

**Submission  
No 149**

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

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# **Submission on Proposed NSW Laws to Prohibit Political Slogans**

**Submitted to: The NSW Legislative Assembly on Law and Safety**

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## **Submission from concerned migrant mothers living on stolen Aboriginal lands in Sydney**

This submission is made by a group of concerned migrant mothers living across Sydney on stolen Aboriginal land. We are mothers and carers from a range of professional backgrounds, including mental health, nursing, and communications. Some of us are raising young children, others are parenting teenagers. What unites us is a deep concern for the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of children affected by violence and conflict, wherever they live and whatever their background. That concern is what brings us to make this submission.

The submission responds to the Committee's invitation for views on measures to address slogans that incite hatred or threaten community safety. The submission reflects our concern for the safety of all communities, the protection of democratic freedoms, and the kind of society our children are growing up in. We offer this contribution in good faith, with the aim of supporting a fair, consistent, and principled approach to community safety and political expression.

### **We care deeply about community safety, social cohesion, and the kind of society our children are growing up in.**

Political slogans have always been part of democratic life. They are a way for communities to express grief, solidarity, resistance, and hope, particularly in the context of long-running international conflicts and histories of injustice. While such slogans can be emotional and symbolic, this does not make them violent or hateful in and of itself.

We are concerned about proposals to prohibit slogans simply because they are confronting or upsetting to some. When speech is judged based on interpretation rather than clear evidence of incitement to violence, the boundary between lawful and unlawful expression becomes unclear. This uncertainty discourages people from participating in peaceful civic life, which is a serious concern for parents and communities seeking to raise children in a healthy democracy.

We are also concerned about the narrow focus of this inquiry. It appears to centre primarily on slogans associated with Palestinian solidarity, such as "globalise the intifada", or "from the river to the sea" while other language that is racist, exclusionary, or intimidating - including language directed at migrants, refugees, and First Nations peoples - does not appear to be receiving the same level of scrutiny. If community safety is genuinely the objective, there must be a consistent approach across all communities.

Framing certain phrases as “inherently hateful by their nature” risks oversimplifying context and lived experience. For many Palestinians and those who stand in solidarity with them, these slogans express decades of displacement, resistance, and a desire for dignity, justice, and peace - **not violence against civilians**. Disagreement with a political message does not, on its own, justify criminalisation.

We are also mindful of the chilling effect that proposed criminalisation may have on legitimate criticism of serious human rights violations. When people fear legal consequences for peaceful protest or for expressing solidarity, they may withdraw from public life altogether. This kind of self-censorship does not protect communities; it weakens democratic participation and limits open discussion of critical social and political issues.

Existing laws in New South Wales and at the Commonwealth level already address incitement to violence, intimidation, and serious racial vilification. These laws focus on conduct and intent, rather than banning specific words or phrases. Expanding criminal law to prohibit particular slogans risks unnecessary overreach and may interfere with the implied freedom of political communication protected under the Australian Constitution.

At the same time, it is relevant to name specific slogans and phrases that should be prohibited - not because they are controversial or uncomfortable, but because they have been repeatedly used to justify violence, dehumanisation, and the removal of basic protections from entire communities.

The phrase “**War on Terror**” is one such example. While often presented as a neutral policy term, in practice it has been used to justify endless wars, racial profiling, mass surveillance, indefinite detention, torture, and the deaths of millions of civilians, overwhelmingly in Muslim-majority countries. Its use has normalised the idea that certain lives are expendable and that extraordinary violence is acceptable when directed at a broadly defined and racialised “other”.

Statements such as “**there is no such thing as Palestinians or Palestine**” go beyond political disagreement. They erase the identity, history, and presence of a people. While the modern state of Palestine did not exist in the same form as today’s nation-states, the land of Palestine has long been named, mapped, written about, and inhabited as such. Palestinians carried passports identifying them as Palestinian, and the term was widely used in literature, administration, and political life. Denying this reality is a form of dehumanisation that lays the groundwork for dispossession.

Slogans claiming that “**Arabs do not belong in Palestine and should go to Jordan, Lebanon, or Syria**” explicitly advocate for forced removal based on ethnicity. This is a call for ethnic cleansing. It frames an entire population as foreign, illegitimate, and disposable, and promotes the idea that people can be uprooted from their homes simply because of who they are.

Calls such as “**Israel should flatten Gaza**” or references to “**mowing the lawn**” are not metaphors in any meaningful sense. They are calls for the large-scale destruction of a densely populated civilian area. When used publicly, these phrases

normalise mass killing and collective punishment and should be understood as incitement to extreme violence.

Similarly, statements such as “**there are no innocents in Gaza**” remove civilian status from an entire population, including children. This is a classic form of genocidal language. Once innocence is denied, any level of violence becomes justifiable.

The use of the term “**Amalek**” in reference to Palestinians is particularly dangerous. In its religious and historical context, Amalek is associated with a command to destroy an entire people, including women and children. When this term is applied to a living population today, it signals total eradication rather than conflict or defence, and should be treated as incitement to violence and mass harm.

Phrases describing the situation as “**a war between civilisation and barbarism**”, where “civilisation” is understood to mean the Western world and “barbarism” is applied to Palestinians, are openly racist. They strip people of humanity and frame violence as a moral duty. This kind of language damages social cohesion and increases the risk of hatred and violence against communities in Australia.

The Committee should also consider prohibiting racist statements and practices that target Palestinians and undermine Palestinian identity more broadly. Statements such as “**they deserved what they got**” or the blanket labelling of Palestinians as “**terrorists**” deny suffering and justify harm. Preventing Palestinians and Australians from speaking about trauma and loss, or forcing the removal of Palestinian symbols such as stickers or watermelon imagery, contributes to silencing, erasure, and further marginalisation rather than community safety.

These examples are raised to demonstrate that some slogans and statements are not merely provocative or offensive, but actively dangerous. Any measures considered by the Committee should focus on language that dehumanises, incites violence, or justifies mass harm, while still protecting genuine political debate, dissent, and the ability of communities to name their own experiences.

If the purpose of this inquiry is genuinely to protect community safety and social cohesion, it must examine all forms of dehumanising and violent language, regardless of political alignment, popularity, or source. Failure to do so would not only leave the most harmful rhetoric unaddressed, but would also contribute to the perception that political expression is being regulated selectively rather than on the basis of clear and consistent principles.

As mothers, we hope our children grow up in a society where difficult conversations are approached with fairness and care, not fear or selective restriction. The decisions made by this Committee will shape more than protest law; they will shape the lessons our children learn about democracy, equality, and whose voices are valued in Australian society.

In considering this inquiry, we urge the Committee to adopt an approach grounded in fairness, evidence, and consistency. Language that dehumanises people, denies civilian innocence, or legitimises violence must be addressed firmly, wherever it

appears. At the same time, non-violent political expression, including speech that names injustice or expresses solidarity, must be protected as a core democratic freedom. We ask the Committee to resist selective or overly broad restrictions and instead focus on clear harms, real-world impact, and the long-term consequences for social cohesion and civic participation. The choices made here will shape not only protest law, but the values our children inherit about justice, democracy, and whose voices are permitted to be heard.

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