REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 5 - JUSTICE AND COMMUNITIES

ANTISEMITISM IN NEW SOUTH WALES

UNCORRECTED

At Macquarie Room, Parliament House, Sydney, on Monday 19 May 2025

The Committee met at 9:00.

PRESENT

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)

Dr Amanda Cohn (Deputy Chair)
The Hon. Greg Donnelly
The Hon. Scott Farlow
The Hon. Stephen Lawrence
The Hon. Cameron Murphy
The Hon. Chris Rath

The CHAIR: Welcome to the first hearing of the Committee's inquiry into antisemitism in New South Wales. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the lands on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Robert Borsak. I am the Chair of the Committee.

I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses may say outside this hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for inquiry participants. I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of these procedures.

Mr DAVID OSSIP, President, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, sworn and examined

Ms MICHELE GOLDMAN, Chief Executive Officer, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: I welcome the witnesses. Mr Ossip, would you like to make a short opening statement?

DAVID OSSIP: Good morning, Chair and Committee members. I would like to firstly begin by thanking the Parliament for establishing this inquiry and to recognise the work that each of the members of this Committee and the secretariat have put and will continue to put into this inquiry. Speaking on behalf of both the board of deputies and the Jewish community more broadly, we recognise the enormous burden of work which rests on each of your shoulders. We don't take for granted the valuable time which you are allocating to an issue which is of such great importance to us.

Since the First Fleet arrived on the shores of Sydney Cove with at least eight Jewish convicts, the Jewish story has been deeply interwoven with the story of this State. From Jewish convict John Harris, who set up what would become the NSW Police Force in 1789, to Esther Abrahams, who served as the first lady of New South Wales in 1808, the Jewish community has played its part in building our State into what it is today. Across all aspects of society, Jews have been active contributors, from the trade union movement to commerce, from the health sector to academia, and from philanthropy and the arts to law.

For much of the past 200 years, Jews have also been proud members of this Parliament. Remarkably, in 1917, this Parliament was forced to close on Yom Kippur because both its Speaker and Deputy Speaker were Jewish. Unlike almost any other jurisdiction on earth, Australia, and New South Wales in particular, has been a land of opportunity and safety for Jews that is free of the persecution and discrimination which has pursued us elsewhere. As far back as 1860, Rabbi Jacob Saphir, who was visiting Australia from Jerusalem, observed:

> The Jews live in safety and have a share in all the benefits of the land and in government posts and political administration.

It was in recognition of this that the Jewish Board of Deputies, on the 150th anniversary of this Parliament in 1974, gifted the mace which is still used by the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament on behalf of the grateful Jewish citizens of this State for all that this great country and State has given its Jewish community. This context and history is what makes what has transpired since 7 October 2023 all the more tragic.

As is documented and outlined in our submission, the past 20 months have seen an unprecedented and shocking rise in antisemitism. For the first time, the Jewish community of Australia and New South Wales has felt unsafe and at risk, not because of anything it has done but because of who we are. Jewish institutions have been defaced. Families have had to take down their mezuzah. Jewish school students have hidden their uniform in public. Holocaust survivors have had to issue public pleas for the hate to end. The Jewish community of Sydney has been told to stay out of its own CBD for its safety.

This all would have previously been unthinkable, and yet the hatred in our streets on 8 October 2023 and the hate rally which took place at the Opera House on 9 October 2023 took the genie out of the bottle of antisemitism, and we've been playing catch-up ever since. During this period, and despite the staff resources which are available to us as an organisation, there have been moments where we've been completely overwhelmed as an organisation by the sheer volume and seriousness of antisemitic incidents which have been reported to us. Schools, universities, sporting matches, arts and cultural festivals and online—no sphere of life has been immune to the virus of antisemitism.

Committee members, it is a mistake to conceive of antisemitism as solely a Jewish community issue. Antisemitism poses a serious threat not only to the safety and inclusion of Jewish Australians but also to the health of our State's democracy and social cohesion more broadly. The resurgence of antisemitism in mainstream discourse, whether through overt hatred, coded language or veiled as political criticism, acts as a corrosive force within civil society. Left unchecked, such vilification creates an environment of fear and exclusion that limits the ability of individuals to participate freely and fully in public life. When antisemitic rhetoric becomes normalised, it desensitises the public to hate, diminishes social trust and cohesion and sets a dangerous precedent for the marginalisation of other minority groups.

As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks warned, "The hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews." Antisemitism is often a bellwether for and harbinger of broader discrimination and a warning bell for structural weaknesses in a society. Addressing antisemitism is therefore not only a matter of protecting one community—the Jewish community. It is essential to preserving the Australia and New South Wales we all so love. That's why this inquiry is so important, and why we feel so grateful and privileged to be here today. We welcome any questions you may have.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you, Mr Ossip and Ms Goldman, for being here today, for your testimony and also for the work that you do on behalf of all of the community in New South Wales. One of the things that I was troubled to read in your submission was the rise of antisemitic incidents. In your submission, you outlined that in 2023 there were 181 incidents of antisemitism in New South Wales. That had grown in 2024 to 510—a 339 per cent increase. Would you be able to tell us, in terms of those figures, what that has actually meant within the community and what sort of work you're undertaking at the moment with the Government, Multicultural NSW and, of course, the New South Wales police, to address this growing problem?

MICHELE GOLDMAN: Thank you for the question. A 339 per cent increase is hugely significant. It's the highest level, in terms of absolute incidents, that we're ever experienced in our 200-year history. It's manifesting across all aspects of society. We're getting reports of students who experience antisemitism in schools, at universities, in public spaces and in workplaces. Many in the Jewish community have become very internal, as David has already described. Antisemitism causes people to feel excluded and to feel fearful. We're seeing increased levels of anxiety. People are becoming really introverted and unable to participate in all aspects of society as they traditionally have been able to.

On the one hand, we're trying to provide immediate support to people to deal with the incidents that they have in the various aspects of their lives—to work through it. We're working with school principals. We're working with university leadership. But in the longer term, what we really need to do is understand the causes and identify what can help to prevent this hate from occurring because, as David articulated very well, it's not only a problem for the Jewish community. It's a problem for broader society. When one community is marginalised and the rest of society becomes desensitised to that, it's only a matter of time before other groups are marginalised too.

We welcome the hate speech laws that have been introduced. It's something we've been advocating for for some time. It's the first step. What we really need to see now is consistent application of the laws to ensure that those people who are guilty of vilification, of harassment, of intimidation face the law. And that there is effective deterrence to others and a clear message is sent that this is not okay in our society. These are not the values that Australians ascribe to, and anyone who wants to go against them will be punished so that this kind of hate and vilification is not normalised.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: With 510 incidents, we've seen the ones on our TV screens of synagogues being desecrated and people's homes being emblazoned with graffiti. But of those 510 incidents, I'm sure many of the smaller incidents never get on the media at all. Are there any of those incidents that you want to raise for the Committee today so that we can maybe better understand what the Jewish community in particular is facing across New South Wales?

MICHELE GOLDMAN: I will give you a few examples which do seem to play out day to day, just ordinary examples that are happening to people which previously would have been inconceivable. I will give a few examples that are occurring in schools, because that is a place where we are receiving a lot of reports. In May this year, a Jewish student was walking near a school volleyball court when a group of older boys in green shirts shouted at him, "Are you Jewish? Fucking Jew. You should kill yourself." The student was so taken aback and so frightened that he did not report the incident, fearing retaliation from the boys if they saw him approach a teacher. He returned home, visibly shaking, expressing fear about going back to school again. His mother then reported that incident to us.

At Rose Bay Secondary College a student created and shared an image of a Jewish peer with the caption "Straight out of Auschwitz". That image was widely circulated on social media among students. The student and their family, naturally, were extremely distressed. The incident was reported to the school, which did take internal disciplinary action. However, the parent felt that the school's response maybe failed to address the broader problem of normalised antisemitic humour amongst students. In March this year a Jewish student was singled out during a class discussion after disclosing their Jewish background in a context unrelated to politics or religion, and this is often the case. Several students began mocking them, making comments, linking them to Israel and suggesting that they supported violence. This, again, is a classic issue playing out where people, regardless of their political or other beliefs, are accused of what's going on in the Middle East. The teacher reportedly failed to intervene or redirect the conversation. The student was isolated and humiliated. Those are some examples from schools.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Thanks so much for your evidence and coming along. It's really appreciated. The issue that I want to ask you about, there's obviously this quite contentious issue about at what point is criticism of Israel antisemitism. It has been addressed in a number of the submissions. I would certainly observe that you see on social media, for example, quite obvious instances of antisemitism being disguised through criticism of Israel. It can be quite obvious and use antisemitic tropes, and so forth. I'm interested in your thoughts about the more contentious areas. We've got submissions describing the weekly protests that have taken place in the CBD as hate rallies and antisemitism in the whole. I'm interested in your organisation's thoughts on that

difficult line. At what point does criticism of Israel reveal antisemitism, as opposed to at what point is it a legitimate criticism that might be made of any nation State engaging in certain activities?

DAVID OSSIP: I'm happy to take that. The first point to make is, to a large extent, getting into this discussion is a bit of a red herring, because the overwhelming majority of incidents which are reported to us have nothing to do with Israel or Zionism. They are classic textbook antisemitism. Anyone who tries to link them to the Middle East or Israel is just using that as a smokescreen to hide true, unadulterated antisemitism. If we were to recite the incidents today, there would be no debate or discussion amongst the Committee as to whether or not that constitutes antisemitism. Obviously there is room for debate on all matters of policy, including foreign policy, and no government, including the Australian Government or the Israeli Government, is above criticism or discussion. Where the line is crossed is where hatred of Israel spills over into suspicion of Jews more broadly, or a view that Jews are pernicious, dangerous or particularly egregious in their actions. It's when protesters will deny the rights of Jews to self-determination and claim that Israel's very existence is illegitimate or inherently racist that—

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Just on that, I recently read an essay by a Jewish Australian who focused on that aspect of the various definitions of antisemitism, and particularly the suggestion that denying the right of Israel to exist is antisemitism. Are you able to expand upon at what point do you think, for example, advocacy of a one-state solution is antisemitism? Presumably a one-state solution, as it's spoken of, would mean you wouldn't have Israel as the State that it currently is. At what point is it illegitimate to advocate that?

DAVID OSSIP: This inquiry obviously is to deal with antisemitism in New South Wales. I don't want to get into a detailed discussion about foreign policy and the merits of various policy proposals for resolving what is a very contentious and intractable situation in the Middle East. The point I would make is this: About half of the world's Jews today live in Israel. The overwhelming majority of Jews consider themselves to be Zionists and consider the existence of the Jewish state as essential to the preservation of those Jews living in the State of Israel. There is genuine concern that if those Jews were to lose sovereignty, they would meet the fate of other minority groups in the Middle East. So for many Jews in New South Wales, when they hear calls for the destruction of the State of Israel, what that immediately brings to mind is that is imperilling half of the Jews which remain in the world today.

The CHAIR: Mr Ossip, in the introduction of your submission you talk about Australia being a very open and accepting country, and certainly New South Wales is very much that way with the Jewish community. Do you think with what's occurred recently that we've been caught napping in our policy response to this sort of antisemitism?

DAVID OSSIP: Even before October 7—and the evidence will back this up—antisemitism was on the rise. The further we get away from the Holocaust, unless the Holocaust is part of discourse and consciousness, the more antisemitism becomes normalised. The rise of social media and parts of the far right and far left have unleashed and emboldened antisemites to an extent that we never thought would reoccur. What transpired on the steps of the Opera House on 9 October, and some of the hate speech on 8 October, I think that really did catch the community at large by surprise. The fact that, before Israel had even responded, you had individuals marching down to the Opera House and screaming racial epithets against the Jewish community, that shocked the community at large. The fact that that wasn't an aberration and the situation then metastasised and got worse over time, yes, I think it caught all sectors of society by surprise. We've been playing catch-up ever since.

