




Speech By
Melissa McMahon

MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

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

 **Ms McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (4.07 pm): I rise to make my contribution to the bill before the House today. As Australians, I think we can all say that we were equally horrified by the events of Bondi last year. Australians have always prided themselves on having a democratic, equal, welcoming society. We have been a multicultural society for decades, and we have often been held up as a success story in the global multicultural world. We also acknowledge that in the global world there are dark hearts and dark minds and that, unfortunately, in this world there will be people who will act upon those, as we saw last year. Australia is clearly not immune to that.

No part of our community in Australia should feel fear for being who they are, for who they worship or for what they believe. This is not the case in many countries around the world, and that is why Australia is the lucky country. But we are lucky only up to a point. We are lucky because we have a robust democracy, as evidenced by the fact that we are debating a bill like this before the House. We have that privilege.

Australia has always been considered a safe haven for immigrants from around the world to have the freedom to practise religion. Alongside that freedom, what they appreciate is the freedom of expression and the freedom of association. These are the hallmarks of an Australian society.

I should note that the short title of this bill starts with 'fighting anti-Semitism', a real problem that we have seen not only in the last few months but certainly over the last few years. However, let's be clear: there is no mention of the words 'Semitism' or 'anti-Semitism' in the bill. It is not contained in the bill. The words that are being debated and mentioned are not contained in the bill. I understand there are some foreshadowed amendments, but it is not like the committee got to consider them. It is not like the few limited bodies that were involved in the consultation will get an opportunity to do so. No, I foreshadow that, much like a lot in this debate, the amendments will be introduced a few minutes before we have to vote on them because scrutiny is not something the government likes to display. I will enjoy looking at these foreshadowed amendments minutes before we have to vote on them because that is the type of transparency we see. In this House we are criminalising behaviour and we are criminalising speech, and we are doing so without even knowing what those words are.

There are general protections in this bill that protect places of worship and services. These are worthy and they should be supported because they do not specify a religion and they do not specify a place of worship. They are equal protections for equal groups within this state.

The scope of this bill is to outlaw free speech at the decision—currently, that we can see—of an attorney-general. These are the most extreme powers for prohibiting and criminalising free speech in the country. Let's put it this way: Queensland is now at the forefront of criminalising free speech in this country without us even being able to debate what those words are. That is where we are at. I think the word 'liberal' in the LNP is doing a lot of heavy lifting because there is not much liberal ideology in that.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr J Kelly): Order, member for Nanango.

Ms Scanlon interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Gaven.

Ms McMAHON: What comes next? What words come next? I know that we as elected members in the House have been gagged from debating issues that the Premier finds uncomfortable, so whoever is going to be in the AG's ear—

Mr Ryan interjected.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The members for Morayfield and Nanango will cease their quarrelling across the chamber.

Ms McMAHON:—and decides what words the Attorney-General is going to add to the 'go directly to jail list' next—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order, firstly, on relevance. Secondly, I take personal offence at the member's contribution and I ask her to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I will take some advice.

Ms MULLEN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe the member is being directly relevant. There are provisions within the existing bill that speak to jail time in relation to prohibited expressions and that is what the member was speaking about.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will just take some advice. Firstly, with regard to relevance, I was distracted because several members were quarrelling across the chamber and I was dealing with that. Member, I would ask that you demonstrate the relevance of your contribution to the debate. Secondly, the member has taken personal offence. I would ask you to withdraw.

Ms McMAHON: I withdraw. The words foreshadowed by the government to be the first on this list are those that cause fear or alarm to members of the Jewish community. However, in the words of the chair of the committee, these words mean different things to different people. This is what the chair said during committee deliberations: these words mean different things to different people. By the chair's very own admission, the words that are being considered are contested; they are not unanimous. They are certainly not unanimous within the Jewish community. We can look at contributions by groups or the submissions by the Jewish Council of Australia, which does not agree with this bill, Jewish Voices of Hope, which does not agree with this bill, or Jews for Justice, which does not agree with this bill. We are talking about contested words. I have no doubt there are people who feel intimidated by such words. There are many words that are spoken in our community that intimidate groups of all different kinds. The phrase 'go back to where you came from' is considered quite intimidating but is shouted freely on everyone's Facebook pages. What comes next? That is my point. What comes next, because this is a slippery slope when it comes to limiting free speech.

Clearly, as has been described by many submitters, this is specifically targeting what some people feel are anti-Semitic views. That is a legitimate position to hold, but then there are others who consider this legitimate political expression. Where does this parliament draw the line? I can tell you which side it has landed on. It has landed on the side of the government of the day deciding what words people can say and what words are going to land people in jail. Some call it a call for justice; others refer to it as a call to arms. The context becomes very important and, again, this is going to be something that will land on the desk of police officers to have to determine in the context of who is bearing signs or saying phrases that are deeply contested, even amongst academics. Our first responders are going to have to wade through that. I am not going to get started on the constitutional aspects of free speech that this particular bill is going to raise. No doubt we will find ourselves at the High Court again at some point.

Let's not presume that this bill has universal support. Yes, I joined the committee in its travels and we did hear from some amazing locals and members of the Jewish community in Townsville about the fear they hold. There was also an interesting contributor from the community who came along and was given an opportunity to speak. I would like to go over the community statement that was made by Mr Cohen during the committee proceedings in Townsville. He said—

... this bill should be scrapped. It seems like it was written a while ago and they were just looking for the right time to introduce it. It is counter to its intention.

Mr Cohen went on to say—

I served in the IDF during the second intifada particularly in the Gaza Strip.

This was a contribution by a man who is an Australian, has been in Australia for 20 years but was over there and was making his contribution through the IDF. If anyone was to have thoughts about phrases and what incites fear, what incites hatred or what incites intimidation, this is a man who was there, who had skin in the game. His view on it was—

We had it for thousands of years.

He is referring to anti-Semitism. He went on—

We can survive it. We are not victims. I do not like this idea that Australia needs to feel sorry for us, like it is not an acceptable feeling for Australia. We have invited it here, we let it happen and now we have people chanting 'globalise the intifada'. I have been there; I know what it is. I fought against it. I lost friends.

This is not the way to do it.