

**Submission
No 127**

MEASURES TO PROHIBIT SLOGANS THAT INCITE HATRED

Organisation: NSW Turkish Community

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Measures to prohibit slogans that incite hatred

Submitted by

NSW Turkish Community

Executive Summary

This submission is made by the NSW Turkish Community in response to the Inquiry into the Use of Intimidating Slogans and Community Safety.

The NSW Turkish Community stands in solidarity with the Jewish community and recognises the historical trauma, lived fear, and ongoing antisemitism experienced by Jewish Australians. We unequivocally condemn antisemitism in all its forms, just as we condemn Islamophobia, racism, and hatred directed at any community.

This inquiry is occurring at a time of heightened community tension following the Bondi shooting. While concern for community safety is necessary and justified, responses must protect **all communities equally** and avoid selective standards that undermine trust and social cohesion.

The NSW Turkish Community has lived experience of political violence on Australian soil, unresolved acts of terrorism, ongoing intimidation linked to overseas conflicts, and the public glorification of extremist organisations hostile to the Turkish community. These realities mean that slogans, symbols, and rhetoric must be assessed based on **impact, repetition, and context**, not intent alone.

This submission calls on the Committee to adopt **clear, enforceable, and consistent standards** that prevent intimidation, protect public safety, and preserve democratic freedoms.

Specifically, we ask the Committee to:

- Affirm that the safety of all communities is the government's primary responsibility, without hierarchy or exception
- Address inconsistencies in how intimidating slogans and extremist symbols are treated and enforced
- Ensure equal standards apply to all communities, causes, and political actors
- Strengthen operational guidance and governance frameworks rather than relying solely on new offences

Purpose of submission

This submission is made on behalf of the NSW Turkish Community in response to the Committee on Law and Safety's inquiry into the use of slogans directed at certain communities to intimidate those communities and instil fear of violence.

The NSW Turkish Community affirms its strong support for the Jewish community in New South Wales and across Australia. We recognise the profound historical trauma endured by Jewish people, the reality of ongoing antisemitism, and the legitimate safety concerns many Jewish Australians face today.

We condemn antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, and all forms of hatred. This submission is made in the spirit of solidarity, social cohesion, and equal protection under the law.

Context

This inquiry follows the fatal shooting at Bondi, a tragedy that deeply affected the Jewish community and shocked the wider public. The NSW Turkish Community unequivocally condemns this act of violence and stands in solidarity with the Jewish community and all those impacted.

In responding to such events, it is critical that public policy strengthens cohesion rather than creating perceptions of selective protection. Community safety measures must be principled, consistent, and applicable to all communities.

Lived experience of political violence in New South Wales

The NSW Turkish Community has direct experience of politically motivated violence occurring on Australian soil.

In 1980, Turkish Consul-General **Şarık Arıyak** and his bodyguard were assassinated in Sydney in an attack claimed by an Armenian terrorist organisation. This incident is recognised as the **first international politically motivated terrorist attack in Australia**. Despite its significance, the perpetrators were never brought to justice.

For the NSW Turkish Community, this history is not abstract. It demonstrates how overseas political extremism, when imported into Australia, can escalate from rhetoric to lethal violence.

This lived experience heightens concern when extremist slogans, imagery, or organisations hostile to Turkish Australians are publicly tolerated.

Contemporary glorification of extremist organisations

The NSW Turkish Community is deeply concerned by the **public display of symbols and slogans associated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)** at protests in Sydney, including a 2022

demonstration outside NSW Parliament calling for the release of **Abdullah Öcalan**, the imprisoned PKK leader.

The PKK has been a **listed terrorist organisation in Australia since 2005**. Its symbols and imagery are directly associated with decades of violence and loss of life, including attacks targeting civilians and Turkish diplomats.

For Turkish Australians, the public glorification of the PKK is **intimidating and retraumatising**. The absence of clear condemnation or enforcement in such cases creates a perception that some extremist expressions are tolerated while others are rightly prohibited.

This inconsistency directly undermines community confidence in the equal application of safety standards.

Ongoing intimidation and pressure linked to overseas conflicts

Over many years, members of the NSW Turkish Community have experienced:

- Attacks and vandalism against Turkish associated places of worship and community sites
- Periodic escalation of hostility during commemorations linked to events that occurred **over a century ago** in another country
- Sustained pressure from advocacy campaigns that position Turkish Australians as proxies for overseas historical conflicts

These dynamics place undue stress on Australian citizens with no personal connection to those conflicts.

Australia must not become a venue for relitigating overseas history through intimidation or symbolic pressure on local communities.

One-sided institutional recognition and community impact

The NSW Turkish Community is concerned by the **unequal treatment of diaspora historical narratives** within New South Wales.

In 2013, the NSW Parliament passed a motion recognising alleged Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek genocide claims without consultation or input from the Turkish community. Regardless of individual views on history, the unilateral endorsement of one side's narrative by a state institution has had real-world consequences.