The CHAIR: Your recommendation 2 talks about addressing antisemitism in schools, in education policy and practice. You've got quite a developed and detailed number of recommendations there. From my reading of it, it seems as if almost nothing is being taught about the Holocaust or antisemitism awareness in schools, and certainly in the university system. Have you got any comments to make about that?

DAVID OSSIP: I'll let Michele add to this in a moment. There is Holocaust education to varying extents in the high school system at the moment. Holocaust education, by itself, isn't sufficient to combat antisemitism. The Holocaust was just the worst manifestation of antisemitism, but antisemitism didn't begin with the Holocaust, and it didn't end with the Holocaust. Why we think that there needs to be antisemitism education in our school systems is because antisemitism is sui generis in so many ways. It often doesn't manifest in an overt or direct way. It manifests through tropes about Jews being manipulative, controlling the world, being wealthy or being poor. It's often very subtle, pernicious and malignant. Unless you have the toolset available to you to identify what antisemitism actually is, and when it starts to creep into society, you can't snuff it out at the very beginning. Michele, do you want to add to that?

MICHELE GOLDMAN: Yes, David has expressed it really well. It's very complex and people don't understand it. Whilst the Holocaust is very effective at teaching people what happens when hate goes unchecked and what happens if you're a bystander, what is clear, especially with the rising rates of antisemitism, is that more

is needed in order to teach people how to identify what it is, what it looks like and the things that are happening. People think all the tropes that are currently playing out are just a bit of humour. More is needed so that people understand that that is antisemitism, and can identify it and respond to it if they are teachers or administrators, and stop it.

Dr AMANDA COHN: I'd also like to pick up the line of questioning about what was happening in the community well before 7 October 2023. I'm particularly interested in the rise of Neo-Nazism, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. Certainly, in my own experience, my first report to New South Wales police for organised Neo-Nazism in my community in Albury-Wodonga was back in 2018. I'm interested in understanding what work you might have already undertaken in that regard and also what you think the Government needs to be doing, particularly to address the rise of Neo-Nazism.

DAVID OSSIP: Thank you, Dr Cohn, for the question. You are correct. Antisemitism makes strange bedfellows. It brings together fascists and far-right extremists but also those on the extreme left and religious extremists. Those who would not see eye to eye on any single issue, for some reason, come together and are united by their hatred or antipathy towards the Jewish community. You're right: There has been a rise of far-right extremism. Anyone who spends time on social media will see how emboldened some of those groups have become. We as an organisation are closely working with police and law enforcement in relation to that. There has been legislation which has passed this Parliament in recent years to outlaw Nazi symbols and also the Nazi salute, which is very helpful. But it's work that we need to continue to do collectively as a community. The point I'll return to is that the far right and Neo-Nazis are obviously an immense concern to us, but we'd be making a mistake just to ascribe antisemitism to that pocket of society.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Your submission is excellent. It goes into great amounts of detail. I was wondering if you could expand a bit more on some of the recommendations that you would like to see this Committee put forward in the Parliament to discuss. We spend a lot of time on the causes and talking about the incidents, but what are some of the practical solutions? I know that is in your submission, but if you could talk a bit more to some of those recommendations, that would be very helpful for the Committee.

MICHELE GOLDMAN: I think there are a few areas where the State Government has levers it can pull to address things in a substantive, sustainable and effective way. Just to focus on recommendation 5, which is around addressing arts and cultural organisations, I see that as potentially a low-hanging fruit. The Government is providing $1.6 billion in funding to different arts and cultural institutions and organisations. What we've seen is a huge plethora of individuals and organisations who have received funding being overtly and explicitly antisemitic across their social media and in their performances, without any consequence or recourse. We see there's an opportunity there for the Government to include clauses in funding agreements that require recipients to commit to ensuring inclusive, respectful practices, and clawback provisions if they don't adhere to those clauses. That's one. We've already talked about the schools to some extent. I think in all public sector places—we've seen with the Bankstown hospital incidents that a whole lot has emerged in the health sector where people who have previously been fearful of coming forward have been encouraged to do so. There are 180,000 public health sector workers. We've already started conversations with NSW Health, but that is a great platform to be able to embed education around antisemitism and other forms of racism and discrimination so people are able to identify what it is, to not engage in it and, if they see it, to be able to call it out.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: There is obviously so much to cover. This is very much the tip of the iceberg. What about at universities? You spoke about high schools and primary schools, but what about universities, which seem to have some of the worst examples of antisemitism that I've seen. How do we combat that?

MICHELE GOLDMAN: The first step is ensuring that there is a definition for antisemitism. Now 39 universities across Australia have accepted that definition. That's a first baby step to ensure that complaints processes can be more rigorous and that there is a definition against which different complaints can be assessed as to whether they are antisemitic or not.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: When you state that definition, do you mean the IHRA definition of antisemitism?

MICHELE GOLDMAN: No, they didn't adopt the IHRA definition. They adopted a similar definition. The core is to have a definition against which you can assess things. Ultimately, it's about cultural change. There's no one easy strategy that's going to address everything. It's going to require a multifaceted response, and that requires education and training amongst leadership and amongst administration staff who are handling complaints as well, so that they're able to identify antisemitism. Using Sydney university as one example, they've had an independent assessment and recommendations put forward, which include a review of policies and procedures, new policies around what is considered civil behaviour and not, and rules against the encampments that we saw occupying university lawns and creating a very unsafe place not just for students but also for Jewish academics.

We've had people who have actually left the University of Sydney. I know of some, including a couple of students, whom we had to support to move to other universities, as well as an academic who had been there for years. That's how severe things have gone. There needs to be pressure through whatever levers there are to hold leadership to account and to make sure that complaints are being addressed properly and that there is the cultural change that is needed.

DAVID OSSIP: Just to add to that, there needs to be transparency in terms of complaints handling. There have been some really egregious examples of antisemitism where, if we were to recite what transpired, it would send chills down the spine of every person in this room. Complaints were made. Often the students had to be persuaded to make the complaints because they were concerned that there would be retribution. When they did make the complaints, it's still unclear what action the university has or hasn't taken. When the complaints have been levelled against academics, those academics are still in place. Some of the students who have been allegedly guilty of some of these incidents also seem to have received no sanction. You need to have transparency where, if someone makes a complaint and levels serious charges against an individual or institution, the university is held to account as to how it then deals with those incidents.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. That's where we'll come to an end. Thank you for your evidence today. I note that no questions were taken on notice.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Mr ROBERT GREGORY, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Jewish Association, sworn and examined

Ms TENEILLE MURRAY, Community Engagement Director, Australian Jewish Association, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: We might get started as we don't have a lot of time. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

ROBERT GREGORY: Yes, just a short statement. Thank you for the opportunity to address this important Committee on a very important topic to the Jewish and the wider community. The Australian Jewish Association is a national organisation. We have thousands of members. Many of them are in New South Wales. We are also the largest Jewish organisation in Australia on social media, with well over 100,000 followers on the different platforms. Because of this reach, we are often the first point of call when people experience antisemitism, and we are also often the target of antisemitism ourselves. The first charges under Operation Avalite relate to alleged offences against myself and others at AJA. Since October 7, antisemitism has surged in New South Wales to alarming levels. Statistics show there has been a rise of hundreds of per cent, and New South Wales has significantly more incidents than any other State.

There are three main sources: far-right extremists—this is a longstanding concern, perhaps the most longstanding of the three, but it is mostly on the margins of society; far-left activists—this includes university encampments and political groups which have mainstreamed antisemitism under the guise of so-called anti-Zionism; and, most worryingly, Islamic antisemitism, where some religious figures have glorified terrorism. We are not aware of any major Islamic leader in Australia who has publicly and unequivocally condemned the October 7 attacks. We've even seen some fringe groups which claim Jewish identity being used to legitimise antisemitism from the other sources above. These groups are minuscule. There's many of them, but they're also very loud. You may even hear from some.

University campuses, especially Sydney University, have become hostile places for Jewish students. Staff and unions have often failed to protect Jewish members. Social cohesion in New South Wales is under serious threat. The riot at the Sydney Opera House was not a reaction to Israel's military response. It took place well before Israel had responded. It was a celebration of terrorism. We've seen synagogues, homes, schools and even a day care centre targeted. AJA has heard from Jewish people who now avoid Sydney's CBD, or remove visible signs of Jewish identity, out of fear. Jewish institutions resemble fortresses. Schools need armed guards. Families pay for private security to guard their bar mitzvahs and other celebrations. The cost of safety to our community is enormous.

I'll just finish on a personal note. My wife gave birth eight months ago. We wanted to hold a small celebration for the community at our local synagogue. We were required to hire armed guards as part of the policy of the synagogue. The cost wasn't a major concern for us, but what it is is a symptom of societal failure. Countless families who just want to celebrate their families' joyful milestones are forced to incur this cost because people want to harm us. And there's no other community that I know of, in Australia, that requires this sort of armed protection just to have a little gathering and celebrate.

TENEILLE MURRAY: We make five key recommendations. Number one, stop funding antisemitic individuals and organisations. New South Wales taxpayers should not be subsidising hate. Cutting funds to arts and religious organisations that spread hate will have the added benefit of saving New South Wales taxpayers a large amount of money. Number two, implement the IHRA antisemitism definition, particularly in schools and universities. The definition has been adopted at a Federal and a State level on a bipartisan basis. But, for it to be meaningful, it must be implemented. Number three, rein in local councils. They are not foreign ministries. Antisemitic boycott motions only divide communities. Several councils, including Canterbury-Bankstown and the City of Sydney, have engaged in these stunts, which waste ratepayers' funds. The Minister for Local Government needs to intervene.

Number four, continue assistance with security costs. It is vital and greatly appreciated by the entire Jewish community. While the Jewish community will continue to shoulder the bulk of the financial burden, when the Government assists it shows us that we are not alone. Our friends in the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the CSG are the ones to liaise with on the specifics. Number five, introduce anti-BDS legislation to ensure public funds don't support those promoting antisemitic and discriminatory boycotts. Anti-BDS legislation exists in the vast majority of the US states, and the laws pose no issue with the robust free speech protections in place in the US. Antisemitism is not just a Jewish problem; it is a social cohesion problem. New South Wales must act decisively.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Thanks to you both for coming along. It's much appreciated. In terms of your written submission, can I just take you to the last paragraph of the first page. Have you got a copy of it there?

ROBERT GREGORY: I don't have it in front of me, but happy if you do.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I think, Mr Gregory, it was mentioned in your opening statement as well. It states:

> Recently, the phenomenon of 'Jewish antisemitism' has emerged: A tiny, fringe group claiming Jewish heritage … rejected by the broader Jewish community but amplifying division and defending antisemitism.

I think you said that we might be hearing from some of those groups. I was wondering if you could expand upon who those groups are.

ROBERT GREGORY: I'm not sure whether I should make adverse opinions about other groups. You're happy for that to happen? We didn't mention any specific groups, because there are a lot of them. They're tiny. Often they each have a few people, and often the people overlap in these different groups. But the phenomenon I was speaking about, of Jewish people who act against the Jewish community—while these groups may be new, the phenomenon is not. In the Soviet Union, there was Jewish groups that informed on the community. In Nazi Germany, there was even a group of Jews, the National Association of German Jews. It actually goes back to biblical times. There has always been these very small groups that, for whatever reason, whether it's personal disagreements they've had, whether they just don't get on with the community—this phenomenon has been longstanding. But one thing we see is that it is often amplified by the other groups, as mentioned. You'll often see them rely on saying that these one or two Jewish people agree with what they said, so it legitimises it. I think, in terms of antisemitism, it's important to look at the content, not necessarily who's saying it and whether they do have some Jewish heritage or not.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Do you agree that a common aspect of antisemitism over hundreds of years and millennia, indeed, has been the idea that Jewish people are a monolith and that has fed into various of the conspiracy theories that have really underpinned antisemitism?

