

**Submission  
No 70**

## **MEASURES TO PROHIBIT SLOGANS THAT INCITE HATRED**

**Organisation:** Australasian Union of Jewish Students

**Date Received:** 12 January 2026

**Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS)**

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

12 January 2025

AUJS welcomes the opportunity to submit our perspective to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety on Measures to Prohibit Slogans that Incite Hatred. We thank the Committee for their work.

Australian universities have, in recent years, experienced a marked escalation in antisemitic rhetoric, intimidation, and exclusionary conduct. This trend has intensified in the context of heightened global tensions and has manifested through protests, encampments, and everyday campus interactions. Central to this environment has been the repeated use of highly charged slogans such as “from the river to the sea” and “intifada”, including the phrase “globalise the intifada”. While often framed as political expression, these slogans carry well-established historical associations with violence, terror attacks against civilians, and the denial of Jewish self-determination.

The normalisation of such language within educational institutions has serious implications for social harmony. When rhetoric that is widely perceived as endorsing or trivialising violence is left unchecked, it erodes trust between communities, weakens confidence in institutional protections, and compromises the ability of students to participate fully in campus life. This submission argues that maintaining social cohesion requires clear boundaries around expression that intimidates, dehumanises, or implicitly incites harm, while continuing to uphold legitimate freedom of expression.

To address these challenges, this submission makes three key recommendations within the scope of NSW Government powers. First, it calls for the adoption of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism across NSW campuses to ensure clarity and consistency in identifying antisemitic conduct. Second, it urges the NSW Government to partner with universities to implement education and awareness initiatives that address antisemitism, its harms, and the legal limits of protest. Third, it recommends that universities actively utilise existing NSW laws that prohibit intimidation and incitement, integrating them into campus safety and disciplinary frameworks.

Taken together, these measures seek to protect vulnerable communities, uphold social cohesion, and ensure that NSW campuses remain safe, inclusive environments grounded in mutual respect and democratic values.

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# About AUJS

The Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS) is the national representative body for Jewish students in Australia and New Zealand. Our mission is to provide meaningful experiences to Jewish students to develop and strengthen their sense of Jewish identity and Jewish leadership. AUJS has affiliate clubs on four university campuses across New South Wales. We focus on providing social, educational and professional development experiences for Jewish students to foster their Jewish identity both on and off campus.

AUJS advocates for the safety, welfare, and inclusion of Jewish students across Australian university campuses. In this capacity, AUJS has extensive experience documenting, monitoring, and responding to incidents of antisemitism and related forms of hatred within higher education settings, and regularly engages with universities, regulators, and government stakeholders on these issues.

## Campus Climate

In recent years, Australian university campuses have experienced a marked rise in reported incidents of antisemitism, hostile rhetoric, intimidation, and exclusionary behaviour that have negatively affected Jewish students' sense of safety and inclusion. These developments have coincided with heightened geopolitical tensions and have manifested in a range of settings, from student protests and encampments to everyday campus interactions. Universities, student groups, and community organisations have documented increasing numbers of incidents where Jewish students report feeling unsafe, intimidated or unwelcome in spaces that should be inclusive academic environments.

A notable dimension of this climate has been the use of highly charged slogans during protests and demonstrations. In particular, phrases such as "from the river to the sea" and the repeated invocation of "intifada" have featured prominently in campus activism. Both expressions carry significant historical and political connotations. "From the river to the sea", referring to the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, has been widely interpreted by Jewish communities, government leaders, and human rights advocates as a call for the dismantling of the State of Israel, and in some contexts as implicitly endorsing the exclusion or elimination of Jewish national self-determination. Similarly, "intifada", an Arabic term literally translated to "uprising", evokes the First and Second Intifadas, which were

characterised by terror attacks across Israel including suicide bombings, bus bombings and stabbings, which resulted in a significant loss of life. For many, its use in contemporary campus protests conjures associations with violence perpetuated against Israeli civilians rather than abstract political solidarity. Often, these slogans are paired with painted red hands, which evokes the Ramallah Lynching of 2000, which furthers the deep sense of fear and offence felt by Jewish students on campus.

The impact these slogans have on Jewish students cannot be overlooked. Universities and student welfare bodies have recorded instances in which Jewish students feel targeted or harassed by these slogans, particularly when they are chanted en masse, displayed on signage, or used as an intimidation tool.

From the perspective of social cohesion, the normalisation of such slogans undermines the foundational principles of mutual respect and shared civic belonging. Social harmony depends not on the absence of disagreement, but on the existence of shared norms that place clear limits on rhetoric that intimidates, dehumanises, or implicitly endorses violence. When slogans that carry violent connotations are permitted to circulate unchecked, they contribute to the erosion of trust between communities and weaken confidence in institutions' ability to protect minority groups. This is particularly acute in campus environments, where students are expected to participate freely in academic and social life. If certain groups feel compelled to withdraw from classes, protests, or public spaces to avoid intimidation, the promise of equal participation is fundamentally compromised.

