

**Submission
No 35**

MEASURES TO PROHIBIT SLOGANS THAT INCITE HATRED

Organisation: Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace

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Coalition of Women
for justice and peace

Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace

**Submission to the Legislative Assembly Committee on
Law and Safety Inquiry into Measures to Prohibit
Slogans that Incite Hatred**

11 January 2026

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1. Executive Summary

This submission is made by the Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace, a grassroots, multi-faith and multicultural collective committed to justice, human rights, and social cohesion. We represent Christian, Jewish, Muslim and secular perspectives and oppose hatred, racism, and violence in all forms. We have however, serious concerns about proposals to criminalise political expression, slogans, or peaceful protest - particularly where such measures disproportionately target pro-Palestinian advocacy or the Arabic language. Existing NSW and Commonwealth laws already address genuine incitement to violence and public order offences. New speech-based offences risk undermining democratic freedoms, increasing discrimination, damaging community cohesion, and negatively affecting mental health and wellbeing. We urge the Committee to adopt evidence-based, proportionate, and non-punitive responses that uphold freedom of political communication, equality before the law, and inclusive approaches to addressing racism and social harm.

The Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace looks forward to presenting our perspective to the Committee in person.

Yours sincerely,

Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace

Email: [REDACTED]

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2. Introduction

The Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety in relation to its inquiry into Measures to Prohibit Slogans that Incite Hatred.

We make this submission out of concern that proposals to criminalise political expression, cultural language, or peaceful protest risk undermining democratic freedoms, disproportionately impacting particular communities, and weakening social cohesion in New South Wales.

This submission draws on lived community experience, direct participation in lawful demonstrations, and sustained engagement in peaceful civic action.

3. About the Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace

Members of the Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace (or “Coalition”) engage in peaceful civic action, including monthly “chains of women” held in various suburbs across Sydney. These actions seek to raise awareness of human-made humanitarian and environmental crises, civilian harm, and injustices affecting communities worldwide, including the Palestinian people. The Coalition’s efforts are non-violent, inclusive, and grounded in respect for human life, international law, and accountability. In addition, the Coalition advocates through direct engagement with politicians and public sector officials, the writing of letters and petitions, and participation in lawful public protests.

As women and caregivers, members of the Coalition are particularly attuned to the long-term impacts of fear, exclusion, and repression on families, children, and future generations.

4. Community Cohesion and Public Safety

Concerns have been raised in this inquiry regarding the use of certain political slogans. The proposed measures appear to focus on pro-Palestinian slogans, including phrases expressed in Arabic without consultation with the community regarding the meaning, intent, and context of such slogans.

Having participated in every relevant Sydney demonstration, the Coalition can confirm that the phrase “globalise the intifada” was not used at these events prior to public statements announcing an intention to prohibit it. The word *intifada*, meaning “shaking off” or “uprising” in Arabic, is not inherently hateful. In historical and political contexts, it has been used to describe movements for self-determination and lawful acts of resistance to oppression. Use of the term alone does not constitute incitement, violence, or a threat to community safety.

Rather, targeting Arabic words or slogans risks reinforcing anti-Arab racism, perpetuating harmful stereotypes, and undermining social cohesion - particularly at a time when members of Arab and Palestinian communities are grieving the loss of loved ones, and in some cases entire families and homes, due to widespread destruction and unlawful killing in Gaza and Lebanon.

There is no evidence linking pro-Palestinian protests or slogans to the tragic events at Bondi Beach. Public speculation to the contrary is unsupported and risks increasing fear, discrimination, alienation, and mistrust – particularly within the Arabic-speaking community,

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who represent the third most spoken language group in Australia after English and Mandarin, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics census data.

The NSW Government's proposed banning of Arabic words risks reinforcing and even encouraging, further anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab and Islamophobic sentiment while potentially exacerbating antisemitic attitudes. As reported by the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC), there has been a two hundred per cent increase in reported Islamophobic hate incidents since 14 December. The Islamophobia Register Australia has recorded an average of eighteen incidents per day – up sharply from a previous baseline of one to two incidents daily. These incidents include the vandalism of Islamic institutions, verbal and physical harassment, and online hate, with hijab-wearing Muslim women particularly targeted through acts such as spitting and the forcible removal of their headscarves.