ROBERT GREGORY: There have been many different types of antisemitism, so that could connect to one. But antisemitism morphs, as Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has noted. Often it was religiously based. We saw that, for example, in Spain during the Spanish Inquisition, where Jews could convert out of Judaism and at least theoretically they'll be safe. We saw it in Nazi times. It was obviously racially based. Under communism it was culturally based, where Jewish people who abandoned their culture could still succeed, but Jewish culture was suppressed. There are many types of antisemitism. The example you gave is not necessarily present in all of them.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: What did you mean in that last paragraph on page 1 when you said that those groups claimed Jewish heritage? Are you trying to pass doubt upon whether those groups really are Jewish?

ROBERT GREGORY: I wasn't trying to cast doubt, but there have been well-documented examples where various people who've presented themselves as Jewish anti-Israel activists were then exposed as not actually having Jewish background. Most famously, there were some incidents in Germany where people presented themselves actually as Holocaust survivors or descendants of Holocaust survivors, and later investigative journalism proved this not to be the case. I'm not making any comments about any particular people or a particular group in that regard.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: It sounds, from what you've just said though, that you are trying to suggest that maybe at least some of the individuals in those groups are not Jewish—is that right?—or that there are some sorts of doubts about their Jewish heritage.

ROBERT GREGORY: We haven't made that suggestion, but, as I just mentioned, it has been exposed in different cases internationally that that in fact is the case—that people were calling them Jewish identity and are not. I'll just repeat: We didn't, in our submission, make that point about any particular person, if that's what you are implying.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I've been made aware of some things that your president, David Adler, has said on social media.

ROBERT GREGORY: I'll just say that he's not our president; he retired a little while ago.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I think he was at the time of these comments. He said of Stan Grant:

> STAN GRANT'S COMPLEXION SEEMS TO HAVE CHANGED.

> Look at the 3 pics. Can anyone explain?
>
> IS STAN GRANT DOING 'BLACK FACE'? If so, why?

He said of Senator Lidia Thorpe:

> What % Aboriginal are you? You appear quite white.

In light of those comments, and in light of that paragraph that I took you to, I'm just concerned that the organisation might be falling into that trap of actually furthering antisemitism by presenting monolithic views of Jewish people. What is your comment on that?

ROBERT GREGORY: My comment is that it's quite strange at a Committee hearing on antisemitism that the Jewish groups and Jewish people are being attacked by the Committee members, but that's all right.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: It's certainly not an attack on you. I'm just trying to explore the issues, as I've identified.

ROBERT GREGORY: No, it's not about me. Those comments were not made by the AJA. I think what you're referring to was made in a personal capacity, and I think they have been addressed. But I also don't think they're particularly relevant to antisemitism, which is what we're talking about here. They're just perhaps a political attack on a Jewish group, I would suggest.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I've seen on the social media of the AJA, as part of preparing for the hearing, things that seem quite extreme—for example, posts that openly advocate the ethnic cleansing of Arabs on the West Bank. Do you think that those sorts of racist, extreme types of statements might not be assisting in terms of antisemitism?

ROBERT GREGORY: Are you talking about a particular comment?

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Yes, I'm talking about one, for example. There seem to be a lot of them, but one on 25 February:

> WE NEED TO MOVE THE ARABS (PALESTINIANS) AWAY FROM ISRAEL.
>
> It is the ONLY solution says Micah Avni and he should know …

Then you go through in the post to list examples of population transfer throughout history. It appears to openly endorse ethnic cleansing. Is this the position of your organisation?

ROBERT GREGORY: I don't have the particular thing in front of me.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I'll just provide you a copy of it.

ROBERT GREGORY: Sure.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Chair, are we able to ask some questions as well?

The CHAIR: Yes. I don't want to go too far down this rabbit hole. We're halfway through the questioning time already. We've only got limited time. We might move on to the next question.

ROBERT GREGORY: I'm happy to address it when it comes, but before it comes, AJA, I don't believe we've made that statement. That might be a quote from somewhere.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Yes, it's a quote but it's endorsed by the organisation. I think the copy is about to reach you. It states:

> It is the ONLY solution says Micah Avni and he should know …

ROBERT GREGORY: Those are clearly in quotation marks.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Not the bit, "It's the ONLY solution says Micah Avni and he should know".

TENEILLE MURRAY: Thank you for the question. I think we'll take this question on notice. If we could go back to the topic at hand with the limited time, we'd really like to discuss our recommendations and take further questions on the antisemitism hearing today.

The CHAIR: Take the question on notice.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: One of the areas that I was quite interested in is when it comes to community safety. You've pointed to additional funding for community safety. How much do you estimate community safety costs the Jewish community at present?

ROBERT GREGORY: We did say that the best people to approach on that would be CSG and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, who do handle security—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Gregory, even if we were to turn to perhaps your personal example, how much did that cost you in terms of being able to provide security for that celebration of your child's birth?

ROBERT GREGORY: For that little thing, I don't know off the top of my head, but it was something around $300 or $350 for a few hours of having an armed guard. As I said, personally it's not the biggest issue, but this is happening to all the families.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Was that a policy of the synagogue at the time?

ROBERT GREGORY: That's a policy, yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You extrapolate that across the community and you see there's a significant cost to individual members of the Jewish community because of the safety concerns, but for the community at large as well?

ROBERT GREGORY: Exactly. Every preschool, these places have to have armed guards. The parents of preschools—the fees are so expensive, because as well as paying towards education, money is going towards security. There are many types of places that need 24/7 armed guards at various places, so the cost is phenomenal. That's why any assistance is greatly appreciated, but, at the end of the day, the individual community members and organisations will still bear most of the burden.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I used to live a street away from a Jewish school. When we first moved to the area, my wife was really surprised at why there was a school with an armed guard 24/7. I understand the challenges that the community faces in that regard and have seen it. As you say, it's not just a challenge for the Jewish community; it's a challenge for the broader community. I think we've seen that in recent months as well. I will turn to one of the other areas you've highlighted, the IHRA definition on antisemitism. I think we heard from the board previously that universities have adopted a definition on antisemitism, but not the IHRA definition. Could you outline to us why the IHRA definition is important, and why that should be adopted across government but also by other institutions?

ROBERT GREGORY: Thank you for the question. To treat any illness, the first step is to diagnose it, which is why IHRA is so important. That's why Holocaust educators, Jewish organisations and experts around the world got together several years ago after extensive discussion and came up with the IHRA definition. The definition has been widely adopted by countries, by states in the United States, by organisations, intergovernmental organisations, and other media organisations. It's so useful because it provides examples of antisemitism. Often the hardest part, unlike some other types of racism which might be more clear and easier to define—often with antisemitism, because it takes so many forms, because it can be racial, because it can be religious, because it can be cultural, it's harder to define.

The real usefulness of the IHRA definition is in the examples it provides. We are very grateful that both at a Federal level and in New South Wales it has bipartisan support. It has been adopted. As we mentioned in our submission, the issue is that it hasn't really been implemented in the next step. As you mentioned, universities are ground zero for antisemitism. That's one of the places where the most reports, the most incidents, are coming out of. Many universities have now adopted a definition which is a bit of a watered-down IHRA definition, but it's still much preferable to not doing so.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Since we're on definitions, the one thing that this Parliament has grappled with has always been the freedom of speech at one end and combating antisemitism at the other. In your opinion, where should that line be drawn? When does anti-Zionism become antisemitism? Obviously, we've seen things like flags being flown of Hezbollah and Hamas—Taliban flags. We've seen chants like "From the river to the sea" and things like that. Is that anti-Zionism gone too far, to the point that it has become antisemitism?

ROBERT GREGORY: You mentioned free speech. On free speech, we take a different line than some other Jewish organisations—we weren't necessarily big supporters of the hate speech laws—but where we draw the line is when it comes to government funding. People have the right to have whatever views and opinions they want but the government should not be required to fund, for example, arts organisations that spread hate, or religious organisations that spread hate. While the people themselves legally can hold whatever views they want, the taxpayer shouldn't have to fund it.

In terms of when anti-Zionism becomes antisemitism, the IHRA is also quite clear on this. Criticism of the Israeli Government, just like criticism of the Australian Government and any other government, is acceptable. That's fine; that's normal. We criticise different governments, including Israel and Australia. Where it crosses the line is when the demonisation of the Jewish state becomes the demonisation of the Jewish people. Some examples

are when Israel is compared to the Nazis, which is obviously meant to hurt and target the Jewish people by mocking the genocide against the Jews; where Israel is singled out and treated in a different way than any other country—only because it is the Jewish state—and held to a different standard; and where Jewish people in Australia are held responsible for the actions of Israel. Those are some examples where it crosses the line.

TENEILLE MURRAY: I'd like to add that since October 7, as leadership in the Jewish community, our names are publicly online on multiple websites. We've received multiple threats across Twitter and social media to our families, our homes, which should not be acceptable, and is not protected.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Good morning. I would like to come back to this post. I understand that the Committee and yourselves moved on in the interests of time, but with a bit more time I think this is a really important issue, and I think it would be helpful to know if your organisation stands by the statement that was made in that post on Facebook or not.

ROBERT GREGORY: This is not a statement we made, as we mentioned before, this is—I can see the quotation marks on the statement. I'll preface by saying that, as I mentioned, AJA is the largest Jewish organisation on social media, with well over 100,000 followers. We have several social media—for example, Twitter, Facebook, whatever—and many, many posts a day, so we would have tens of thousands of posts. So if we, as our friend here did, wanted to scroll through and try and find an offensive post out of tens of thousands of posts, maybe they're able to. But as I can see here, neither of us here made this post; this is the first time I'm seeing it. It appears to be a quote from someone whose father was murdered by a terrorist. He says:

> The terrorist who murdered my father is being released today. I'm saying out loud what all of Israel …

So this is a quote from someone whose father was murdered by terrorists on the day when the terrorist is being released, and he seems to be talking about examples of different historical transfers of population. I know it's a foreign policy topic, so probably not relevant today, but AJA does not have a policy on these types of issues, and we have never expressed a policy on these types of issues.

Dr AMANDA COHN: One more question, if I may, Chair. Coming back to this question of definitions and noting your strong advocacy for the IHRA definition, I suppose the fact that this hasn't been universally adopted and it's something you're still having to push for—is that because there's some degree of controversy about the definition within the Jewish community in Australia?

ROBERT GREGORY: No, I would say it has been adopted extremely widely, as I mentioned. At a bipartisan level, I think there may only be one political party in the country that doesn't support it and in this State and in other States—in Victoria and South Australia, so I don't think the issue is with support for it and its adoption. It's the next step of actually doing meaningful action, and I think there needs to be discussion of how it can be implemented. There are very few issues that are as consensus as that and get such bipartisan support. It was done on a Federal level under the Morrison Government with the Labor Opposition at the time in support of it, so I don't think it's particularly controversial. In the Jewish community, all the major organisations are obviously in support of it, as are many governments overseas and many intergovernmental organisations.

Dr AMANDA COHN: To very briefly follow up—because you answered my question about consensus between major political parties—I'm specifically interested in your view of the Australian Jewish community and the level of consensus about the definition of antisemitism.

ROBERT GREGORY: Any large Jewish organisation in Australia supports IHRA and has for many years. It's very widely accepted. There may be some newer or more fringe, very small groups that don't, but it's quite a widely held belief.

The CHAIR: You talk in your submission about action against local government. Do you want to elucidate on that a little more?

ROBERT GREGORY: We have seen local governments inflame the situation by passing boycott motions. I think one council even sent ratepayers' money overseas and there's now a bit of a scandal about that.

The CHAIR: Which council is that?

