

INQUIRY INTO ANTISEMITISM IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Emet Australia

Date Received: 6 April 2025

Dear Chair,

About Emet

Emet is a grassroots movement of proud Australian Jews. We envision an Australian Jewish community that stands for freedom, equality and justice for all people between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. In Australia, we believe that starts by ending our community's support for Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories. We believe in a Jewish community that supports building a State of Israel that truly upholds the principles of equality, democracy and respect for human dignity, and which actively pursues justice and equality for Palestinians and Israeli Jews alike.

Our submission

We wish to express the current fear, retraumatisation, and distress within our community arising from the recent wave of antisemitic attacks on Jewish community sites in Melbourne and Sydney. Our loved ones and the community more broadly are reeling. We are hurt, angry and deeply frightened by these attacks and the felt increase in antisemitic sentiment within the Australian public.

In these challenging times, we thank the committee for inviting us to make a submission. We have focused on paragraphs (a) and (d) of the Terms of Reference.

Although Emet's core business is not preventing or combatting antisemitism, we believe we have something relevant to say about the recent causes of antisemitism in New South Wales, and how the safety of our community might be enhanced.

(a) The causes underlying the increasing prevalence and severity of antisemitic incidents across the State/(d) How community safety might be enhanced, on behalf of the Jewish community of New South Wales

All people have the right to freely practice their culture and religion without fear of violence, discrimination and hatred. Jews do not fall outside that proposition, and any meaningful commitment by the government to anti-discrimination or anti-racism must include steadfast resistance to antisemitism.

Relevantly to our work, the recent escalation in conflict in Israel and the Palestinian territories, has clearly been a substantial source of tension in the Australian community. Elements of the Australian public have used these events as a rallying point and a convenient excuse to engage in antisemitic commentary as well as activities that seek to instill panic, fear and division. We would also like to acknowledge that whilst antisemitism has risen from these events, so have other forms of discrimination and hatred (eg against Palestinians and Islamophobia) which we vehemently condemn and encourage the NSW Government to address.

As the Committee is well-aware, antisemitism has a long history and has not arisen as a result of October 7 and the events following. There are certainly people in the Australian community who harboured antisemitic views before 7 October 2023. However, our observation is that there are some people who have reacted to the devastating scenes in Gaza and to the years of harsh and unrelenting occupation that preceded it by (1) embracing more extreme and racist rhetoric against Jews; and/or (2) engaging in a more

subtle conflation of Jews and Israel in efforts to condemn the State of Israel, which we also consider to be a form of anti-semitism.

1. In respect of the former, our position, which we consider to be uncontroversial, is that there is no place in Australian society for anti-semitic views and actions that intentionally instill fear in and marginalise Jews and, in extreme cases, result in violence against Jews. We note that this kind of extreme and overt antisemitism partly stems from ready access to antisemitic content online. As is well documented, once in an antisemitic 'corner' of the internet, the echo-chamber effect operates to ratchet up extremist views. We believe the Government has a role in targeting and counteracting misinformation, including through social media.
2. We identify that following October 7, there has been a rise in more subtle forms of antisemitism. The activities and policies of the government of Israel are not those of Australian Jews. The conflation between Israel and Jews has increased since October 7 and is in fact antisemitic, because it implies that all Australian Jews are accountable for the actions of and are loyal to the Israeli Government. Jewish civilians in the diaspora cannot be assumed to be responsible for the actions of the Israeli government by virtue of being Jewish alone. We acknowledge that statements from the Jewish community and Israeli government which blur the lines between Jews and Israel, might be one factor in the causative mix which has given rise to the increase in this form of anti-semitism. However, we also think that this trend has some overlap with our first identified form of antisemitism in that it has brought to the surface views or has provided a platform to conscious or unconscious views about Jews that are rooted in historical forms of antisemitism.

We also seek to emphasise that any criticisms of the State of Israel, its government, policies or actions, are not inherently antisemitic - we urge the Committee and the NSW Government to build this into any approach it takes to combatting antisemitism and enhancing safety. We acknowledge that there are parts of the Jewish community who increasingly suggest that any form of criticisms of the Israeli government are anti-semitism. However, we maintain that there are legitimate ways to criticise the State of Israel without invoking antisemitism, including through peaceful and non-violent protest. We urge the committee to ensure there is space for discourse and criticisms of Israel without accusations of antisemitism (unless otherwise warranted), in any measures it takes to secure the Jewish community's safety and combat antisemitism following this Inquiry.

Emet is concerned by an increasing trend we have observed of politicians using antisemitism for their own ends - to gain political support from Jews and other parts of the Australian community who may support Israel or are against voices who support Palestinian liberation. We cannot suffer the misuse of this crisis and urge the Committee to only recommend measures which genuinely enhance our community's safety, based on **evidence**, consultation across the Jewish community (beyond only mainstream institutions) and do not go beyond what is necessary to achieve that goal.

Emet firmly believes that genuine intergenerational safety and security can only be achieved through safeguarding the safety and security of all. We encourage those that have legitimate criticisms of the State of Israel, including in respect of its actions toward Palestinians, to continue to speak up, and we call on the NSW Government to support this.

If you wish to contact a member of our organisation, please email us on

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Kind regards,

Emet