

**Submission
No 44**

MEASURES TO PROHIBIT SLOGANS THAT INCITE HATRED

Organisation: Readers and Writers Against the Genocide

Date Received: 12 January 2026

Inquiry: Measures to prohibit slogans that incite hatred

Committee: NSW parliamentary committee on Law and Safety

Terms of reference

The Committee should consider:

- a. The threat that the use of phrases like "globalise the intifada" poses to community cohesion and safety and the importance of maintaining social harmony and cohesion;
- b. How best to prevent the use of phrases that are so inherently hateful by their nature that they lead to incitement of hatred and threaten community safety;
- c. The need to protect communities from hatred, intimidation and violence;
- d. Australian and international examples of best practice to combat the use of such slogans, including measures and approaches taken in the United Kingdom;
- e. The Australian Constitution and the implied freedom of political communication;
- f. Existing offences and other measures in New South Wales and Commonwealth legislation, including offences and measures that have been announced; and
- g. Any other related matters.

11 January 2026

Committee on Law and Safety
Parliament of New South Wales
6 Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000
lawsafety@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Re: Submission to the Inquiry into Measures to prohibit slogans that incite hatred

To the Committee on Law and Safety,

Readers and Writers Against the Genocide (RWAG) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Measures to prohibit slogans that incite hatred. RWAG is a national body with local state-based chapters, including in NSW, that promotes literary works by Palestinian and First Nations writers, and educates the public about Palestinian and First Nations literature.

Summary:

RWAG firmly opposes any legislative or other measures that target specific communities or political movements and criminalise political expression, cultural language, or protest. RWAG maintains that existing laws already address incitement to violence and hatred.

RWAG is deeply concerned by the specific reference to the phrase “globalise the intifada” in the Inquiry’s Terms of Reference, which signals a discriminatory posture and suggests an intent to curtail the democratic rights and cultural freedoms of Arab, Palestinian, Muslim, and migrant communities and their allies—groups already disproportionately policed and surveilled.

RWAG urges the NSW Government to learn from other jurisdictions, including the United Kingdom, where experience shows that repressive legal measures undermine community cohesion, endanger the wellbeing of citizens exercising democratic rights, and impose significant costs on taxpayers through inevitable legal challenges—as seen recently in challenges to NSW protest laws.

RWAG encourages the NSW government to invest in anti-racism measures, education, and community-led prevention, not punitive expansion of police powers. Any interventions must uphold democratic rights, cultural freedoms, and equal treatment under the law for all people.

In a time of grief we must recall that a democracy’s chief strength lies in its ability to admit criticism to the public sphere: this is its vital character and must be carefully held. Even in, particularly in, difficult times.

Key Concerns:

Legal and Democratic Considerations

RWAG is concerned that the proposed measures to prohibit certain slogans will have a detrimental impact on democratic rights, community safety, and social cohesion in NSW. We oppose laws or measures that criminalise political expression, cultural language, or protest, noting that existing laws already address incitement to violence.

We are committed to the principles of democratic speech, anti-racism, and social justice, all of which are indispensable planks of a cohesive society. Proposing to prohibit political speech, including certain slogans or words, undermines democracy and may contradict the implied freedom of political communication enshrined in the Australian Constitution. This is particularly the case where the terms of reference of the inquiry indicate the purpose of these measures is to curtail freedom of political communication of already disproportionately policed and surveilled Arab, Palestinian, Muslim, and migrant communities.

It is vital that the NSW Government does not repeat the failures of approaches taken elsewhere. Lessons from the United Kingdom demonstrate that repressive legal measures have proven both costly and chaotic. As an organisation committed to public education and providing interested community members with access to voices, works and ideas that are not widely available to mainstream audiences, RWAG opposes the prohibition of protected political action and speech due to the negative impacts it would have across Australian cultural life as well as potential for increased racial vilification of already marginalised communities.

Impact on Communities

We note with particular alarm terms of reference item (a) which explicitly targets the phrase “globalise the intifada”, and (d) which references approaches taken in the United Kingdom as “best practice”. The terms of reference indicate that “measures to prohibit slogans that incite hatred” will disproportionately affect a large group of citizens who have protested Israel’s action in Gaza since October 2023, which many credible international organisations agree is genocide. Since the British government proscribed one organisation, Palestine Action, as a terrorist organisation in July 2025, more than 2,000 British citizens have been arrested for peaceful protest. At one protest in August 2025 when a total of 532 people were arrested, half of the people arrested were over 60 years of age. Contrary to the idea that the approach of the United Kingdom demonstrates a best practice approach, RWAG would suggest that it has been a national failure and a source of international ridicule.

We further note that prohibiting the word “intifada” – a term taken from the Arabic language – has in itself the appearance of a discriminatory measure. Criminalising Arabic words will stoke public narratives of fear and mistrust, with the likely impact of escalating harm and violence against Arab communities, rather than promoting social cohesion. There is an important history and context to the word “intifada”, largely associated with the actions of Palestinian civil society against an ongoing military occupation by Israel. Though the ban would affect many more than Australia’s Palestinian community, it is clear that any such ban would disproportionately affect Australia’s Muslim, Arab and Palestinian communities.

However, it should be noted that the expression “globalise the intifada”, which was widely reported in the days after Bondi, has not been a key slogan at anti-genocide rallies but was rather adopted by media outlets that have been highly critical of anti-genocide political action. This is not limited to but exemplified by *The Australian*, such as in the article “Intifada arrives on our shores so spare us shock”. The same paper has labelled anti-genocide protesters as “Pro-Gaza Ghouls”.

Recommendations

There is a robust body of criminal law in Australia and NSW already fully equipped to address incitement to racial hatred and incitement to violence. It is vital that this existing framework is utilised following the tragedy at Bondi, rather than adopting new legislation that will have the adverse effect of targeting specific communities or political movements. Such a decision should be

avoided and rejected as out of step with community values and an onerous impediment to community safety.

RWAG urges the NSW government to consider a broad approach to the harm of racism and racist violence in the community, and recommends adoption of the National Anti-Racism Framework 2024 developed by the Australian Human Rights Commission. This Framework is grounded in the principles of dignity and equal protection for all. It is vital that all actions taken by the NSW government are grounded in a commitment to the democratic rights and cultural freedoms of all people, as expressed in relevant state and federal laws.

We further recommend the NSW government invest in anti-racism, education, and community-led prevention measures, rather than expand police powers. Any and all interventions must uphold democratic rights, cultural freedom, and equal treatment under the law for all people.

Conclusion

RWAG believes that community cohesion is best protected through existing legal frameworks and the same protection of democratic rights for all people. Such a commitment requires clear-sighted strategic approaches rather than ad hoc reactions during a time of tragedy.

Repressing the important raft of rights to expression undergirded by the Australian Constitution would be to answer one harm with more harms, and cannot successfully deliver any of the outcomes that the NSW government is endeavouring to pursue.

RWAG would be pleased to appear before the Committee. If this submission requires additional information or clarification, we can be contacted at Readerswritersagainstgenocide@gmail.com.

Yours respectfully,



Aviva Tuffield
Chair
On behalf of Readers and Writers Against the Genocide