

**Submission
No 31**

MEASURES TO PROHIBIT SLOGANS THAT INCITE HATRED

Organisation: Digital Defence

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Submission to the NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety

Inquiry: Measures to prohibit slogans that incite hatred and threaten community safety

Submitted by: Digital Defence (Australia)

Date: January 2026

1. About Digital Defence

Digital Defence is an Australian not-for-profit organisation focused on addressing harmful online conduct, including harassment, doxxing and vilification. Our work centres on evidence-based analysis, data collection and education initiatives, alongside policy and stakeholder engagement. Digital Defence looks at how digital platforms can be used to amplify harmful or polarising sentiments and identify practical measures to reduce digital harm, to improve online safety and support social cohesion for all Australians

2. Purpose of this submission

On 22 December 2025, the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety announced an inquiry into measures to prohibit slogans that incite hatred and threaten community safety. The terms of reference include “the need to protect communities from hatred, intimidation and violence,” which is the focus of this submission.

This submission addresses a critical and persistent gap in current policy discussions: the systematic neglect of the online environment as the primary vector through which hate, vilification, and extremist narratives are produced, amplified, and operationalised.

While public debate and regulatory responses frequently focus on slogans, symbols, and conduct in physical public spaces, Digital Defence submits that any effective response must place the online space at the centre of regulatory, enforcement, and prevention efforts.

3. The online space as the epicentre of contemporary hate

Digital Defence’s monitoring and casework over the past two years demonstrate that:

- Hate-inciting slogans and dehumanising language overwhelmingly originate, spread, and gain legitimacy online before appearing offline.
- Consistent content moderation failures of social media platforms enable rapid amplification, repetition, and normalisation of extremist rhetoric with minimal friction or consequence.
- In some cases, deliberately organised or coordinated online communities provide plausible deniability, coded language, and networked reinforcement that allow hate actors to evade accountability while sustaining real-world impact.

Policy responses that address slogans without addressing the digital ecosystems that generate and legitimise them will remain incomplete.

4. Absence of consequences for online bad actors

Digital Defence has observed sustained online campaigns involving:

- Doxxing of Australian citizens
- Coordinated harassment and abuse
- Racial and religious vilification
- Calls for, justification of, or endorsement of violence

Notwithstanding the existence of relevant criminal, civil, and regulatory frameworks, there has been little to no visible enforcement against repeat online offenders. This absence of consequences has entrenched a culture of impunity and emboldened further escalation.

5. Antisemitism online and the use of antizionism as a cloak

This section addresses examples of the use of language that, while framed as political expression, functions in practice to promote hatred, intimidation and threats to community safety. A substantial portion of the conduct documented by Digital Defence involves antisemitism expressed through the language of so-called “anti-Zionism,” where references to “Zionists,” “Israel,” or “Israelis” are used as proxies for Jewish people. These terms are frequently paired with longstanding antisemitic narratives and imagery, creating plausible deniability while enabling the circulation of inherently hateful expressions that risk normalising hostility, incitement, and real-world harm.

Academic Dr David Slucki highlights the tension between legitimate political debate and antisemitic targeting:

“Recognising this diversity of thought and the humanity of those who hold those beliefs, we ought to draw a clear distinction between debating the merits of Zionism as an idea and harassing, doxxing or physically attacking those who identify as Zionist. In Australian public debate, ‘Zionist’ is often used as a political descriptor. But it is also sometimes used as a stand-in for ‘Jew’, which is where political argument turns into antisemitic targeting.”¹

Independent research conducted by the Online Hate Prevention Institute (OHPI), examining patterns of online antisemitism in Australia before and after 7 October 2023, identifies the most prevalent narratives as including traditional antisemitic tropes such as blood libel, conspiracy theories of Jewish world control, dehumanisation of Jews, denial of Jewish self-determination, Holocaust distortion or glorification, and explicit or implicit endorsement of violence against Jews.²

Crucially, this research demonstrates that following 7 October, traditional antisemitism did not recede; rather, it intensified and was frequently redirected toward “Zionists” or “Israel,” while retaining the same underlying narratives, language, and intent.