For Turkish Australians, this has contributed to:

- Marginalisation of their voices
- Validation of accusations directed at a living community
- An atmosphere in which intimidation and hostility are normalised

Institutional actions, even when symbolic, can unintentionally legitimise community pressure and deepen division.

Religious identity and Islamophobia

Approximately 98 per cent of people of Turkish background identify as Muslim. As a result, members of the NSW Turkish Community frequently experience hostility on both ethnic and religious grounds.

Islamophobia remains a persistent concern, particularly for visibly identifiable individuals. Women who wear hijab are disproportionately subjected to verbal abuse, intimidation, and physical threats, often during periods of heightened social tension.

The NSW Turkish Community notes that antisemitism and Islamophobia frequently rise together. Addressing one while overlooking the other weakens social cohesion and undermines trust.

Selective enforcement of hate symbols

NSW has taken appropriate and decisive action to criminalise Nazi symbols, recognising their inherently intimidating and violent associations.

However, the continued public display of **PKK flags and imagery**, despite the organisation's terrorist designation, raises serious questions about **consistency and fairness**.

From the perspective of Turkish Australians, PKK symbols are no less threatening than other extremist symbols. A zero-tolerance approach to intimidation must apply equally, regardless of which community is affected.

Selective enforcement undermines both public confidence and community safety.

Intimidating slogans, symbols, and cumulative harm

The intimidation addressed by this inquiry is not limited to words alone. It includes symbols, imagery, and repeated narratives that glorify violence or legitimise hostility.

For communities with lived experience of terrorism, unresolved violence, and ongoing intimidation, the cumulative impact of such conduct is profound.

Intimidation must be assessed based on:

- Impact on affected communities
- Repetition and amplification
- Context, including historical trauma

Freedom of political communication

The NSW Turkish Community strongly supports the implied freedom of political communication under the Australian Constitution and the right to peaceful protest.

However, freedom of expression does not extend to conduct that:

- Intimidates identifiable communities
- Glorifies or normalises terrorist violence
- Imports unresolved overseas conflicts into Australian civic life

The NSW Turkish Community supports the right to peaceful protest and lawful political expression, provided such activity does not intimidate or endanger others.

Recommendations

The NSW Turkish Community recommends that the Committee:

1. Develop clear, behaviour-based thresholds for intimidation, including slogans and symbols, based on impact, repetition, and context.
2. Provide clear operational guidance to law enforcement on managing extremist symbols and intimidating conduct at public gatherings.
3. Apply standards consistently to all communities, protest movements, and political actors.
4. Affirm that the safety of all communities is the government's primary responsibility.
5. Address selective tolerance of extremist symbols to ensure equal protection.
6. Recognise the compounding impact of Islamophobia on Muslim communities.
7. Assess the social cohesion impact of unilateral institutional recognition of overseas conflicts.
8. Improve reporting pathways and responses for communities experiencing intimidation.
9. Strengthen coordination across state and local government agencies during high-risk events.
10. Review the application of existing laws before introducing new offences.
11. Restrict local councils from engaging in or memorialising contested overseas historical events to protect social cohesion and keep local government focused on its core civic mandate.

Conclusion

The NSW Turkish Community stands in solidarity with the Jewish community and all Australians who experience fear, hatred, or intimidation.

We condemn violence in all forms and reject antisemitism, Islamophobia, and racism wherever they occur. The response to tragedy must strengthen unity, not create new divisions.

Community safety is not a zero-sum equation. Protecting one group must never come at the expense of another. Inconsistent standards, selective enforcement, and institutional imbalance erode trust and increase risk.

Australia is not a proxy battlefield for historical or geopolitical conflicts born elsewhere. It is a shared home. The safety of every person must carry equal weight.

Clear leadership, consistent standards, and principled enforcement are essential to protecting social cohesion in New South Wales.

References

1. Green Left Weekly, *Sydney rally calls for freedom for Abdullah Öcalan*, reporting on a 2022 protest outside NSW Parliament displaying PKK symbols and calling for the release of Abdullah Öcalan.
2. Australian Government, *List of Terrorist Organisations*, Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) listed as a terrorist organisation under Australian law since 2005.
3. NSW Police Force, *Historical terrorism investigations*, documentation relating to the 1980 assassination of Turkish Consul-General Şark Arıyak and his bodyguard in Sydney, recognised as the first international politically motivated terrorist attack on Australian soil.
4. NSW Parliament, *Legislative Assembly Motion (2013)* recognising Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek genocide claims, passed without consultation with the Turkish-Australian community.
5. NSW Department of Communities and Justice, *Crimes Amendment (Prohibition on Display of Nazi Symbols) Act 2022*, criminalising the public display of Nazi symbols in New South Wales.
6. Australian Government, *National Counter-Terrorism Laws and Listings*, outlining the purpose of terrorist listings and the risks posed by extremist symbolism and propaganda.
7. Parliament of New South Wales, *Terms of Reference: Inquiry into the Use of Intimidating Slogans and Community Safety*, including the obligation to protect communities from hatred, intimidation, and violence.