Maintaining social harmony therefore requires more than passive tolerance of all forms of expression. It requires a principled commitment to protecting freedom of expression while recognising that speech which incites fear, legitimises violence, or undermines the safety of particular communities sits outside the bounds of responsible democratic discourse. Addressing the use of phrases like "globalise the intifada" is not an attempt to suppress political debate, but a necessary measure to preserve social cohesion, safeguard vulnerable communities, and uphold the conditions under which peaceful coexistence and genuine dialogue remain possible.

# Slogans and Their Harmful Impact

## “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free”

The phrase “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” has been widely used at protests and actions on Australian university campuses, often presented as a slogan of liberation or solidarity. However, for many Jewish students, the phrase is neither neutral nor abstract. It is understood as a call for the elimination of the State of Israel and the denial of Jewish self-determination in the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The geographical totality invoked by the slogan leaves no space for a Jewish state to exist, and its meaning is therefore inseparable from the prospect of political erasure rather than peaceful coexistence. In this sense, the slogan challenges the legitimacy of Jewish national existence itself.

This interpretation is not a product of hypersensitivity or bad faith. The phrase has a long history of use by political movements and militant organisations that explicitly reject Israel’s right to exist. It echoes historical calls to “push the Jews into the sea,” language that emerged during the mid-twentieth century and was accompanied by armed conflict. The continuity between these historical expressions and their contemporary revival is significant. When such language is reproduced in modern protest contexts, particularly within pluralistic spaces such as universities, it reactivates historical fears grounded in lived experience rather than abstract theory. For Jewish students, the slogan resonates as a reminder of repeated efforts to deny Jews safety, sovereignty, and belonging.

The impact of this rhetoric is compounded by the way it is often deployed on campus. Chanted en masse, displayed on banners, or written across shared spaces, the slogan can create an environment in which Jewish students feel targeted or unwelcome. Its repetition blurs the line between political advocacy and collective intimidation, particularly when it is used in contexts where Jewish students are present or identified as proxies for the Government of Israel. This dynamic undermines the principle that universities should be spaces where students can participate freely without fear of harassment or exclusion on the basis of identity.

Moreover, the normalisation of this slogan has broader implications for social cohesion. A campus climate that tolerates rhetoric widely perceived as calling for the destruction of a nation closely tied to a minority community erodes trust in institutional commitments to

inclusion and safety. It signals to Jewish students that their concerns are secondary to political expression, even when that expression is experienced as threatening. In this way, the continued use of “from the river to the sea” does not advance constructive debate or mutual understanding. Instead, it deepens polarisation, legitimises exclusionary narratives, and weakens the conditions necessary for genuine dialogue and coexistence within diverse academic communities.

## “Globalise the intifada”, Use of the word “intifada”

The term intifada is a term that is deeply embedded in a history of violence which has left enduring scars on Jewish communities. The First and Second Intifadas were characterised by prolonged campaigns of attacks that claimed thousands of lives, many of them civilians, and included suicide bombings, shootings, stabbings, and assaults on buses, cafés, and other everyday public spaces. Many Jewish Australian students have family members who were either injured or killed in these attacks. For Jewish people, these periods are remembered not as distant political milestones, but as times when ordinary routines were overshadowed by constant fear and the anticipation of sudden violence. The reintroduction of this language into contemporary protest settings carries that history into the present. Rather than advancing a vision of peace or reconciliation, it invokes and normalises a legacy of civilian targeting, making it difficult to disentangle the term from the trauma it represents.

Indeed, when intifada is deployed in slogans or chants on campuses or in public demonstrations, it is rarely received as analytical or symbolic critique. Instead, it is widely experienced by Jewish students and community members as a form of rhetorical aggression. The invocation of a word so closely associated with terror attacks communicates, implicitly if not explicitly, that such violence is being minimised, justified, or reframed as a legitimate mode of resistance. This effect is intensified in shared civic and educational spaces, where students should be able to engage without fear that language associated with past atrocities is being directed, however indirectly, toward them.

The harm is magnified further by slogans such as “globalise the intifada,” which extend the logic of violence beyond its original context. To call for the globalisation of an intifada is to suggest that a form of struggle historically marked by attacks on civilians should be replicated or endorsed on an international scale. This is not a general expression of political dissent, but the promotion of a framework that legitimises violence as an acceptable political instrument. In pluralistic environments such as universities, this rhetoric undermines the

basic conditions of safety and mutual respect, leaving Jewish students feeling exposed, targeted, and marginalised within spaces meant to be inclusive.