Slogans such as:

- “All Zionists are terrorists”
- “From the river to the sea”
- “Globalise the intifada”

are routinely deployed online in ways that collapse Jewish identity into a collective enemy, normalise violence, and dehumanise Jewish Australians. Given that the overwhelming majority of Jews identify as Zionists in some form, this conduct functions in practice as antisemitic incitement, regardless of how it is rhetorically framed.²

Assessing such conduct requires attention to impact, context, and targeting, not merely stated intent. Harassment or vilification that follows identification of an individual as Jewish, or that relies on traditional antisemitic narratives while purporting to target “Zionists,” remains antisemitic in substance.



This point is further articulated by academic Dr Jeremie Bracka, who explains how contemporary antisemitism exploits legal abstraction:

Under section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)*, vilifying speech is assessed by asking whether it is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate because of race or ethnicity. In practice, courts have often assessed

anti-Zionist speech at a high level of abstraction, detached from Jewish historical experience, where Zionism is closely bound up with peoplehood, self-determination, and collective survival.³

In *Wertheim v Haddad* [2025] FCA 720, the Federal Court found that certain lectures breached s 18C by conveying antisemitic imputations, while treating other remarks criticising Israel and “Zionists” as political commentary. This illustrates a growing doctrinal mismatch: the law searches for explicit racial naming, while antisemitism increasingly operates through coded language and repetition.³

6. Doxxing as a case study: the “WhatsApp 600”

The mass doxxing incident commonly referred to as the “WhatsApp 600” provides a clear case study of how online conduct can escalate into real-world intimidation and threats to personal safety, underscoring the need for effective protection of communities from hatred, intimidation and violence.

In February 2024, a group of online activists identifying as anti-Zionist, including [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], as well as [REDACTED], published links on their respective social media accounts to materials extracted from a private WhatsApp group comprising approximately 600 Jewish Australian creatives. The materials included a transcript of the private group chat, a spreadsheet containing links to participants’ social media profiles, and a separate file containing photographs of more than 100 Jewish individuals.

The consequences of this disclosure were immediate and severe. In an interview with *Guardian Australia*, the Federal Member for Macnamara, Josh Burns MP, described the incident as “very distressing,” noting that it went far beyond trivial online commentary and resulted in “really serious consequences,” including death threats. He recounted being in contact with a family who were forced to go into hiding after receiving an “avalanche of threats,” switching off devices and relocating for safety, describing the experience as akin to a “lynch mob.”⁴ These outcomes demonstrate how the publication of identifying information can materially increase the risk of intimidation, harassment and violence against targeted communities.

The Prime Minister publicly condemned the release of identifying information belonging to Jewish members of the WhatsApp group. In a radio interview on 2GB on 12 February 2024, Prime Minister Albanese stated that he had asked the Attorney-General to bring forward legislation addressing doxxing, describing it as “the malicious publication of private information online,” and emphasised that targeting Australians on the basis of their religion was “completely unacceptable.”⁵

As foreshadowed, new anti-doxxing provisions were introduced in December 2024 through the *Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024*. However, the conduct underpinning the “WhatsApp 600” incident already appeared to fall within the scope of existing Commonwealth offences, including carriage service offences under the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)*, which prohibit the use of a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence. The dissemination of private communications and identifying information, in circumstances where harm was both foreseeable and realised, engaged legal thresholds that existed prior to the introduction of the new legislation.

Despite the availability of these existing legal measures, there have been no meaningful enforcement outcomes against those responsible for publishing and amplifying the personal details of Jewish Australians in a manner that facilitated harassment, intimidation and threats.

This case highlights a persistent challenge in Australia's response to online harm: while serious incidents prompt legislative attention and reform, the protection of affected communities ultimately depends on the consistent and effective enforcement of existing laws. Where enforcement is limited or absent, legislative reform alone is insufficient to prevent intimidation, deter harmful conduct, or reduce the risk of real-world violence.