Measures that target language or cultural expression do not address the underlying causes of prejudice and division. Instead, efforts should focus on understanding and tackling the root causes and drivers of antisemitism and other forms of discrimination, fostering dialogue, education, and inclusive community engagement to strengthen social cohesion and wellbeing.

5. Opposition to Hatred, Racism and Violence

The Coalition unequivocally condemns all forms of hatred, racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and incitement to violence.

We also recognise anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab racism as increasingly visible forms of discrimination, particularly in the context of war, widespread destruction, and unlawful killing of civilians in Gaza and Lebanon. Narratives that dehumanise civilians or suppress lawful political expression contribute to social harm and exclusion.

Maintaining a clear distinction between genuine incitement to violence and lawful political expression is essential to democratic integrity and social cohesion.

6. Position on the Inquiry and Proposed Measures

The Coalition opposes the introduction of laws or measures that criminalise political expression, cultural language, or peaceful protest.

Existing NSW and Commonwealth laws already address incitement to violence, threats, harassment, and public order offences. Offences and remedies currently exist under the federal *Criminal Code Act 1995* and *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. At the state level in NSW, the *Crimes Act 1900* makes it a criminal offence to publicly threaten or incite violence towards another person or group based on race or religion with recent changes making it criminal to intentionally and publicly incite hatred based on a person's race. The introduction of new speech-based offences is unnecessary and risks overreach, discriminatory enforcement, and a chilling effect on lawful civic participation.

Criminalising words or slogans without regard to context is ineffective and inconsistent with democratic principles.

At the time of this inquiry, no complete or authoritative list of slogans proposed for prohibition has been officially released. This lack of clarity creates uncertainty for the community and increases the risk of inconsistent, discretionary, or disproportionate enforcement. Laws that

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affect political expression must provide clear notice to the public regarding what conduct is prohibited.

Many political slogans do not have a single, fixed, or universally accepted meaning. Criminalising words without reference to intent, context, or surrounding conduct risks substituting executive interpretation for judicial assessment. This represents a departure from established legal principles that focus on conduct and demonstrable harm rather than the content of speech alone.

The Coalition does not support slogan-specific bans or the creation of new speech-based offences. Such measures are unnecessary, legally problematic, and incompatible with democratic principles.

7. Impact on Communities

Rushed legislative responses and inflammatory public narratives risk increasing fear, discrimination, alienation, and mistrust within the community.

Punitive approaches that target expression rather than conduct are likely to stigmatise entire communities and undermine social cohesion. Arab, Palestinian, Muslim, and migrant communities already experience disproportionate scrutiny and surveillance, and these impacts must be carefully considered.

Unequal or selective treatment of communities - particularly when perceived to originate from political leadership - risks deepening social division and eroding public confidence in institutions.

Broad or unclear prohibitions on political language risk limiting lawful expression beyond protest settings, including in journalism, education, academia, and civil society advocacy. Fear of misinterpretation may discourage open discussion of international law, history, and humanitarian crises, weakening informed public debate and democratic participation.

Measures perceived as targeting particular political viewpoints or communities are also vulnerable to selective or politicised enforcement, further undermining trust in public institutions.

8. Impact on Mental Health and Community Wellbeing

Peaceful protest has played a significant role in supporting community wellbeing during periods of mass civilian harm overseas. For members of the Coalition, participation in lawful demonstrations provides a constructive, non-violent means of collective expression, solidarity, and moral agency.

The Coalition is deeply concerned about the disproportionate and severe impact of the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe on Palestinian women and children. Women in Gaza and the West Bank have borne the brunt of civilian harm, including loss of family members, displacement, destruction of homes, interruption of healthcare and maternal services, and the burden of caring for traumatised families amid widespread insecurity. Many women in our Coalition have direct familial, cultural, or emotional ties to those affected, intensifying grief, anxiety, and distress.

