, foster mutual respect and preserve the shared values that underpin our society. On 17 December we offered bipartisan support to the Premier to take strong, considered action on anti-Semitism and gun violence. That offer, disappointingly, was ignored. Instead, the government rushed forward with laws without meaningful consultation, without clarity and without full regard for the consequences.

The bill before this parliament is troublingly broad and, in parts, vague. It bundles multiple complex issues—protection of places of worship, new criminal offences around speech and symbols, and firearms reforms—into one package. The challenges faced by religious communities are real and demand careful, evidence-based responses. Let me be clear: Labor supports measures that genuinely protect places of worship. People should be able to attend synagogues, churches, mosques and temples without fear. Students, staff and families should be able to pray, learn and live safely. We welcome provisions like the new offences for intimidation or obstruction at places of religious worship and increased penalties for assaults on ministers of religion. Protecting faith communities is essential, but they deserve better than rushed legislation.

Yet after weeks of defending its original approach, the government is now scrambling. It has been forced into eleventh-hour amendments—changes not released publicly in advance, not consulted on with stakeholders and not properly scrutinised by this parliament or the people of Queensland. The bill has faced overwhelming criticism from legal experts, civil liberties groups and community organisations—so much so that the Premier has been rolled by his own party room on key elements—yet we are now asked to vote on amendments the public has barely seen. Criminalising speech is never simple. Social harmony takes leadership and clarity. It is more about listening than suppression. The offences proposed will be very difficult to prosecute and the vagueness risks creating confusion rather than clarity or, worse, chilling legitimate debate. Queensland already has strong vilification laws introduced by the former Labor government. Police and individuals can act when conduct crosses into serious incitement of hatred. Submissions to the committee urged targeted refinements, not broad new offences that could undermine freedoms.

On firearms, the shortcomings are equally glaring. This bill increases penalties for gun crimes and introduces new offences like reckless discharge toward public buildings or drive-by shootings at places of worship—measures we can support in principle—but penalties alone do not prevent weapons from falling into the wrong hands. It fails to implement key recommendations from the State Coroner following the Wieambilla shootings. It does not commit Queensland to the National Gun Buyback Scheme agreed at National Cabinet and it lacks mandatory mental health checks for licence holders or significant new funding for licensing and compliance.

If we are serious about preventing another Bondi or another Wieambilla, prevention must be the focus—robust screening, consistent national standards, early risk identification and keeping firearms out of the hands of those who intend to harm. The Labor opposition will always support action that keeps people safe, but the legislation must be clear, consultative, enforceable, evidence-based and it must protect without confusing or overreaching. This parliament does not need to choose between safety and freedom of speech or between confronting hatred and maintaining community cohesion. We can achieve both with proper consultation, careful drafting and genuine bipartisan cooperation and, as the Prime Minister has urged, a shared commitment to lowering the temperature of debate so we build trust rather than division. That is the standard Queenslanders deserve. That is the standard we must meet for the victims of Bondi, for every faith community and for every Queenslander who wants to live in peace and security. We owe it to them to get this right—not in haste, not in chaos, not for political points-scoring. Labor stands ready to work constructively to deliver better laws.