7. Online conduct and real-world harm

Online speech is not abstract or consequence-free. Online rhetoric:

- Shapes norms and acceptable conduct
- Desensitises audiences to violence
- Identifies and targets individuals and groups
- Lowers barriers to real-world harm

In July 2025, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese observed that social media “pushes people towards extremes, whether that be extreme left or extreme right,” acknowledging the role of online platforms in amplifying ideological division.⁶

Yet, following the Bondi Beach shooting massacre on 14 December 2025, the Prime Minister's press conference on 22 December 2025 outlined a broad suite of proposed hate-related offences and penalties without specifically addressing online conduct, despite it being the primary environment in which such conduct originates and proliferates.⁷

This omission reflects a broader policy disconnect. For example, while it is unlawful to publicly display the symbols of listed terrorist organisations in physical spaces, similar conduct frequently occurs online with little apparent consequence.

One prominent example is ██████████, a key figure in the “WhatsApp 600” doxxing incident, who has repeatedly used ██████████ social media accounts to promote and glorify listed terrorist organisations and violent extremism. ██████████ online activity includes the publication of terrorist flags and imagery, calls for “intifada,” the sale of merchandise bearing the words “bash Zionists,” and the circulation of violent imagery such as burning Australian flags, burning police vehicles, and ██████████ own illustration depicting the decapitation of King Charles.⁸

██████████ has also published explicitly hateful antizionist statements, including assertions that “Zionists are parasitic upon progressive spaces” and that the WhatsApp group “confirms what we already know: Zionists are thoroughly racist, thoroughly anti-Indigenous and thoroughly committed to colonialism.”⁹

Further, in the wake of the Bondi Beach massacre, ██████████ published an article ██████████ which included explicit justification and endorsement of lethal violence. In this article, ██████████ reframed the attack as a legitimate consequence of “colonial violence,” rejected the innocence of Jewish victims, praised Hamas' 7 October attack as a “liberatory operation,” promoted dehumanising collective punishment rhetoric, and delegitimised Australian democratic institutions and law enforcement.¹⁰

In other words, ██████████ has systematically used ██████████ online platforms to engage in hate speech, promote extremist violence, glorify terrorism, and act as a central figure in a major doxxing event. To date, there does not appear to be any criminal charges laid by the Australian Federal Police in relation to ██████████ alleged offending.

These examples underscore the urgent need for effective enforcement of dangerous online conduct, which cannot occur without explicit recognition of the central role the online environment plays in escalating hate and extremism.



8. Forthcoming policy work

Digital Defence is actively engaged in policy work relating to online safety regulation and enforcement, informed by extensive examples of where existing offences and protection measures have fallen short or have not been fully utilised in practice. We are available to supply further information about this to the committee

9. Recommendations

Digital Defence respectfully recommends that the Committee:

- Explicitly recognise the online environment as the primary site of contemporary hate incitement.
- Ensure that measures addressing slogans are integrated with online enforcement mechanisms.
- Examine barriers to enforcing existing laws in digital contexts.
- Consider cumulative harm arising from repeated online conduct.
- Include doxxing, coordinated harassment, and coded incitement—including antisemitism expressed through antizionist language—within community safety considerations.

10. Conclusion

Efforts to combat hatred and threats to social cohesion will continue to fall short if the online space remains peripheral to policy design and enforcement.

The digital environment is not merely reflective of social tensions; it is the engine that accelerates, legitimises, and operationalises them. Addressing slogans without addressing the online ecosystems that produce and normalise them risks treating symptoms while leaving causes untouched.

Digital Defence welcomes the opportunity to assist the Committee further.