ROBERT GREGORY: I believe it's Liverpool council. The role of local council—I think most people agree—is not to engage in foreign policy conflicts, particularly very divisive ones. We heard from Jewish residents of Bankstown—of which there are not many and they don't want to be particularly public—who were very concerned about motions passed in the council there. Police had to be called during the debate there. What we saw in previous years when Marrickville Council attempted to boycott Israel was a much more outspoken opposition from the Government. The Minister for Local Government at the time threatened financial sanctions, I believe, on the council and, in the end, the push to boycott Israel did not succeed. Unfortunately, the Minister for Local Government has not been particularly outspoken on these matters. We believe that boycott motions—

not only do they waste ratepayers' funds and they're divisive, but they are also wasting time when the local government should be fixing potholes, collecting rubbish and doing the things that ratepayers expect.

The CHAIR: How would you propose that the State Government legislate in this area? Is that what you're saying? How would we do it?

ROBERT GREGORY: The first step, I think, would be to speak up, as I mentioned. The Minister for Local Government should speak up. I think that councils who waste ratepayers' funds on these issues should face financial sanctions. I think that is something that should be done.

Dr AMANDA COHN: With regards to local councils passing motions or spending ratepayers' money on what you're describing as international conflicts, does your criticism extend to Woollahra council, who, I understand, flew the Israeli flag outside the council chamber for several months?

ROBERT GREGORY: Here I'm talking about boycott motions—things that target goods from Israel as the only Jewish state—where these similar councils would never boycott Chinese products or any other country. While we might not agree with the council flying any flag other than the Australian flag, I don't necessarily think they should face financial sanction over that.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I've got one question, if there's time. I'm just curious about what your organisation thinks is the best way of dealing with the extreme far right. For example, there has been talk in the media recently about openly neo-Nazi organisations starting a political party to get involved in electoral politics. I know your organisation has more of a purist view, if I can put it that way, on free speech, but I'm interested in what you think is the way to deal with the very extreme far right. Should we be using police powers et cetera to stamp them out, or do you think that's counterproductive and they should simply fail in the marketplace of free ideas, for example?

ROBERT GREGORY: We think that all these types of hatred should be dealt with in the same way. Until now, there is a difference in policing. For example, yesterday, not in New South Wales but in Victoria, the Nazi symbol was flown at a rally. If this would have been done at a far-right rally, I think there would have been arrests. It would have been taken care of very quickly. But this was a Nakba-type rally and, as I am aware at this stage, I don't think any action has been taken as of yet. I think all these types of hatred should be dealt with equally. The far right is a major issue. Online, as we heard before, it's growing a lot. We are one of the most targeted groups by the far right. We've had our events attacked by them. I am frequently targeted by them online, so it's a major concern. When they break the law—where they use violence or threaten violence—it should be prosecuted, as it would be with any other hate group.

The CHAIR: Thanks very much for coming today. I note you took one question on notice. The secretariat will be in contact with you soon to get your answer to that question.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Mr JACK PINCZEWSKI, Board Member, The Great Synagogue, sworn and examined

Rabbi Dr BENJAMIN ELTON, Chief Minister, The Great Synagogue, sworn and examined

Mr KEVIN SUMPTION, PSM, Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Jewish Museum, affirmed and examined

Ms SANDY HOLLIS, Head of Education, Sydney Jewish Museum, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Thanks very much for coming today. On behalf of The Great Synagogue, would one of you gentlemen like to make a short opening statement?

JACK PINCZEWSKI: I'll be very brief, Chair. I'll just say that we thank the Committee for its interest, and the Legislative Council generally for its interest, in this deeply distressing issue for our community. We believe The Great Synagogue is one of the most visible pieces of Jewish infrastructure in New South Wales. We are on a very busy street in the heart of the city. Along with the Sydney Jewish Museum, we are one of two pieces of Jewish infrastructure in close proximity to the CBD.

As a consequence of the events since October 7, The Great Synagogue unfortunately has been at the epicentre of a number of events which have made it more difficult for us to be Jewish in Sydney. The experience of The Great Synagogue is probably unique in some respects, but unfortunately is probably all too common in others. We're a synagogue which has been proudly part of the fabric of this city and of this State for well over 100 years. According to many of the people we've spoken to in our community, this is probably the first time that many people have felt uncomfortable being visibly or identifiably Jewish over such an extended period of time. I think we'll let our written submission speak more for itself, but I'm very glad that the Parliament of New South Wales has taken this issue seriously enough to examine. I'm also very appreciative of the people who have reached out to us broadly in the community to express their concerns and also express their support for us.

The CHAIR: Mr Sumption, on behalf of the Sydney Jewish Museum, would you like to make a statement?

KEVIN SUMPTION: Yes. Again, I would like to express my thanks to the Committee for the invitation to speak today on behalf of the Sydney Jewish Museum. We are a museum that has been in existence since 1992 and approximately 800,000, mainly students, have come to that museum since 1992 to learn, principally, about Jewish culture, the achievements of the Jewish community, particularly in New South Wales, and very specifically about the Holocaust and its impact, not just on European Jewry but specifically on those families who made Australia home, many of whom were victims of the Holocaust. We, as a museum, have had a very difficult period of time since October 7. We, as a museum, like many of the Jewish communities, have experienced unfortunate levels of threats. Our staff have endured many, many threats, particularly in the virtual space, so it's been a very difficult time for the museum. But we're very proud of the job that the museum does in providing vital education to particularly students of history in the State to come and learn about the contributions of the Jewish community and the atrocities of the Holocaust.

The CHAIR: Questions? Who would like to start?

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I can start, if that's convenient. Thanks so much for coming along and for your written submissions. It is extremely helpful. I have some questions, first for The Great Synagogue, if I could. I noticed the things in your submission about the protests that have been occurring in the CBD—I think on a weekly basis and then they moved to a monthly basis. There's obviously a tension here between free speech and association and then issues of concern to the Jewish community. But I am just wondering if you could talk to us about the weekly protests and maybe expand on in what sense you perceive them to be antisemitic and how they've directly impacted on the synagogue?

BENJAMIN ELTON: I wouldn't describe them as inherently antisemitic, although there are people within them making antisemitic slogans either orally or in writing, so they do contain antisemitic elements. We support the right to protest and free speech, including in the centre of our city. Our initial concern was that we were being advised to close down our services early in order that the congregants could leave before the protests went past. There was clearly concern about the wellbeing of Jewish congregants just coming and going in a safe way, and that's very concerning to us.

In practice, that suppressed our freedom of worship and freedom of assembly, and there were also clearly times when we were targeted. A "Sanction Israel" banner was unfurled outside the synagogue, although we're not the Israeli embassy or a representative of the Government of Israel. There was a video that was posted online from one of these protests which showed the front of the synagogue and the back of the synagogue with some caricatured Jewish music being played in the background and was rather threatening in a sinister way. We support protest and free speech, but the way they were carried out was, in effect, a way that suppressed our freedom to

worship and assemble. There were definitely antisemitic elements within the protest, even if that wasn't the official policy of the protest as a whole.

JACK PINCZEWSKI: I should also add that there have been a number of things that I know make the Jewish community uncomfortable. It's not necessarily that they are antisemitic. We raised this issue with police in December 2023, as noted in our submission. One of the things that we asked the police to do would be to consider negotiating with the protesters to move to a different location. We had suggested Tumbalong Park, Belmore Park or other locations that are still in the CBD, or even towards Wynyard was one of the suggestions. The feeling was that it would be too difficult to convince a group of people who had been protesting at the Archibald fountain to move for whatever reason. I don't think it was the right thing to have done. There should have been more of an effort made to encourage deconfliction.

Even when there are protests on a Sunday, which is not the traditional Jewish day of worship, the risk is that we will have an event that might be on a Sunday. There might be a non-Sabbath-related event—a bat mitzvah, for instance. I do believe there was an instance where a bat mitzvah had to be moved from The Great Synagogue to a different synagogue because of the perceived potential impact of these protests. I don't want to pre-empt your next question, but I assume it's going to be asked about the places of worship bill. Did you have any questions particularly about that? It probably does affect us more than other synagogues.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: No, I didn't have a question on that. I did note in your submission the idea of a 500-metre exclusion zone. I think that's in your submission.

JACK PINCZEWSKI: Part of the problem is that we don't have a clear idea of what is proximate to a synagogue. You guys write laws. I think you're probably aware that's a fairly interesting question. The Archibald fountain is about 230 metres from the front door of our synagogue. If there's a particularly large protest or a protest is being led down Elizabeth Street, it passes our synagogue directly. Again, we don't want to cavil with the idea that protest is a legitimate form of expression. In fact, we would want to facilitate it, but just not near our synagogue, for the reasons that we had outlined. We noticed in December 2023 that events were escalating and things had the potential to get worse. Our advice was to try to move these protests to a place where there wouldn't be the potential for people to walk past with banners calling for the sanctioning of Israel and our congregants could feel safer coming to the synagogue on days that didn't contain services.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: My next question is about social cohesion. It's obviously something that is talked about a lot and might mean different things to different people in light of these almost inherent tensions in the community and strongly held views in the Arab community about what's happening in Palestine and strongly held views in the Jewish community. We've heard evidence that most Jewish Australians are Zionist in terms of their orientation about Israel. How do we inculcate, particularly in young people, some understanding of the distinctions here and the fact that you shouldn't be visiting all your adverse views about Israel upon the Jewish community or that Jewish people are individuals who are to be attributed to all of the actions of Israel? How do we do that in a political context where there is a lot of support for Israel in the Jewish community and a lot of support, if I can put it that way, for Palestine in the Arab Australian community? How do we practically build social cohesion?

BENJAMIN ELTON: Education is obviously the beginning of that at all levels. We have a very strong school tours program at The Great Synagogue in which we have students of Christian, Muslim and all other religious backgrounds who come into the synagogue. Through that, they achieve a much more multidimensional understanding of the Jewish community—that we're not just a Zionist community, although most Jews are Zionist, but we are a faith community and have a cultural and communal aspect as well. When they leave the synagogue, maybe after meeting a Jew or a rabbi for the first time, they understand that we are multidimensional human beings. They might disagree with us about events in the Middle East, but that doesn't mean that we don't have other things in common—common humanity, common Australian citizenship and a common commitment to faith. That makes our political or foreign policy views just one aspect, not the commanding aspect of our identity vis-a-vis each other.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Do you think that there's any way in which that needs to be a two-way street in terms of engagement with the Arab community?

BENJAMIN ELTON: Of course. After October 7, there's no question that interfaith conversations were really stalled for a long time. That was because, speaking from the Jewish community, we found a lot of the statements made after October 7 by people we'd been having conversations with and dialogues with to be really abhorrent and celebrating those who perpetrated October 7. That really clamped down on those conversations. It has been a long process. Now we are in a position where those conversations between the Jewish community and the Muslim community are starting again, and there is a building up to rebuilding trust, a lot of which was lost. I've been involved in that effort, and I hope it will continue. But it was definitely chilled by the events of 7 October.

JACK PINCZEWSKI: I might also add that there is a degree of self-policing from communities that needs to occur. What I mean by that is if the rabbi or one of his contemporaries were to say something obscene about another religious community or another ethnic community, I think it would be incumbent on us as leaders in the Jewish community—myself, as a board member, and I have sat on the Jewish Board of Deputies before—to publicly condemn it. I have done so when there were rabbis who suggested that the rule of law doesn't apply to religious courts or in terms of certain things around the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse. If you wanted to see more social cohesion, there is a requirement for leaders in communities of faith to ensure that the temperature is brought down and that statements such as "Jews are the descendants of pigs and monkeys", which is something that has been said, are condemned and are condemned visibly and publicly, to the point where those who are saying them do not find any succour or safety inside their faith for those statements.

