

INQUIRY INTO ANTISEMITISM IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Dr Meredith Medway

Date Received: 27 March 2025

Dear committee,

I am a Jewish Australian who is concerned about both incidents of antisemitism in NSW and a number of aspects of the discourse around antisemitism in NSW and Australia more broadly. I am a strong supporter of the Palestinian people, and I find the increasing conflation of criticism of Israel and anti-semitism very concerning. Indeed, I have heard claims from supporters of Israel that Jewish people with my political views are not 'real Jews' or are not proud of our Jewish heritage - itself quite an antisemitic idea, buying into the longstanding trope of the 'self-hating Jew'. In my recent experience talking to non-Jews, the political rhetoric conflating Jews around the world, including in Australia, with Israel has resulted in confusion about whether saying something negative about the Israeli state is anti-semitic, whether all Jews support Israel and feel very strongly connected to the Israeli state, and even whether all Jews are in fact migrants from Israel. Recent changes to the definition of antisemitism within our universities in NSW are a stark example of the misuse of this term to silence pro-Palestine voices, including the many Jewish Australians like me who support Palestine.

I am upset to learn of the lack of transparency about the motives unrelated to antisemitism behind recent instances of antisemitic graffiti and a fake terrorism plot in NSW, which show me that the concept of antisemitism is being used to promote a pro-Israel agenda. This is offensive given the serious instances of genuine antisemitism that many of us have endured in our lifetimes. The weaponisation of antisemitism to promote this agenda prevents the NSW government from understanding, addressing and preventing real instances of anti-semitism.

In addition to my distress at the misuse of the important concept of antisemitism, I am troubled to hear repeated reference to the thoughts and feelings of 'the Jewish community' in relation to support of Israel, with no mention of the existence of Jewish Australians like myself who have a different perspective. I would greatly appreciate our NSW political leaders taking more care to understand the diversity within the Jewish community, and I think this is needed as part of combatting antisemitism.

I think that addressing genuine antisemitism involves a broader campaign to address the various forms of racism that affect our society. I notice a number of points of contrast between the response (or lack of) to recent incidents of Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism compared to antisemitism. In fact, the ideas underlying these different forms of racism are the same, and a government genuinely interested in effectively stamping out all racism would address its different forms together, rather than treating one form of racism as exceptional.

Many thanks for considering my comments.

Meredith Medway