Such language also erodes social cohesion by collapsing the distinction between political opposition and collective blame. By framing violence as transferable and global, it risks casting Jewish identity as a stand-in target. This dynamic deepens polarisation, fosters mistrust between communities, and heightens the risk of escalation. Historical experience demonstrates that when violent rhetoric is normalised within public discourse, it can serve as a precursor to real-world harm, even where speakers deny any intention to incite violence. For these reasons, the casual or celebratory use of intifada language is profoundly destabilising, reopening communal wounds and undermining the sense of security upon which democratic, multicultural societies depend.

## Student Testimonials

*Student from the University of Technology Sydney* - "Seeing intifada chanted and championed on campus makes me very scared. I have family members who were killed and injured during the first and second intifadas. To have, what I view to be, open advocacy for terrorism brought onto campus is not only deeply disturbing but is a credible threat to my safety and the safety of Jewish students on UTS campus."

*Student from the University of New South Wales* - "These slogans are frequently defended under the banner of academic freedom. Yet academic freedom is not a blanket licence to say anything within a university setting. Its purpose is to protect legitimate teaching, research, and scholarly debate. Language that intimidates, excludes, or vilifies Jewish students does not serve an academic function and should not be shielded by claims of academic freedom."

*Student from Macquarie University* - "University campuses are intended to be spaces that bring students together, not divide them. Their primary purpose is education, grounded in open inquiry and respectful debate. This does not require the policing of conversation or the suppression of disagreement. However, when students encounter chants such as "from the river to the sea" or "globalise the intifada" on campus, it becomes clear that these expressions are not facilitating genuine dialogue. Instead, they are often used as ideological markers, suggesting that adherence to particular views is a condition of being a "good" or "moral" student."

# Recommendations

## 1. Adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism across campuses

The NSW government should actively encourage, and where possible mandate, the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism across all public universities. The IHRA framework offers clear, internationally recognised examples of how antisemitism can manifest in speech and conduct. For Jewish students, the absence of a common, operational definition creates inconsistency in how complaints are assessed and resolved, leaving many incidents unaddressed or under-recognised. Federal peak bodies such as Universities Australia have moved towards a definition aligned with IHRA, but uptake remains uneven, and some institutions have hesitated over concerns about academic freedom. This would help ensure that acts of prejudice targeting Jews are recognised and addressed consistently, contributing to safer, more inclusive educational environments.

## 2. Promote education and awareness campaigns on antisemitism and its harms

The NSW government should partner with universities to roll out comprehensive education and awareness campaigns addressing antisemitism, its historical context, and its impact on students' safety and participation. Such campaigns should be evidence-based and developed in consultation with Jewish community leaders and human rights educators. They could encompass compulsory induction modules for commencing students, workshops for student leaders, and targeted resources for staff who manage student conduct. Education should unpack how certain slogans and symbols can constitute racial hatred or intimidation under NSW law, as well as elucidate the lived experiences of Jewish students when confronted with hostile environments. These initiatives would complement legal reforms criminalising racial hatred and contribute to a broader cultural shift that recognises the boundary between legitimate political expression and harmful conduct. The state government already positions community safety and cohesion as priorities in its hate speech and anti-hatred legislative reforms. By extending this focus into preventative education on

campus, NSW can foster deeper understanding across diverse student populations, reducing prejudice and building resilience against inflammatory rhetoric.

### 3. Ensure universities use laws addressing slogans that constitute intimidation or incitement

NSW's recent legislative reforms make it an offence to intentionally incite racial hatred and provide police with greater powers to address public assemblies where intimidating conduct occurs. Universities must actively incorporate these legal tools into their campus safety frameworks, rather than treating them as external or peripheral. This means training campus security and liaison officers to recognise conduct that may cross into criminal intimidation or incitement, and working closely with NSW Police to respond appropriately. Where student protests or demonstrations feature slogans that could reasonably be seen to incite hatred, universities should intervene under their own codes of conduct and, where necessary, refer matters to law enforcement in accordance with state law. Doing so reinforces that freedom of expression does not extend to conduct that causes students to fear for their safety or wellbeing, aligning institutional practice with the state's legislative intent to protect vulnerable communities. The NSW Parliament can further support this by clarifying how university policies should dovetail with state offences, for example through guidelines or memoranda of understanding between the Department of Communities and Justice and tertiary institutions. This will help ensure that harmful rhetoric is not tolerated under the guise of protest, and that Jewish students and other targeted groups are afforded the full protections of NSW law.

## Conclusion

This submission has highlighted the real and growing harm caused by slogans that incite hatred, legitimise violence, and undermine the safety and inclusion of Jewish students on NSW campuses. While freedom of expression must be protected, it cannot extend to conduct that intimidates or marginalises minority communities.

AUJS thanks the Committee for its consideration of this submission and urges decisive action to uphold social cohesion, ensure student safety, and preserve universities as inclusive spaces grounded in mutual respect and democratic values.