I'm very gratified to know that there are a lot of rabbis out there of good faith who are engaged in a lot of cross-cultural understanding and interfaith learning. The rabbi here is a great example, as is Rabbi Zalman Kastel, who runs the Together for Humanity Foundation. There needs to be an element of self-policing in order for social cohesion to occur and also, in the role that you have as legislators, when people say things like that, which vilify Jews, that you have laws appropriately adapted to ensure that those who say those things are prosecuted.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Lastly on that from me, a bit of a theme of some of the evidence that we've received in submissions is people noting that Muslim community leaders didn't condemn October 7. On the other side of the equation, I've heard it said by different people that representative Jewish groups, in the view of some people, haven't been sufficiently strong in condemning what's occurring at the moment in terms of the events in Gaza. I pose this question to you: Do you think that there's a way that we can somehow call a bit of a ceasefire on that issue? How can we have greater understanding on both sides of this debate that there are such inherently different views about the history and about what's occurring that perhaps we're incapable of meeting each other's demands in terms of condemning all the things that each community feels particularly strongly about?

BENJAMIN ELTON: I'll answer it in two ways. Everyone has to be aware of their own bias and their own perspective. I think that there is a difference between what happened on 7 October and the military action taken since, especially in the early stages of the war. The attacks on 7 October were deliberately targeting civilians—finding civilians and killing them individually—knowing perfectly well they were civilians, as opposed to civilians being killed as a result of military operations. I think there is a difference there between an attack targeting civilians and an attack in which civilians die. That's the first thing. Second, I don't think it was the lack of condemnation which I, at least, found most problematic. It was the endorsement. It was the celebration. There's a difference there.

It's one thing to tolerate a certain silence—we understand people can be silent for all sorts of reasons—but to celebrate it is much more egregious. I said two things, but this is the third thing. I think you will find that Jewish spokespeople, including myself—in everything I've said on this topic, I've always expressed regret at the loss of all civilian life on all sides and expressed sympathy to those who have died in Gaza who were in no way responsible for any atrocities or any crimes and were caught up in it. I'm not sure there is a parallel. Maybe there has been a condemnation in terms of Israelis who've died and civilians who've died, but certainly I've made a big effort, and I think others have too, to recognise the suffering of innocent Palestinians, and to mourn and regret that.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Just to be clear, I wasn't suggesting that there's one monolithic approach on one side and one monolithic approach on the other. There's obviously a whole variety of different views. I've heard those two things expressed, and I suspect a lot of people would think that your answer reflects a lot of assumptions and beliefs that they don't have. It seems to me a bit of an intractable issue. I just wonder whether there's a way of sidestepping those intractable differences and reaching social cohesion notwithstanding.

BENJAMIN ELTON: I think that if there hadn't been celebration—as we saw through the streets of some parts of Sydney on 7, 8 and 9 October and that we saw at the Opera House—we'd be a lot further along. I think if there was just silence, that would have been much easier to cope with and deal with. But I agree with you, as it happens, that I think it doesn't do either side—and I hope there aren't sides, but either community—any good to start demanding particular statements. I think silence on both sides, on certain very difficult matters, is a way we could all get through this.

The CHAIR: I'll ask a question to you, Mr Sumption, in relation to the education role of the Sydney Jewish Museum. You're doing a fair bit of work already with high school students. You talk, in your submission, about primary school children. Would you like to elucidate where the problems are in that level of education and the awareness of antisemitism with children?

KEVIN SUMPTION: In our submission, we made clear that the museum tends to be very focused on high school students and those studying history. Since October 7, the research that we've done and others have done has found that a lot of the views expressed against the Jewish community are very prevalent on social media. For instance at the high school level, Jewish students attending Jewish schools, and sometimes non-Jewish schools, are particularly targeted by antisemitic posts in social media. We're also finding, because this is the nature of social media, that those same posts and those same experiences are also accessible to younger students 11, 12 and 13 years old. There's increasing educational research strongly suggesting that leaving it to have a discussion about these issues until you're 15, 16 or 17 years old is too late. Some of these difficult conversations, in an age appropriate way, need to take place with younger members of schools. That is something that the museum is particularly focused on and developing new programs for. Maybe you can talk about that?

SANDY HOLLIS: If I might add, research shows that in order to determine somebody's values and opinions, there have to be a number of touchpoints throughout their education. We're not only talking about this in terms of the Jewish community. We would say that there is an avenue. A really exciting process can take place where different groups—different immigrant groups or different cultural groups or religious groups—can together create a program whereby younger students come into contact with the different groups that make up our community, building a stronger fabric of society.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Thank you for all your evidence so far. My question is to The Great Synagogue first and then maybe to the museum as well. A lot of the antisemitism that we hear about is in the media and through police reports and things like that, but there's obviously a huge amount that just isn't reported in the media or to the police. How has life changed, if you could expand a bit more, for your congregants post October 7? What is it like living as part of the Jewish community in Sydney at the moment? If there's anything that the museum wants to add as well in terms of your staff and volunteers, how has life changed in the last two and a half years?

BENJAMIN ELTON: Speaking personally, I've been abused on the street. I've had slurs yelled at me by people walking down the street past me or from moving vehicles. I had a gathering in my home on a Saturday afternoon for congregants. We had the front door open, and an antisemitic obscenity was screamed through my front door with my small children in the house. Congregants have woken up to find, on their apartment buildings, antisemitic graffiti. Of course, we all know about the car set alight. During the worst days of that summer, they weren't sure what they were waking up to each morning. Life has become much more unpleasant and much more fear ridden than it was before October 7.

JACK PINCZEWSKI: From my perspective, I'm involved in a number of Jewish community groups. The advice that we've received is that we should be seeking silent elector status to protect our addresses because you can also be looked up through—this is part of the terms of reference, so I don't want to go too deep into it. The question is whether or not I could be looked up on business registries as well. I have a particularly unique name. I don't think there are too many other Jack Pinczewskis out there. One just has to google me and you can see that I'm Jewish. I'm very mindful of that. I'm querying whether or not I should be encouraging other family members to seek similar protections. Normally if you'd asked me would I wear a yarmulke in the city—I don't; I'm not that religious. Sorry. I would feel a degree of discomfort walking through the city and being visibly identified as Jewish.

The CHAIR: That is because of what's happened recently?

JACK PINCZEWSKI: Yes. The difficulty is that you just don't know who is out there. If I'm on public transport and I don't have a yarmulke on and I don't have a yellow ribbon, I don't look visibly Jewish. I could get away with not having anything visible on me that indicates that I'm Jewish. Others are not so lucky. Others have an article of faith. They'll wear a yarmulke at all times. Others will be mainly in Jewish areas. I happen to come into the city an awful lot. This is where my synagogue is. This is where I work. I don't know if it's a safe thing for me to be visibly Jewish in this city, not because I think there's someone out there to get me, but because I just don't know what someone might do.

BENJAMIN ELTON: I was advised to vary my route walking to the synagogue—to not always go in the same direction or same path in case I was being tracked and followed and could be attacked either going to or from the synagogue.

The CHAIR: Again, this has only changed since October 7?

BENJAMIN ELTON: Yes.

KEVIN SUMPTION: It's been my great pleasure to work in many cultural institutions not only in Australia but also in Europe. This is the first cultural institution where I've worked with a faith community—the Jewish community. It has been a shock to work in a place where I have to employ three armed guards. I have

Australian children come to that place and encounter those armed guards. This is something that, as an Australian, I found deeply disturbing, that I have to live in a place where I put armed guards at the front of my museum.

I have 22 CCTV cameras facing the street. The level of security that my staff have to go through on a daily basis—the briefings we have to get from Community Security Group, Taskforce Pearl coming to my museum to brief us regularly on what's going on. These are shocking situations that I have no point of reference for, for any cultural institution I've ever worked in. These aren't the daily living conditions that Jewish people in Australia should have to endure. It should be something that we should not be proud of. It should not be something that any of our Jewish community should experience.

SANDY HOLLIS: If I might add, in the immediate aftermath of October 7 we had a large amount of cancellations from schools who were concerned about security. Depending on what happens in the Middle East, that fear becomes more elevated. Of particular concern for the museum is that our volunteers are either Holocaust survivors or second- or third-generation Holocaust survivors. They are very fearful and are re-traumatised by what they're seeing around them.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: To the panel, if we think about other parts of New South Wales other than Sydney—Newcastle, Wollongong, which are the metropolitan cities to the north and south, and also to the west, both north and south, in regional and rural New South Wales—to the extent that it has been reported to you or that you've been made aware of, can you provide to the Committee any perspective or insights of the impact on Jewish citizens across the State, as well as on their facilities, clubs and related associations?

BENJAMIN ELTON: The only synagogue outside the Sydney area is in Newcastle. I'm not sure how they've been impacted, but it might be worth writing to the president and the rabbi of the Newcastle community to see how they've been impacted. Other than that, there are Jews and small communities of Jews in places like Byron Bay. But the only organised community is Newcastle.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: In effect, that is the diaspora, so to speak, in New South Wales, outside of Sydney?

JACK PINCZEWSKI: If you interpret Bondi as the promised land, then yes.

The Hon. GREG DONNELLY: Thank you for the answer. Thank you.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Going back to the efforts in community security, this is a longstanding issue for the Jewish community. Mr Sumption, as you outline in terms of the requirements that you have at the Sydney Jewish Museum, that is something that's been a longstanding arrangement. Before October 7, I took my children to the synagogue one school holiday and they wondered what on earth is so valuable in the Sydney Jewish Museum because of the amount of security they had to go through. Post October 7, how much more have you had to add in terms of security requirements? What sort of cost has there been for that, both at the Sydney Jewish Museum and also at The Great Synagogue?

KEVIN SUMPTION: Our normal security arrangements would require three security guards at the museum. One would always be armed. Since October 7 we have fluctuated in the threat level that the museum has received. So we've moved to a standard two armed guards, and then in certain situations we've moved to three armed guards at the museum. We're also a building site at the moment. We have a level of security in terms of trades coming onto the museum premises as we go through a two-year building program, which has required additional security support, particularly for our builders.

Working closely with Community Security Group, CSG, we have to test the credentials of all of those coming onto our premises, onto our building site, to make sure that they don't represent any form of threat to the museum. The level of not just financial investment by the community but the care and attention to detail in ensuring that we are running a very secure not only museum but now building site is just phenomenal. I would say, in terms of my role as the CEO, it's something I would spend an hour to two hours most days considering, testing and understanding how we are making sure that we're protecting not only the people coming to the museum, the general public, but our staff. Yes, it's been a very significant challenge for everyone at the museum.

BENJAMIN ELTON: At moments of heightened risk we've had to have guards at not just every service, every event and every tour but also every time the office is open, which is a great expense and an additional expense for the congregation. We've also been very grateful because the police for a while had officers front and back of the synagogue, sometimes for 24-hour periods, certainly when our congregation were arriving and leaving and when a demonstration was going past. There had to be roving cars from the police going past my home and going past the synagogue, keeping an eye on things overnight, for example. Also, I was accompanied to the synagogue on a couple of occasions when the threat was considered to be particularly high. My car was followed by a security car to make sure I was safe.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: It's really shocking that this is the state of affairs in New South Wales. It's something that the community has had to live with for a very long time, but it's dreadful that things have gotten to this level. A point that everybody makes is that education is one of those keys. Both of you have made that point as well, in terms of understanding, and that when people meet with you, Rabbi Elton, you may be able to have some differences of opinion on certain things but there is a shared humanity. The Sydney Jewish Museum plays such an important part in that, in being able to educate future generations on what have been some of the horrors so that they're not repeated. You mentioned as part of your opening statement looking and working with younger age groups. What younger age groups are you looking at? What are some of the touchpoints, potentially, for the Sydney Jewish Museum?

SANDY HOLLIS: We're talking about year 5 and 6, so bringing it just into primary school, where the focus of the program is not Holocaust. The focus of the program is immigration, which is a large part of their social studies syllabus. There also elements of the PDHPE syllabus that deals with leadership and empathy. We would zone in on those two.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: How would you be doing that with the Sydney Jewish Museum and the programs you'd be operating?

