

Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

Re: Exposure Draft – Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026

13 January 2026

Dear Committee Members,

As a concerned Australian citizen from [REDACTED] Queensland, I strongly oppose the Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026 in its current form. While I condemn antisemitism, hate, and extremism—particularly in light of the tragic Bondi Beach attack—this 144-page omnibus bill represents a dangerous overreach that threatens core freedoms. It combines unrelated reforms into a rushed package, prioritizing political expediency over careful scrutiny. The bill's flaws, including vague language and disproportionate measures, could harm ordinary Australians by eroding free speech and imposing unnecessary gun restrictions, ultimately fostering division rather than unity.

On free speech, the bill's new offences for racial vilification (up to 5 years' imprisonment) and "inciting hatred" are alarmingly broad. Terms like "promoting hatred" or "glorifying" past acts could criminalize legitimate political discourse, such as critiquing immigration policies or religious practices. A social media post questioning multiculturalism might be deemed to cause "fear or intimidation," leading to self-censorship among citizens fearful of prosecution. The reversed burden of proof for displaying prohibited symbols—requiring individuals to prove their innocence for educational or journalistic purposes—undermines the presumption of innocence and chills expression. Worse, exemptions for quoting "religious texts" create a loophole that could shield hate preachers inciting violence, while targeting critics of radical ideologies. This asymmetry protects imported voter bases at the expense of open debate, potentially politicizing enforcement against "far-right" views or white Australians discussing mass migration. As noted by critics, it risks emulating UK's arrests for online comments, stifling dissent without addressing root causes like Islamophobia or anti-Palestinian racism.

Equally troubling are the gun restrictions in Schedule 4, which feel tacked on and unrelated to combating hate. The national firearms buyback scheme, bans on imports like high-capacity magazines and suppressors, and expanded background checks (including ASIO assessments of "hate" associations) target law-abiding owners rather than extremists. These measures erode self-defense rights, invade privacy through spent convictions reviews, and criminalize sharing manufacturing info online (up to 15 years). Post-Port Arthur laws already work; this "gun grab" punishes responsible citizens, potentially leaving them vulnerable while radicals exploit loopholes.

The bill's rushed timeline—submissions due in days, passage expected next week—lacks consultation with Muslim groups and others, risking unintended consequences like deepened

divisions. It trades liberty for perceived security, building a surveillance state without proportionality.

I urge the Committee to reject or substantially amend this bill: narrow definitions to require imminent harm, restore free speech protections, decouple gun reforms, and extend scrutiny. Australia deserves laws that unite, not divide.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Martin

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