

Dear Committee Members,

I am an Australian citizen who fully supports strong action against antisemitism and religiously-motivated violent extremism.

The exposure draft of the Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026 raises serious concerns regarding free speech, vagueness, overreach and proportionality.

The new criminal offences – particularly the 5-year maximum penalty for “inciting hatred” based on race, religion or ideology – risk capturing Australians with genuine and sincerely held views on matters such as immigration policy or the recent Islamic terror attack in Bondi, positions that the vast majority of Australians may find reasonable.

A critique of religious practices, immigration policy or government decisions could easily be misinterpreted – deliberately or not – as “inciting hatred”, leading to widespread self-censorship of legitimate debate as well as the jailing of innocent Australians.

This very thing is happening right now in the UK, where over 12,000 British citizens have been jailed for comments made online about government immigration policy and terror attacks. Often these Britons have received longer sentences than the terrorists perpetuating the crimes they are discussing.

Vague terms such as “promoting violence”, “glorifying terrorism” and “supporting” prohibited hate groups invite subjective enforcement.

Retweeting an article, sharing a quote or criticising an ideology could also trigger charges.

The expanded list of banned symbols and the process for listing hate groups (mirroring terrorist listings) could be politicised to target unpopular views rather than genuine threats.

Tacking on unrelated measures further undermines the bill’s focus. Specifically:

- Schedule 4’s national firearms buyback and stricter gun laws are not connected with combating hate and radicalisation.

Australia must fight real hate and violent religious extremism **without eroding the freedoms that define us.**

I respectfully urge the Committee to recommend:

1. Narrowed definitions requiring proof of imminent harm *or* direct incitement to violence
2. Robust and explicit free speech protections and defences
3. Removing non-speech elements (visa powers, firearms)
4. Mandatory independent review for effectiveness, due 3 years after enactment
5. A sunset clause dated 5 years after enactment.

Yours sincerely
Bradley Webb
Australia 13 January 2026