SANDY HOLLIS: What we do at the moment on a much smaller scale is we focus on a few of our survivors who came to Australia. We focus on why they left their countries—again, not touching very deeply on the Holocaust but talking about discrimination and racism—and then coming to Australia and how Australia welcomed them.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So trying to promote a social cohesion kind of argument at that stage. We've got the great legacy of Eddie Jaku and *The Happiest Man on Earth*, and even some of the great survivors as well. I've got to say, every time I've ever met with a Holocaust survivor, the story is one of optimism and a shared humanity rather than one of resentment and anger. I imagine they may form part of those stories as well.

SANDY HOLLIS: We have about 32 survivors who are still able to come and work with us at the museum. Without exception, every one of them talks about tolerance, the importance of democracy and the importance of understanding, and shows remarkable resilience and empathy. That is what we focus on.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Pinczewski, turning back to the requests that were made to the New South Wales police when it came to the demonstrations occurring at Hyde Park, I understand from your submission and from what you've outlined to the Committee that there was not an inclination to look at alternative sites. Were there any assurances at all given to the synagogue about the security that you would receive with them being continued to be hosted at Hyde Park?

JACK PINCZEWSKI: I should probably start by saying that the work of the New South Wales police—rank and file and command—has been very good in providing us support. The event, in terms of a banner being paraded past the synagogue, took place in the first week that the police were no longer present. The reason why the synagogue was, we believe, targeted was because it was the first week that there was no physical police presence. Police were very good. We met with Government after that, and police returned to the synagogue to prevent recurrences.

We understand that police are in a bit of a situation here. We don't cavil with this, necessarily. You're able to protest in a park. You don't require a form 1, necessarily. You're not necessarily blocking physical traffic, although you might be blocking foot traffic. But we would have said that the better way to do this, to deconflict it and to ensure that we as a community can continue to worship and gather unimpeded, without the potential threat of visibly Jewish congregants arriving and protesters arriving at the same location, or what is essentially the same location, would have been to recommend removal to any number of other parks in Sydney's CBD. It would be a question for the organisers of the protests why they persist in the Archibald fountain. I don't know if there's some sort of special significance of the fountain. It would be a matter for them. I don't really cavil with the response of police, who I think are bound by the law as much as we are, and as much as anyone else.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: You used that terminology of deconflict. Essentially what has occurred is that you have vacated the space in certain times when protests are occurring to ensure that deconflicting. Is that the case?

BENJAMIN ELTON: That's right. The bat mitzvah was relocated, and we closed down the post-service refreshments early so everyone was out of the building before any protesters came past in order to prevent conflict. We were the ones who had to leave and get out of the way.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: I don't want to cut across another inquiry that's looking into this, but I think it would be remiss of us not to ask about the caravan incident because you were a target in that. It has been ruled

out as an act of terrorism, but is it still, in your view, an act of antisemitism? I was wondering if you could expand on what that was like for you and your congregants at The Great Synagogue.

BENJAMIN ELTON: It was obviously terrifying as information leaked out slowly that there was this potential, as it was described then, mass casualty event and the synagogue and the museum were the two targets of that. That, in its effect, clearly and predictably would be to terrorise and terrify the Jewish community. How can it be anything other than antisemitic?

JACK PINCZEWSKI: It's one of those things where obviously there needs to be a political, religious or ideological intent for it to be a terrorist act. In this case, the intent might not have been to do that exactly. The ends were not to terrify Jews, but the means were to terrify Jews. The ends were for whoever he is in Türkiye to negotiate with police on his bail, and the means by which he was going to do that was to terrify the Jewish community sufficiently to encourage them to act. How is that any less antisemitic than an attack? Ask yourself, if it were the case that multiple car fire bombings, graffiti attacks and attacks on synagogues were not sufficient, how much further would he have gone to convince police that he was someone who could resolve the seemingly endless attacks on Jewish people. That's what he was intending on doing. He very likely would have encouraged them to escalate it even further. I know there are some of your colleagues who have said that the attacks are not antisemitic. I don't take that at face value. I think it might have been a question of whether or not it was a terrorist event. They were definitely antisemitic in effect and in intention.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming today and giving us evidence.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Short adjournment)

Ms STEPHANIE CUNIO, Founder, Jewish Women 4 Peace Action Ready Group, affirmed and examined

Ms CORINNE FAGUERET, Co-Chair, Jewish Women 4 Peace Action Ready Group, affirmed and examined

Dr JANICE CAULFIELD, Founding Member, Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace, sworn and examined

Dr BUSHRA OTHMAN, Spokesperson, Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Would any of you like to make an opening statement? Maybe one from each organisation?

JANICE CAULFIELD: On behalf of our group, the Coalition of Women for Justice and Peace, Dr Bushra Othman and I thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak and provide evidence. We come today with a deep commitment to justice and a firm opposition to all forms of racism. But this inquiry, in both scope and framing, is troubling. It is built on a contested definition of antisemitism that risks conflating legitimate political expression with racial hatred. This conflation is not just intellectually dishonest; it is dangerous. It stifles dissent and delegitimises advocacy and our democratic right to speak out against grave injustices, including those unfolding in Palestine.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: I might just complete the rest of the opening statement. Ensuring a society that exhibits values of shared dignity and respect cannot be achieved through censorship or repression. It must be built on equal justice. Antisemitism is real, but it is one symptom of a broader disease, a system that normalises racism, dehumanisation and selective outrage. We ask why is this Parliament exceptionalising one form of racism while others, like Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian bigotry, anti-black racism and the ongoing vilification of First Nations people, go unexamined? The truth is the tension we see in our society is not borne from hatred between communities. It is born from a growing public consciousness of injustice. People are seeing with clarity the double standards, including our Government's failure to uphold its obligations under international law and selective commitment to justice. This has led to the erosion of public trust and led to confusion, anger and fear, as the consequences of this governmental failure to uphold justice gives legitimisation, at a State level, that not all lives are deserving of the same rights under law. We urge this Committee to reaffirm that human rights, calling out injustice and political advocacy are not threats to harmony; they are the foundation of it. Thank you.

STEPHANIE CUNIO: Thank you to the Committee. I want to acknowledge I'm on Gadigal land. I'm a Sephardi Jewish woman who's lived on Gadigal and Bidjigal land my whole life. My experiences of racism were mainly as a kid and mainly because of the colour of my skin. And, honestly, I hadn't experienced racism for decades until post 7 October 2023. Soon after, the fragility of that experience became evident. And that's how Corinne and I met. We were both working for climate organisations, and we were struggling to hold the duality of the massacre that had happened to our people in Israel and the knowledge that Netanyahu was going to respond in a very violent way that would result in many, many deaths. So we met that way. And I founded Jewish Women 4 Peace. The action-ready group is the kind of activist arm.

Our aims are pretty simple. We'd like the war to stop. We want the hostages to be returned, and we want a just peace where Israelis and Palestinians can live in safety. Of course, it became very evident that that polarity and that duality was going to be very difficult to deal with. Very quickly in our mainstream community, it became difficult for people like me that wanted to speak out about Gaza. This has come to the extent that I want to name it what it is. We've talked about this in our submission. It is lateral violence. There is a situation where people that would like to speak out cannot. They fear losing their jobs. There's splits in their families. They fear having to move their kids out of Jewish day schools if they speak out about human rights and the deaths that are occurring. This is despicable, and it is lateral violence.

Finally, I want to make a point about a familial experience of racism. My cousin's daughter did a netball trial about a year ago in South Sydney. As she was in her first game, big sign "No blacks or Jews"—graffiti. This 11-year-old girl had to look at this. This was dreadful for her. A few weeks later, outside her Jewish day school, there was Jew hate graffiti. We're dealing with that, as are many Jewish families, as are many other families in New South Wales, of Muslim descent, of Palestinian descent, and First Nations families, because it is all racism. So I want to say what the others have said. It is a form of racism, and isolating antisemitism as a special form of racism is not helpful. We have avenues like the Human Rights Commission to deal with racism. Thank you.

CORINNE FAGUERET: I'll complete our statement by mentioning two other points in our submissions, which we feel are very important. One is the danger of conflating anti-Israel criticism with antisemitism. I was really interested to hear your questions that were quite detailed on that topic. My personal history is as a descendant of the Holocaust. I'm very familiar with intergenerational trauma that comes from that. I've also spent a lot of time in Israel and been very concerned about the actions of the Israeli Government towards Palestinians for many decades. No human being, Jewish or not Jewish, is exempt from the risk of extremism, of racism, of supremacist ideology. We must retain the right to criticise the actions of Israel. This is really important.

The other really important thing to consider here is that freedom of speech is an incredibly important Western value—not only Western, but also Western—and an important value in Australia. We must protect it because it is a fundamental component of our democracy. My last point will relate to my personal experience. Since October 7 I have made a big effort to reach out to Palestinian people—Muslims and Christian—and through that I have made a big effort to listen to somebody else's perspective. I think, and our group thinks, this is an absolutely fundamental component of social cohesion. Thank you.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I was wondering if any of you have been participants in the weekly protest movement that's been occurring. If you have been , and even if you haven't been, because I'm sure you're aware of it, are you able to talk to us about whether you think that protest movement has been antisemitic, either in whole or in part? What would be your response to suggestions that it's a hate movement or inherently antisemitic? Maybe starting with you, Corinne.

CORINNE FAGUERET: I haven't been to those protests, mainly because they clash with other things I'm doing and I'm contributing in other ways. At the beginning, I have to say that, as a Jewish person, I would've felt uncomfortable going. That is because some of the messages and the language used is very confronting to Jewish people. I know many people, Palestinian and Jewish, who attend these protests, and all of them have told me that there is a concerted effort at those protests to ban any sort of antisemitic rhetoric. Now, I would comfortably go.

STEPHANIE CUNIO: I haven't been to the weekly ones but I spent quite a bit of time at the Sydney Uni encampment. I made myself go there knowing it would be uncomfortable to do so as a Jewish person, but I wanted to understand. I was invited spontaneously to speak at an action rally there and I spoke about the same kind of things I'm going to speak about today. I was welcomed by them but I found it uncomfortable because I'm a Jewish person and it's uncomfortable to feel complicit. That's what you feel like when you're a Jewish person that lives in Australia. You feel complicit in the actions of the Netanyahu Government. You feel like you're doing everything you can, by the work we're doing. So it was uncomfortable, but being uncomfortable is not experiencing antisemitism or racism. They are distinct things. I want to make that point.

JANICE CAULFIELD: Yes, I do go. They are very peaceful marches. We call them peace marches. It's wonderful to hear the responses from the Jewish women sitting to the left of me, because we know that a lot of people of the Jewish faith do attend these marches. They have become our friends. I have Jewish friends—I've had a lifetime Jewish friends—but we know it's a double burden for them, those ones that speak out against the Israeli Government. The suggestion that speaking out against the Israeli Government and its genocidal policies is in any way antisemitic is wrongheaded, I think.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: My final point would be to say, yes, I have attended some of the protests. I'm originally from Melbourne so I've been to some there, and I also have been to some of the ones in Sydney. I think part of your question really should be to understand why people feel the need to actually protest and get out onto the streets. It's an expression about the systemic torture and killing and genocidal policies, as Janice mentioned, about what's happening in Gaza. But more than that, it has nothing to do about any specific faith or religious orientation. In fact, the people who attend the weekly protests reflect all forms of Australian society. Our coalition is representative of women across all walks of life from all different backgrounds, and many of them attend the weekly protests. Again, it's that conflation of saying that criticising the Israeli state and what it's doing currently in Gaza is antisemitic that is inherently wrong.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: My last question, in the interests of time, is for you, Dr Othman. We live in a world of nation states, and chauvinism exists between states. I'm sure if you went to Ukraine at the moment, you'd meet a lot of people who don't like Russia and are probably saying things about Russia. We also live in a world where there is virulent antisemitism, and obviously the Holocaust is the example par excellence of that. Can you talk about how do we, as a committee, understand the difference between, for example, some chauvinism that maybe some Arab people might feel towards Israel, maybe particularly Arab youth, who might express it? How do we understand the difference between mere chauvinism, if I can put it that way—not to downplay it—between those forms of expression and actual harmful antisemitism when we're thinking about this issue of Israel and events in the Middle East?