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For women in New South Wales, peaceful advocacy and collective expression have been an essential means of processing this trauma, asserting moral agency, and maintaining connection with affected communities. Limiting or criminalising such advocacy risks silencing women's voices at precisely the moment they are most needed thereby undermining gender equity, civic participation, and the long-standing role of women as advocates for peace, humanitarian protection, and justice.

These gatherings foster connection across race, religion, gender, and culture, reducing isolation and supporting mental wellbeing at a time of widespread grief and distress. Restricting such expression risks exacerbating mental health harms and increasing feelings of alienation.

For women, caregivers, and children connected to these gatherings, heightened surveillance or intervention risks compounding existing trauma rather than promoting safety. Such measures are likely to exacerbate fear, distress and alienation, undermining mental well-being and eroding trust in public institutions at a time when community support and connection are critically needed.

9. Legal and Democratic Considerations

Any response to hatred or incitement must be consistent with democratic and legal principles, including the implied freedom of political communication under the Australian Constitution.

Restrictions on speech, must be evidence-based and respect democratic freedoms for all people. Broad or vague prohibitions risk discriminatory enforcement and unintended consequences without improving community safety.

Prohibiting political slogans based solely on content represents a shift from conduct-based regulation to content-based control of expression. Once words are regulated in isolation from context, safeguards such as intent, likelihood of harm, and surrounding behaviour are lost, increasing the risk of arbitrary or discriminatory application.

Any restriction on political communication must meet the constitutional test of necessity and proportionality. The Coalition is not satisfied that slogan-specific bans meet this threshold, particularly where existing laws already address genuine incitement, threats, or violence.

Measures that target particular words also risk unintended interference with lawful religious and moral advocacy, including faith-based teaching, community education, and public discussion of justice and human rights. Such expression is a critical component of democratic life and must be protected.

Advocacy for Palestinian rights, including calls for freedom, equality, and an end to occupation, is grounded in international human rights law, including the recognised right to self-determination. Political expression referencing these principles should not be conflated with hatred or violence and must be assessed in context.

10. Recommendations

The Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace recommends that the Committee:

1. Avoid introducing new speech or protest-related offences that disproportionately affect particular communities.

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2. Rely on existing federal and state criminal laws to address genuine incitement to violence or serious harm.
3. Prioritise preventative, non-punitive approaches – such as education and community-led initiatives - to address the root causes of antisemitism and all forms of racism, including anti-Palestinian racism, anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia.
4. Ensure responses uphold freedom of political communication, cultural expression, and equality before the law.
5. Support implementation of the Australian Human Rights Commission’s National Anti-Racism Framework which provides a whole-of-society ‘roadmap’ to address all forms of racism.
6. Apply all measures consistently and without discrimination, recognising the role of fair leadership in maintaining social cohesion.

11. Conclusion

The Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace reaffirms its commitment to safety, dignity, and democracy for all. Community cohesion is best protected through fairness, inclusive leadership, and the equal protection of democratic rights - not through repression or the selective criminalisation of political expression that risks supporting one community while disproportionately penalising others. We urge the Committee to ensure that the outcomes of this inquiry strengthen social cohesion, community wellbeing, and democratic freedoms while addressing genuine harm.

The Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace reaffirms its commitment to the safety, dignity, and equal treatment of all people in New South Wales. We support robust and effective measures to address genuine incitement to violence and hatred, while emphasising that such measures must be grounded in evidence, proportionality, and respect for democratic freedoms.

This inquiry presents an opportunity to strengthen social cohesion through fair, consistent, and non-discriminatory leadership. When laws and enforcement practices criminalise the cultural language, symbols, or peaceful assembly of particular communities, they bias certain political narratives which entrench discrimination, erode political trust and exacerbate harm to community wellbeing, particularly during periods of heightened social tension and collective grief.

The Coalition urges the Committee to ensure that the outcomes of this inquiry uphold freedom of political communication, equality before the law, and inclusive, preventative approaches to addressing racism and harm. In doing so, the Committee can contribute to a safer, more cohesive, and more democratic New South Wales.