




Speech By  
**Jonty Bush**

**MEMBER FOR COOPER**

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

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (7.46 pm): We debate this bill in the shadow of an atrocity. At a celebration in Bondi 15 innocent people were murdered, families were shattered and a community was traumatised. Jewish Australians, including Jewish Queenslanders, felt something in the aftermath of Bondi that no Australian should ever feel when they gather in prayer or celebration—fear. Every person in this state deserves to feel safe in their place of worship, safe celebrating their culture, safe walking down the street while wearing symbols of their faith, safe practising their religion, and that right is absolute. The question before this House is not whether we act against hate. The question is whether the provisions in this bill will actually achieve that aim, and many question whether that is the case.

I want to begin by commending the government for bringing a bill forward and for wanting to respond to an awful and confronting tragedy. Governments have a responsibility to confront anti-Semitism, just as it must confront Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian racism, anti-black racism, anti-Asian racism, ableism, sexism—every form of hatred that fractures our communities and undermines social cohesion.

How we confront hate matters, which brings me to the tone of this debate. The contributions today from some members, including ministers, have been hostile, inflammatory and divisive. Members opposite are no longer in opposition; they are now the government, and with that comes a responsibility not just for the content of legislation but for its tone. Leadership in moments like these does not include inflaming fear or drawing political battlelines through communities that are already hurting. It is about being calm and about care and restraint. The Jewish Council of Australia put it far better than I could when they said—

Jewish safety is not strengthened by rushed political deals or parliamentary chaos. It is strengthened by calm, consistent measures to combat anti-Semitism and by protecting all communities from racism and violence, including Muslims, Palestinians and migrant Australians who are also being unfairly targeted in the wake of this tragedy.

That is a plea for unity and we have to reflect on that in this chamber.

I want to talk about process. This bill was drafted with almost no consultation prior to its introduction. The committee process lasted just 17 days. Submissions were open for just one week, and key witnesses who disagreed with the government's views were coincidentally left off the public hearing's list. This is not the process Queenslanders expect for legislation that fundamentally alters criminal law, freedom of expression that all Queenslanders cherish and the balance of power between parliament and the executive.

I contrast this process with the one the parliament undertook in 2022 when the then Labor government commenced the hate crimes and serious vilification inquiry. I was personally involved in that committee. I found it to be one of the most rewarding inquiries I have been on, which is a testament

to the then chair, the member for Toohey. We took nine months. We partnered with Multicultural Affairs Queensland to engage with difficult-to-reach communities and received over 1,000 submissions from a range of stakeholders, including Jewish and Muslim communities across the state.

That work produced 17 recommendations, including leading the nation in establishing a criminal offence for displaying the Nazi symbol. We recommended taking serious vilification and hate crimes out of the Anti-Discrimination Act and putting them into the Criminal Code to reflect the serious nature of hate crimes, and we increased sentencing where offending was motivated by hatred. By comparison, this bill is rushed and, according to submitters, will not materially make Jewish people any safer.

The original bill makes no explicit reference to anti-Semitism at all. Instead, it creates a framework that enables the Attorney-General to criminalise speech—not just speech that incites violence, which is the traditional and well-understood threshold, but speech that simply offends. That is a huge shift. It gives the Attorney-General unilateral power to determine which words or phrases attract criminal penalties without parliamentary scrutiny or community consultation.

I can think of a lot of phrases and words which are deeply misogynistic that are routinely used to intimidate, threaten and offend women. 'Offence' is the operative word, because under this bill a word or phrase has to merely cause offence to attract a two-year prison sentence. When you couple the offensive nature of misogynistic terms, for example, with the unbearable reality that a woman is killed as a result of male violence every week in Australia, the case for the criminalisation of those hostile words is set out. I look forward to a future under this bill where a man who calls a woman a dog, for example—or worse—could face criminal consequences, potentially up to two years imprisonment. That is what this bill, as put to the committee, allows for.

Many submitters urged caution, including Jewish organisations themselves. The Jewish Council of Australia recommended that the provisions relating to the proscribed phrases be removed from the bill. Jewish Voices of Hope told the committee that, while they reject anti-Semitism, the new offence risks overreach and could chill lawful political expression. Faith leaders told us that criminalising language will not resolve complex social tensions; it will embed it. These are not fringe or radical voices; these are thoughtful members of our community asking us to pause, to reflect and to get this right for everybody's sake. Instead of taking that time or working in a comprehensive and bipartisan way, the Attorney-General has today moved a raft of amendments. The legislation was rushed and today requires fixing. That type of behaviour does not instil confidence.

There have been claims in this debate that Labor has done nothing to protect vulnerable communities. I reject those propositions. It was a Labor government that introduced the Racial Discrimination Act, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Disability Discrimination Act and the Age Discrimination Act. It was a Labor government that introduced Queensland's Anti-Discrimination Act and Queensland's Human Rights Act. In its last term, the former Labor government undertook the hate crimes and vilification reforms, strengthening the legislative framework, and moved hate crimes out of the ADA and into the Criminal Code. It also undertook four years of consultation on the respect-at-work reforms, which would have introduced a positive duty of care on employers to prevent discrimination and vilification and not just respond after harm occurs. One of the first actions of the LNP government after it was elected was to indefinitely pause that bill.

Finally, I remind the House that legislation alone is a blunt instrument. Despite the strengthened framework introduced by us in 2023, only a small number of prosecutions have been initiated. That tells us that law reform in its own right is not enough. We need additional education for police and prosecutors. We need resourcing for community organisations, including those supporting Jewish Queenslanders. We need funding and support for individuals to pursue complaints and prosecutions, including through Legal Aid Queensland. These were core recommendations of the 2023 inquiry into vilification and hate crimes, and these recommendations remain outstanding still under this government.

Last month I asked the Attorney-General by way of a question on notice whether the Crisafulli government remains committed to implementing those recommendations and what the timeframe would be for those. I have not received an answer, but I look forward to receiving one. It is those recommendations, formed after nine months of deep consultation with all multicultural communities, that will make a material difference to the safety of Jewish families in Queensland, in fact to all Queenslanders facing vilification. If we are serious about combating hate, we have to park the chaos, park the division and prioritise careful lawmaking over rushed politics.

Anti-Semitism is real and we have to confront it. Communities have told us that it is not defeated by prohibiting political speech, nor by treating disagreement with the policies of the modern Netanyahu government as synonymous with anti-Semitism. I join with the Jewish Council of Australia in cautioning

against definitions or approaches that categorise Palestinian political expression as inherently anti-Semitic because doing so risks undermining both democratic debate and the fight against genuine hatred. When governments respond to fear with blunt legal force, they do not calm communities; they risk amplifying resentment and fracturing trust. I am deeply concerned that aspects of this bill could do exactly that.