

**Submission
No 53**

MEASURES TO PROHIBIT SLOGANS THAT INCITE HATRED

Organisation: Our Race Community

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This submission raises serious concerns about the premise and framing of the proposed inquiry into the use of slogans allegedly directed at certain communities to intimidate and instill fear of violence.

Rather than strengthening social cohesion, an inquiry framed in this manner risks further dividing communities by selectively elevating the emotional responses of a powerful political constituency—particularly Zionist-aligned groups—above fundamental principles of human rights, freedom of political expression, and equality before the law. When state institutions intervene to police political language in a context of ongoing mass human rights violations, there is a significant risk that such intervention becomes political suppression rather than community protection.

Questioning the Premise: Whose Safety Is Prioritised?

The inquiry appears premised on the assumption that phrases such as “globalise the intifada” are inherently hateful or violent, without adequately considering their political, historical, and anti-colonial meanings, or the context in which they are used. This selective interpretation prioritises the feelings and political narratives of Zionist organisations while marginalising the lived realities of Palestinians, Muslims, Arabs, racialised communities and their anti-genocide allies who are experiencing profound harm, surveillance, and silencing.

By focusing narrowly on the discomfort of one group which wields great political influence, the inquiry risks ignoring the widespread fear, intimidation, and violence faced by communities protesting genocide, occupation, and systemic racism—both globally and within Australia.

a) Community Cohesion and the Risk of Further Division

True community cohesion cannot be achieved through censorship or selective outrage. Singling out pro-Palestinian political slogans for scrutiny without understanding the context—while allowing far-right, Islamophobic, anti-Arab, and anti-Palestinian rhetoric to proliferate—creates a hierarchy of whose voices matter, and ultimately who is afforded human dignity and who is not.

This approach fosters resentment, alienation, and mistrust, particularly among communities who already feel excluded from political power and public sympathy. Far from promoting “harmony”, it signals that political expression is tolerated only when it aligns with dominant geopolitical interests.

b) The Dangers of Criminalising Political Speech

Efforts to prevent the use of so-called “inherently hateful” phrases risk conflating political resistance with violence. This sets a dangerous precedent whereby expressions of solidarity with oppressed peoples are framed as threats, while state and institutional violence remain unscrutinised.

Such measures disproportionately impact racialised communities, activists, and those advocating for local and global Indigenous human rights, including Palestinians, and risk chilling legitimate political speech essential to a functioning democracy.

c) Protection from Hatred Must Be Universal and Non-Selective

The need to protect communities from hatred, intimidation, and violence must be applied consistently and without political bias. This inquiry, as framed, risks undermining that principle by focusing on the alleged harm caused by protest slogans while failing to address:

- Rising anti-Palestinian racism
- Islamophobia
- The intimidation of students, workers, and organisations for opposing genocide
- The silencing of First Nations, migrant, and refugee voices drawing connections between global and local systems of oppression

d) International Examples and the Risk of Importing Repressive Models

While international comparisons may be instructive, the Committee should exercise caution in referencing approaches such as those in the United Kingdom, where expansive policing of protest language has been widely criticised by human rights organisations for eroding civil liberties and disproportionately targeting marginalised groups.

Australia should not replicate models that prioritise public order over justice, nor suppress dissent in ways that undermine democratic participation.

e) Constitutional and Human Rights Considerations

The implied freedom of political communication exists precisely to protect speech that challenges power, state violence, and dominant political narratives. Any inquiry that seeks to curtail political slogans must reckon honestly with the risk of overreach and the erosion of democratic freedoms.

Restrictions on speech that are motivated by political pressure rather than genuine threats to safety are neither proportionate nor legitimate.

f) Existing Laws and the Risk of Misuse

Existing offences under New South Wales and Commonwealth law already provide mechanisms to address genuine incitement to violence and threats to public safety. Expanding or reinterpreting these laws to capture political expression risks misuse, selective enforcement, and further criminalisation of dissent.

Conclusion

This proposed inquiry risks entrenching a double standard: one where calls for liberation and resistance are treated as threats, while state-sanctioned violence and racialised harm are rendered invisible. Rather than protecting communities, it may deepen division by privileging Zionist political sensitivities over universal human rights, freedom of expression, and substantive equality.

If the Committee is genuinely concerned with community safety and cohesion, it must broaden its focus to include the harms caused by racism, genocide denial, political repression, and the silencing of oppressed communities—rather than narrowing democratic space under the guise of protection. One place to start is by implementing the Australian Human Rights Commission’s National Anti-Racism Framework.