BUSHRA OTHMAN: For clarification, could you give me an example of what you mean by chauvinism that could be represented by Arab youth?

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: For example, you might have a view in certain parts of the Arab community that's very hostile towards Israel. You might, for example, at a protest hear people yelling out "F Israel. F Israel." I want to understand what your view is about the line between perhaps chauvinism and antisemitism. At what point is it antisemitism? At what point is it something else? That might be something ranging from legitimate political expression through to chauvinism against Israelis or Israel.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: For me, antisemitism falls under the umbrella term of racism, as each of us have elaborated on already, so it doesn't equate for me to actually put chauvinism and antisemitism in the same bracket. I think part of what you might be referring to is certain people using certain language that might criticise the State of Israel, which is completely separate to criticism of religious faith in terms of Judaism and people who are of that faith. So again, this is about a government and what it's doing currently in Gaza and the West Bank across Palestine, and people feeling that it's our democratic right to criticise a state based on its actions. That in no way has any relationship to chauvinism and it needs to be separated from that.

I'm a general surgeon. I've been a doctor for 15 years. I've spent nine weeks now in total on medical missions to Gaza throughout 2024 and the early part of this year so I have firsthand experience—what I've witnessed on the ground there—in terms of the crimes against humanity, the grave injustices, the systemic oppression, the torture of healthcare workers and the bombing of every single hospital on the ground. For me, it's relevant that anyone, particularly in the healthcare field, would feel the right to be able to speak up and criticise Israel against its actions. I don't see a relationship between that chauvinism and antisemitism.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: But do you accept, for example, that it's sometimes part of human nature to generalise and stereotype, and that there are people out there who might have an entirely understandable adverse view of Israel and that might, on occasion, spill into maybe judging Israelis as a whole as being responsible for that? That would be, I think, not acceptable because it's judging an individual according to the actions of the state. But, I wonder, at what point does that view, or expression of that view, cease being a lesser form of racism, if you like, and becoming actual antisemitism, which seems to be a phenomena that is deeply rooted in history and is particularly virulent and harmful.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: Again, maybe I'm approaching the question differently to what you're trying to understand but, for me, I don't see the equation. I think that criticising the state is separate to actual antisemitism. I don't see a relationship between those two things. It would be like picking an example of one particular Australian politician and saying that that's a representation of every single view that every Australian would have, and that's incorrect. Again, one individual is not a representation of the whole, so critique needs to be directed at the state for accountability and justice to occur. I can't take responsibility or explain the actions of a few who might be able to equate or say things that could be antisemitic but, again, we would be against all forms of racism, no matter to whom, or said by whom.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I suppose what I'm saying is, is there a difference between anti-Israel racism and antisemitism? I might go to the other side.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: Yes.

STEPHANIE CUNIO: Yes, would I be able to give a quick example? People might recall the day that the motorcade came from Lakemba to Coogee. I live in Coogee and I could not resist walking down with my German shepherd by my side, as one does. I walked past these two young guys and one of them said, "Fuck the Jews." I'm sorry to use that word. That is antisemitism. That is racial hatred but if they had said, "F what the State of Israel is doing," that is not racial hatred.

CORINNE FAGUERET: I might add to that to say, for me, and I think for many Jews, I can distinguish between "Fuck Israel" and "Fuck the Jews" but I won't say that "Fuck Israel" doesn't create discomfort. It does but, rationally, I understand the difference, and I would not call it antisemitic. I would probe, if I can.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Is that even though it might be imputing to individuals some sort of wholesale responsibility for the acts of Israel? So you would draw a distinction between that and antisemitism?

CORINNE FAGUERET: Absolutely.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Thank you very much for those answers. I appreciate it.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Just a quick follow-up question. I just wondered if you can expand on this. In your submissions, you're quite critical of the IHRA definition because it conflates those issues. It says that in some circumstances criticism of the State of Israel can be antisemitic. I just wonder if you could quickly expand on that and say what your issue is with that definition.

CORINNE FAGUERET: Is that addressed to a particular group?

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Any of you.

CORINNE FAGUERET: Okay. Well, I'll start then. Look, it's not our analysis. Many, many scholars have criticised that definition because it poses some risks to freedom of speech in that it conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism. That is a very dangerous path to go on. In reaction to that definition, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, which was signed by, I think, over 350 scholars, deals with that issue by making a

space for criticising Israel without being accused of antisemitism. We think that's a much better definition. I'll just add that I work in the NGO sector and that I have come across many NGOs that are worried about speaking out about what's happening in Gaza because they are worried about being accused of antisemitism. That is not a good situation.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: In a sense, that definition is stifling the human rights debate about the conduct of the State of Israel.

CORINNE FAGUERET: In my opinion, yes.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Good morning. Just moving to recommendations about the way forward from here, both for the community and for the State Government, to what extent should the Government be taking action specifically on the issue of antisemitism in isolation versus a broader anti-racist or human rights approach?

STEPHANIE CUNIO: Not at all. As Jewish, we, Action Ready, were prepared, and made it really clear in our recommendations and in our submission that we think this is dangerous. We think it can fuel antisemitism by having a focus on racial hatred towards one group to the exclusion of others, and at the same time as there were race incidents of antisemitism, they are of course race incidents of Islamophobia. Let's not forget that every one of our First Nations brothers, sisters and others experiences racism every day when they get out of bed in nearly every action they take in this world.

Isolating in that way is not helpful. It doesn't help us as Jews. It allowed—I won't go there. It's not helpful for us as Jews and it really needs to be looked at broadly. It also isolates us. We've had a lot of problems with social cohesion between Jews and Muslims and Palestinians in Australia, and isolating it doesn't help. We should be standing together, talking about our experiences of racism and how we don't want—even though we've all got very deep feelings about Israel and Palestine—those things to spill into Australian society.

CORINNE FAGUERET: May I add to that as well that people who are antisemitic are also often anti-black and anti this or that, and if you look at the Holocaust it wasn't just the Jews that were targeted, so there's a commonality there.

JANICE CAULFIELD: Can I just say something that we actually wrote in our notes but we didn't mention because we wanted to ask the Committee why this Parliament is exceptionalising one form of racism while others, like Islamophobia, anti-Palestinian bigotry, anti-black racism and ongoing vilification of First Nations people go unexamined?

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I think it's because the terms of reference got passed at a certain time.

Dr AMANDA COHN: If I could, Chair, ask some more questions specifically to the Jewish Women 4 Peace Action Ready Group. I just want to give you the opportunity to respond. We had some evidence this morning from the Australian Jewish Association that we would be hearing later today from Jewish organisations that are newer or fringe—those were their words, not mine—and you are a newer organisation. I want to give you the opportunity to speak to why you felt the need to form a group more recently and, I suppose, to respond to those allegations.

STEPHANIE CUNIO: Thank you, and I will take that. I think it's in our submission—it was in my opening—I founded Jewish Women 4 Peace because I knew that there would be a whole bunch of women like me that would feel isolated. Our group has everything from rabbis' wives to far-left people—far to the left of me, our wide Jewish Women 4 Peace group. Those people are not in the Action Ready group because of the lateral violence in our community. They look at the chat. They reach out to me one on one, and I would never name those people here or anywhere because I understand why.

To be called a fringe is despicable to me when there are people like rabbis' wives that will speak out quietly because nobody likes killing and murder, and everybody in our group values every life the same. Whether it's disputed 30,000 or 50,000 Palestinians, if it matters, but so many people have died. When we still have hostages who have not been returned, all of those lives matter—every single life matters—so we are not fringe. Our Jewish values are not fringe. I go to synagogue once a month to the Emanuel Synagogue. There are other people here who are members. My son had his bar mitzvah two years ago. My 100-year-old uncle was the Chair of the Sephardi Synagogue—one of the founders. We just celebrated his hundredth birthday there, so I dispute being called a fringe. I call that antisemitism and I call that lateral violence.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I have a couple of more questions, if the Opposition doesn't.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: On that line of questioning, how many members does your organisation have?

STEPHANIE CUNIO: We have 80 members in the chat group and in the Action Ready group we have about 18 to 20.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: I will not answer the question that you asked us before, but counter with a question to both groups. From what we've seen in the media—and the impetus for this inquiry is that the level of antisemitism in New South Wales has reached a crisis point when you look at the vandalism, the torching of cars, the torching of a childcare centre. It is at a level that is absolutely reprehensible. Do you not agree that, of course, while there are huge problems out there when it comes to Islamophobia and racism, antisemitism now is at this crisis point that needs special attention?

JANICE CAULFIELD: I'd like to answer that. This alleged wave of Jew hatred, we now know, thanks to police investigations, has been created by criminals for hire. The cars that have been burnt outside Jewish homes—the stolen cars—these criminals for hire, according to the Federal Police, are being paid in cryptocurrency by overseas actors. This is very worrying—very troubling indeed—and it really does undermine trust in procedures like this and, in fact, the knee-jerk reaction. We know, for example, the Dural caravan incident. The police knew. The Deputy Commissioner admits that he knew. He smelt a rat early on, but he couldn't say anything until they had the evidence that it was indeed a hoax, and yet there was a knee-jerk reaction and the introduction of legislation that was all about criminalising hate speech.

The CHAIR: Ms Caulfield, who would you posit the overseas actors to be?

JANICE CAULFIELD: I don't know. I wish the police could find out, but if they're paid in cryptocurrency, it's very difficult to trace the original source, apparently.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: Could I add something to that? Again, what you've described in terms of those examples of incidences are horrible and horrendous. We would never want anyone within our communities or society to feel like they were being unilaterally targeted because of their faith or their religious observation, or anything like that. It's interesting that you've mentioned that we've reached a crisis point, so I don't really know what the threshold for that has been determined to be.

Islamophobia register has had over 900 submissions of attacks against people who have reported that from the Muslim faith. I, as a visibly Muslim woman, like many other New South Wales visibly Muslim women, have been attacked out in shopping centres and have had their head scarves ripped off and have had racial slurs put against them. Again, I would say to you: Why do we feel the need to exceptionalise one particular group when there is a variety of thresholds of incidences that we've reached across the board, across many different communities and societies? These are all symptoms. The disease here is actually the overlying system that doesn't address racism. I think that's a government responsibility. Seeing individuals act in certain ways that are reprehensible or horrendous is just a symptom of the overlying disease that we're not addressing.

The CHAIR: Dr Othman, what amendments to the anti-racism laws would you posit to fix that?

BUSHRA OTHMAN: I suppose I'm not well versed in the anti-racism laws. What I would hope is that our Government takes a principled, moral and ethical stand to say that all racism needs to be addressed without exceptionalising one particular point. I'm not an expert. I'm a doctor; I'm a surgeon. I know how to treat diseases and symptoms. I raise our views as a spokesperson for our coalition that is representative of a wider Australian community. Part of the reason that we're seeing these symptoms develop is a response to what we're witnessing. Someone mentioned what we're witnessing on our phones about what's occurring overseas. That's reflected in our Australian society. There's systemic injustice and international laws not being upheld. We're not seeing our Government commit to our obligations. If we saw that there was moral leadership from our Government, I think the community would follow along with that.

The CHAIR: Those are Federal issues, not State issues.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: But what's reflected with—

The CHAIR: How do you posit we fix it here? Are you saying there's an equivalence between the antisemitism displayed on 9 October 2023 and someone saying bad things about Islamic people? Is there an equivalence in that?

BUSHRA OTHMAN: I'm not certain that I want to get into the specifics of the certain types of incidents.

The CHAIR: But that's one of the reasons why we're here—to talk about these things.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: I don't want to necessarily comment on the moral equivalence. There are all the actions that I wouldn't want anyone to have any of those actions be displayed against them. From a State level,

what this inquiry is suggesting is that there's a conflation between what are true antisemitic incidences and the reasons for why those are occurring.