Contact Information

Digital Defence

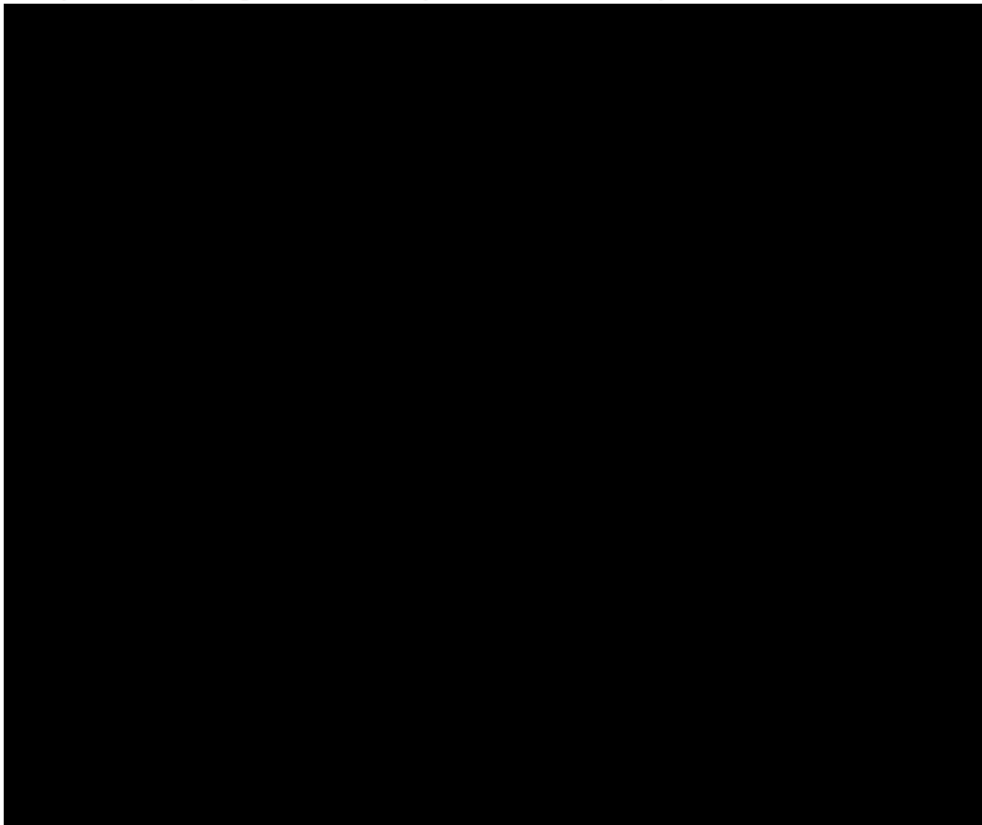


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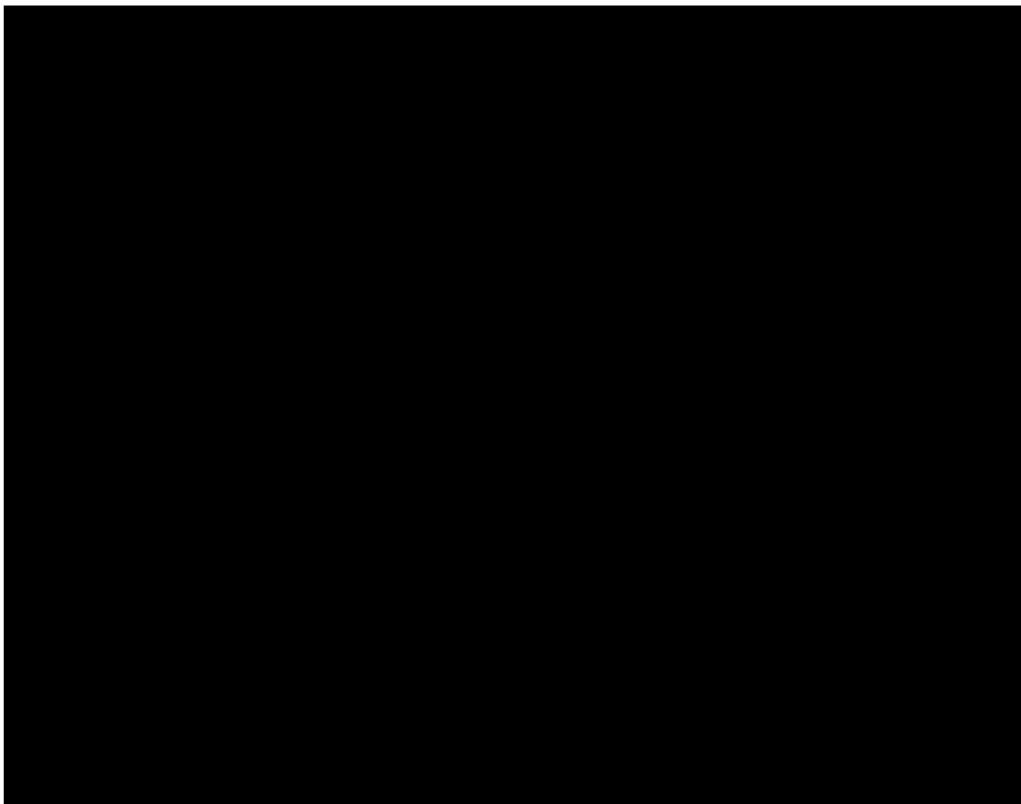
