

**Submission
No 112**

MEASURES TO PROHIBIT SLOGANS THAT INCITE HATRED

Name: Dr Helen McCue

Date Received: 10 January 2026

Dr Helen McCue AM Personal Submission to the

NSW PARLIAMENT INQUIRY INTO BANNING PROTEST SLOGANS

Introduction

I Dr Helen McCue am very much opposed to the basic tenants of this inquiry focusing as it does on language used in legitimate protests by the Palestinian community and its many hundreds of thousands of NSW community supporters protesting against Genocide in Palestine. We live in a free and democratic society where the banning of any political language will greatly undermine the tenants of protest rights. At a time of heightened community tension the banning of protest slogans will disproportionately impact Palestinian and Muslim communities, and will greatly weaken social cohesion in NSW

(a) Community cohesion and safety

I ask the Committee on Law and Safety to provide evidence that slogans such as “ globalise the intifada” have posed a threat to community safety. It is possible that such slogans might offend certain community members, but it is a known fact that the alleged offended community members have among themselves members who support Palestinian justice and abhor Genocide in Palestine and who have more than likely used that slogan in protests themselves.

I don't believe that the use of these slogans poses a threat to community safety. In my experience they are used in peaceful protests to express political opposition, solidarity and calls for justice and to express horror at the suffering of the Palestinian people. There is a grave danger to community cohesion in silencing one community's political expression particularly when within that community there are thousands of Muslims who have been subjected to years of Islamophobia without any sign of the NSW or Federal Governments serious inquiry and compelling action to protect this community.

(b) Claims that slogans are “inherently hateful”

I am finding it difficult to understand why slogans such as “globalise the intifada” and “From the River to the Sea” are inherently “inherently hateful”. For example “intifada” also means to resist and in the Palestinian context that is a legitimate and internationally legally permitted response to military occupation of Palestinian Territory by Israel. Such slogans could only be “inherently hateful” to those who do not support international law nor the inherent right of all peoples to resist military occupation and now in Palestine to resist a Genocide. These words in themselves are not an incitement to violence. Political disagreement or offense should not be treated as criminal conduct. Restrictions on speech should be limited to situations involving genuine threats, intimidation or violence.

(c) Protecting communities from hatred and violence

NSW already has criminal laws that address incitement to violence, threats and harassment. These laws focus on harmful conduct and provide appropriate safeguards. I strongly support protecting all communities from hatred, intimidation and violence yet new laws banning political slogans such as “globalise the intifada” and “From the River to the Sea” are unnecessary and divisive and will impact greatly on community cohesion.

(d) Better approaches than banning slogans

These are much better way to support social cohesion and prevent hateful language than through repressive laws. I believe that it is through dialogue, anti-racism initiatives and the use of existing criminal law that hatred and violence can best be addresses than banning words or phrases. These proposed broad slogan bans are more than likely to cause an escalation of conflict rather than reducing it.

(e) Free political expression

Australia has had a long and proud history of free political expression. These new laws banning specific political slogans will have the opposite effect. By directly restricting political communication and protest such laws will add to community tensions rather than calm such existing tensions. Political expression opposing occupation, apartheid or state violence should be protected, not singled out for punishment and an attack on our free political expression is a grave and dangerous step in a democratic country such as Australia which is why I am opposing these laws

(f) Existing laws are sufficient

There are already many existing NSW and Commonwealth laws that already deal with genuine threats to safety. Expanding into bans on political language risks inconsistent enforcement and overreach without improving community safety.

(g) Other concerns

These proposed new laws will turn political language into an enforcement that will in NSW trigger risks increasing police–citizen confrontation at protests. Such laws will also damaging trust between communities and authorities leading to undermining long-term community safety and social cohesion.

In Conclusion I recommend to the Committee that:

1. No additional political slogans or symbols be banned or criminalised, including those associated with Palestinian advocacy.
2. Any proposed bans on specific slogans, including “globalise the intifada” or “From the River to the Sea” or “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free” be abandoned.
3. Palestinian symbols, slogans and expressions of solidarity be explicitly recognised as protected political communication, not hate speech.
4. Legislation and guidance clearly distinguish between universally recognised hate symbols and political expression opposing occupation, apartheid or state violence.
5. Existing criminal law continue to address genuine threats of violence or intimidation without expanding into content-based regulation of political speech.
6. Protest rights and political expression be clearly protected within NSW criminal and public order law.

7. NSW Government acknowledge and reject the racial discrimination inherent in selectively policing Palestinian political expression.

8. NSW ensure any guidance to police and public authorities is content-neutral, evidence-based, and designed to prevent discriminatory enforcement against Palestinians and those advocating Palestinian rights.

9. Community education and dialogue initiatives be prioritised over broad prohibitions or expanded police powers.