



Speech By  
**Sandy Bolton**

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

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

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (4.04 pm): Fifteen innocent Australians lost their lives in the Bondi Beach tragedy. At the last sitting we stood in this chamber to grieve for and honour them and all who have been impacted. There is no place in our country for violence and hatred. We should be able to gather to practise our faiths and go about our daily lives without fear. As we have heard, that targeted attack was an act of terrorism. It was the second deadliest mass shooting on Australian soil and one that will be forever imprinted in our memories and history.

Today we vote on legislation that endeavours to reduce risk through several amendments to the Criminal Code, the Weapons Act 1990 and the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 that include a ban on hate symbols and specific expressions used to incite or promote discrimination, hostility or violence. In addition, there will be new criminal offences regarding intimidation and increased penalties for attacks on people and places of worship. New maximum penalties of up to 14 years imprisonment have been included for stealing firearms or ammunition. Stricter licensing criteria will require a gun owner to be an Australian citizen. These are amongst a host of other changes. These include intelligence sharing with the ADF for background checks and stringent weapons storage rules. Specific new offences will help police target acts of preparation for serious violence and drive-by shootings.

The majority of these amendments have been welcomed. However, will they reduce hatred, incitement and fear? Support for the bill came from organisations including the Archdiocese of Brisbane, which stated that protecting faith communities is legitimately and morally necessary. The Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies said that the changes reaffirm that hate has no place in Queensland. Firearm owners supported addressing the safety risk from licensed gun theft and limiting access to high-risk individuals. Guns have a practical place in society for law-abiding Queenslanders, including sporting and recreational clubs, as I raised during the community safety debate, and our farmers require specific tools of trade in their efforts to grow our food. I thank those in my community who shared the realities, including our farmers who face endless stock losses because of wild dogs.

However, the 412 submissions raised widespread concerns, which I share. First, concern was raised about the one-week submission deadline, which was far too short. Also, the curtailed committee process yet again highlighted the system deficiencies for scrutiny and oversight which I have raised for many years in this chamber and again recently with the Premier. The Queensland Jewish community warned that the narrow focus of the legislation risked further polarisation and discrimination and less safety for affected communities. They joined with others, including the Australian Multicultural Action Network, to call for the wording to be broadened to a zero-tolerance approach to hatred and violence against all marginalised communities. This is essential.

Submitters also pointed out the duplication with existing Commonwealth and state provisions and called for the anti-discrimination and vilification reforms already within the Crime and Corruption (Restoring Reporting Powers) Amendment Bill to be commenced. The Wieambilla inquest

recommendations must also be implemented, as future tragedies cannot be prevented unless the root causes of extremism are addressed. Change cannot occur in a legislation silo and it is not the only lever available to government, as reiterated by the Public Health Association and the Queensland Police Union. Walter Mikac, who tragically lost his wife and two daughters in the Port Arthur massacre, said that increasing penalties without preventive measures was like locking the gate after the horse had bolted. Rabbi Ari Rubin added that education is a far better solution to pre-empt any of these things. This echoes the historical calls for mandated whole-of-school life and personal development education incorporating cultural and religious awareness and perspectives.

As submitted, those who commit acts of extreme violence and hatred do not follow our laws, nor respect our shared humanity. Legal Aid Queensland explained that criminal law is a poor tool to improve social cohesion and other submitters suggested community-led restorative justice processes, as has been advocated for previously.

Academics had also cautioned on potential impacts to freedom of speech with decisions on specific expressions left with the Attorney-General, and that was a slippery slope that could be exploited beyond what was intended with this bill. I thank the government for responding to these concerns, with a last-minute amendment to ensure future changes are only through legislation, as they should be.

Freedoms, including to speak, gather, protest and debate are fundamental to our democracy, and with them comes a heavy responsibility to our country, our neighbours, our families and to each other. They should never be weaponised to promote hatred or violence, nor attack or divide communities online or on the ground—full stop. As an MP who opposes the gagging of debate in this chamber, urgency motions that limit scrutiny and prevent members speaking on behalf of those they represent and the failures of our committee system that include a lack of transparency, I acknowledge the responsibility that freedom of speech brings. Every day I will oppose, whether here in the chamber, on the street or online, language, intent and slogans that incite or promote hatred and division. There is no place for this now or in the future—again, full stop.

We must address the causes of division, whether religious or based on wealth or ideology, and not just the symptoms that emanate from that. Legislation must be underpinned by systems that work for everyday Queenslanders, not against. Zero transparency is not acceptable, nor is the endless blame and politicking around horrendous and abhorrent behaviours in our society.

Both sides of this chamber need to work together, and amongst the many speeches during this debate, none have mentioned our own behaviours in this House that contribute to increasing unrest, division, mistrust and hatred. To see deep grief and sorrow weaponised against one another has been incredibly saddening.

One of the greatest issues we face as a society and ultimately as representatives is do we go for the quick response to serve the need for instant gratification and to appear that we are doing something or do we take longer, through appropriate processes, to really listen to those impacted, to ensure our actions will actually improve community safety? This is never an easy question, nor are the answers, as not supporting this bill could have one deemed uncaring and by supporting it we could possibly be creating greater harm and enabling the ongoing failings of this parliament.

In finishing, I want to thank the committee and its secretariat and all submitters who endeavoured to do the impossible in an unacceptable timeline. I can only say history will judge us, as will our next generations and all who may be failed by decisions made under this flawed system.