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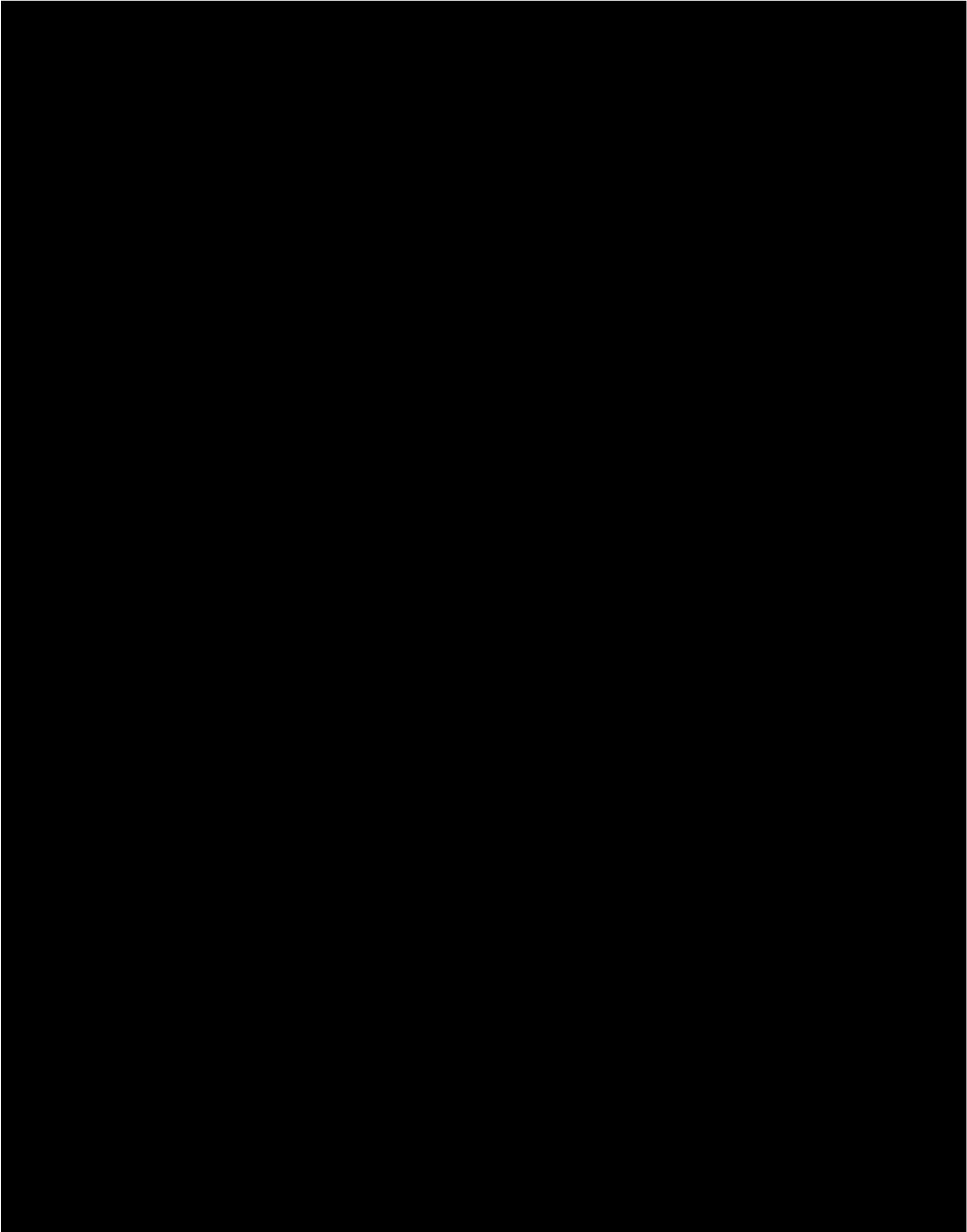
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