The CHAIR: I need to correct you there. We're not saying anything; we're inquiring. We have terms of reference and we're asking for evidence so that we can try to work out what our recommendations might be. We don't have a position in relation to any of this.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: I apologise. I suppose what I was trying to reiterate—

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I think the terms of reference might suggest otherwise.

The CHAIR: The terms of reference suggest that we are looking into antisemitism.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Point of order: There are some assumptions in there. I think the witness is having something put to her that, on a fair interpretation of the terms of reference, is a bit unsustainable.

The CHAIR: We won't get into a debate on the terms of reference right now. What I'm saying is that if you want to put a position in relation to that, I think you should try to support it. That's what I'm saying.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: Support which part exactly?

The CHAIR: The position you're putting. You're saying that there's an equivalence between what happened on 9 October and someone displaying overt Islamophobia at a micro level.

BUSHRA OTHMAN: I don't necessarily want to take up all the time talking about that. I personally think some of the incidents that have occurred have been abhorrent. I'm sure there are numerous other attacks and incidents that have occurred across New South Wales that would be equally abhorrent against other communities and other individuals. I'll leave it at that.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Ms Cunio, you outlined in your opening submission the racism you had experienced as a younger girl on the basis of the colour of your skin, and then you said you hadn't experienced racism until October 7. There obviously has been a rise—whether you use the term "antisemitism" or you use the term "racism"—in racist incidents following that point in time. When did you first experience issues following October 7? How quickly did you feel the change, so to speak?

STEPHANIE CUNIO: Very quickly. The atmosphere changed overnight. Immediately, my mind called it racism, because that's the way I situate antisemitism. It was happening sort of subtly. I had to leave chat groups. I had to leave a climate justice chat group that I had founded. It was my discomfort. It was the language. Israel's disproportionate response was so full-on that people who work in the justice movement lost their s-h-i-t. I see that now. But as a Jew that hadn't experienced racism and that had been supporting a lot of younger migrant women who were experiencing racism, that was deeply difficult for me. Initially, it was language. I work for a trade union. I was on the board of two organisations. It was language in comms. I reached out one on one to people about how that language could be adapted, because I understood their legitimate criticisms of the actions of the State of Israel but that as a Jewish person in Sydney, I'm not responsible. Those one on ones went very well. It took me a few days to recover.

I spoke about the incident at Coogee. I spoke about the incident and my cousin's daughter. I'm a Jew. I lived in Sydney. I don't care whether it was a hoax or not; it was horrible. This feeling of that rise of these racial hatred incidents towards Jewish people was horrible, but my first thought was, "That's what my Aboriginal brothers and sisters go through all the time." I reached out to all my First Nations people. I reached out to one Palestinian colleague. This is actually what they're going through. I am now experiencing what they're going through—that kind of fear of where does this go? I'm not denying it. I'm saying it sits within a broader context of racial hatred. I don't really understand what is useful about isolating antisemitism. I understand the history of the Holocaust and the definition. I went to Dachau last year, I would like to say. It was horrendous. But you know what the visit reminded me of? It wasn't just us; it was everybody. If you were homosexual, forget it. If you had a disability, you were culled. If you couldn't hear properly and you were a child and you were white, you were culled in a hospital. It happens.

JANICE CAULFIELD: And if you were a Gypsy as well. Three million Gypsies.

STEPHANIE CUNIO: That's right. Just a quick story: My daughter is a young bisexual woman of Gypsy and Jewish descent. Do you know what she said to me? She said, "Mum, I would've been a goner. I'm bisexual. I have Gypsy on one side and Jewish descent on the other." I said, "It's okay. Only men went to Dachau. But certainly if you went to the others, it would've been the end of you." I understand why we have this focus on it, but it is racism. We need to stand together with others and address racism together, not in isolation.

CORINNE FAGUERET: I want to add to that as well. Think about the benefits to social cohesion of actually treating that as a broader issue with racism and getting different communities working together on addressing that, rather than just focusing on antisemitism.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Ms Cunio, one thing you said that I thought could be instructive for the Committee as we look further forward is that distinction in terms of the conversations you had and how we could extrapolate potentially on a broader basis—those conversations you had with people where you could say something appropriate that might be critical of the State of Israel or critical of the actions of the Israeli Government but were not critical of an individual person. As a Jewish person, I was wondering what you could share with the Committee on that basis.

STEPHANIE CUNIO: I think it's always the value of relational dialogue, right? It's when you sit down one on one with somebody and you actually learn to understand them and where they're coming from. To go into those conversations, I started by saying, "It made me uncomfortable. Could we have a conversation?" And then you start by finding out why that person feels so strongly about Palestine and what motivates them to care so deeply. And then they can find out what motivates me to care so deeply about racism full stop. Then we can find common ground. If we're defensive towards each other, we don't learn. You all know that. You're parliamentarians.

What we say in our submission—and I'm sure other groups have said the same; I haven't read them all—is that we believe the way forward is for the Government to fund and create the conditions for that kind of relational dialogue, both internal within our community and within other communities. I know that it's really hard for some Palestinian people to speak out about peace as well. We need to have relational conversations. We need to meet one on one. We need to form those bonds with each other, human to human. That is the way we move forward, not in a defensive way.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Returning to the topic of the IHRA definition of "antisemitism", in summary, a part of that guide or standard talks about criticism of Israel not being antisemitism, except if it crosses into certain ideas. One of them that is singled out is the "elimination of Israel". That's one of the ambiguities that has been an issue of controversy, because some people might say that advocating for a one-state solution is to advocate for the elimination of Israel. I'm just interested in your thoughts on that ambiguity and your thoughts on whether advocating for a one-state solution to this vexed issue is, by definition, some form of antisemitism.

CORINNE FAGUERET: I have a very clear-cut answer. I don't consider advocacy for a one-state solution as antisemitic.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: In terms of the IHRA definition, would you interpret the words "elimination of Israel" to include advocacy for a one-state solution?

CORINNE FAGUERET: Not necessarily. With regard to the one-state solution, which obviously would make it impossible for Israel to be a Jewish state, as such, I don't think that's antisemitic. I think it has got nothing to do with antisemitism. Whether you agree with it or not is a different issue. If you're asking me, as a Jewish person, whether I think someone who proposes a one-state solution is being antisemitic, my answer is very clear-cut—no.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Another boundary line, if I can put it that way, that is talked about is that you can criticise Israel but you can't oppose the self-determination of the Jewish people. I take that to mean the existence of Israel as well, but it's perhaps a bit ambiguous what that means. Ms Cunio, can you shed any light on what this concept of the self-determination of the Jewish people means to you in terms of the continued existence of Israel?

STEPHANIE CUNIO: Yes. Here we come to the crux of it. The language "elimination of Israel" makes me uncomfortable, but "one-state solution" doesn't make me uncomfortable. As a Jewish person, we know why the state of modern Israel was created. All of our history tells us about the holy land and our relationship with the land. I understand all that. Other people also have a relationship to the land. As a Jewish person, I don't feel threatened by that idea. First of all, I don't live in Israel and I don't live in Palestine. I want to acknowledge that. But I don't feel threatened by that in any way. I would feel that I could go to Israel or Palestine or whatever it was called and be there and hopefully would have citizenship if I wanted to, regardless. Those are not questions we can answer here because we're not down the track with that.

But I do want to say one thing about the language "the river to the sea". This has been big language in the weekly protest movements. It was big language when I was at the encampment. That language can make you feel uncomfortable because it can make you feel like—and I am not suggesting for a minute that the people that are chanting that are meaning "let's kill every Israeli" or every migrant to Israel, but it can feel like it means that.

I know there are many in my community that are deeply uncomfortable with the chant "from the river to the sea", but I want to just say that I don't believe that most people chanting it are actually saying that. What they're talking about is having the ability to be on land that they have a relationship with.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: To expand upon the question for you, Ms Caulfield, it seems to me that "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" might have an ambiguity to it in the same way that calling for the elimination of Israel might have an ambiguity to it, in the same way that the meaning of "the self-determination of the Jewish people" might have an ambiguity to it, in terms of what it means vis-a-vis Israel. Is it your view that anyone who adopts the IHRA definition should maybe, in doing so, address that ambiguity and state a position on those issues, lest it apply in a way that is actually pernicious?

JANICE CAULFIELD: Yes, I think definitely. This definition that's being proposed is very concerning because of those very serious issues around self-determination and "from the river to the sea". In the Likud party platform—"from the river to the sea" is in the Likud party platform. The Israeli Government wants the land from the river to the sea.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I think that's becoming increasingly clear.

JANICE CAULFIELD: Yes, this is why we've got this ethnic cleansing that's going on. In terms of self-determination, again, I would say that we need to bear in mind that the Palestinians have a right to self-determination. There a two sides here. Everybody does. I agree with my Jewish sisters here because the one-state solution, in my mind too, is a very good solution to the problem. Of course, it wouldn't be a Jewish state, but Jews and Arabs lived quite well together historically in these Middle Eastern lands. This has just been a problem that has arisen from the creation of the State of Israel. But Jews rightly do have a historical association with the land going back, of course, 2000 years, whereas Palestinians have a historical association with the same land going back 4000 years, I think. These are just numbers, but the principle is the same: Everybody has a right to self-determination and everybody has a right to share that land.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: And you, Ms Othman? Have you got any thoughts on that?

BUSHRA OTHMAN: I'd echo what has been said before. There is definite ambiguity between members of society and community about what those slogans and those phrases mean—what you said. I think the important part to reflect on here is that society over there comprises lots of different people, not just of the Jewish faith but of Christian and Muslim faith and all different types of communities. That slogan "from the river to the sea" is advocating against occupation and for all humans who live in that land to have basic human rights that we would expect for anyone, anywhere. The discussions about whether the IHRA take and adopt a definition to look at the one-state solution or the State of Israel and that conflation—I think it's important just to draw the distinction that we would advocate that all humans there have the same rights that we would expect for everyone here and that there shouldn't be that conflation between antisemitism and the State of Israel.

The CHAIR: We have come to the end of questioning. Thank you very much for coming today.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Ms LYNDALL KATZ, Member, Sydney Friends of Standing Together, affirmed and examined

Ms ANITA SCHWARTZ, Membership Coordinator, Sydney Friends of Standing Together, affirmed and examined

Ms CATHY PETERS, Community Member, Jewish Voices of Inner Sydney, affirmed and examined

Mr BART SHTEINMAN, Community Member, Jewish Voices of Inner Sydney, affirmed and examined

Mr TAVEET SINANIAN, Tzedek Member, the Tzedek Collective, affirmed and examined

Ms SHULAMIT KIROVSKY, Tzedek Member, the Tzedek Collective, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: We have three separate organisations here. Individually, if you would like to make a short opening statement of no more than two minutes, that would be good.

LYNDALL KATZ: First, I appreciate the inquiry. It's important, particularly within the overall picture of how discrimination works in our society. Sydney Friends of Standing Together is a diverse group of Jewish, Palestinian and other Australians, along with a lot of other Friends of Standing Together, which support Standing Together in Israel, which is Palestinian and Jewish activists who want to see something different. What we do is support that here. I'll ask Anita to do a more detailed introduction to the organisation that we are both here for, and I may say something at the end after she's finished.

ANITA SCHWARTZ: Thank you for asking us to speak at this inquiry. Standing Together is a progressive grassroots movement organising Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel for a shared future of peace, full equality and social justice, and against the occupation. Sydney Friends of Standing Together is a group in solidarity with Standing Together. We are Jews, Muslims, Palestinians and other Australians with diverse perspectives and beliefs committed to fostering dialogue even in the face of disagreement. Antisemitism has a long, complex history spanning thousands of years. According to the *Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism*, antisemitism has distinctive features, such as conspiracy theories, but fighting it is inseparable from fighting all forms of discrimination. It also says evidence-based criticism of Israel may be contentious, but it is not antisemitic.

In New South Wales, since the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel and Israel's response and current campaign of annihilation in Gaza, reported antisemitism has risen dramatically. Public discourse on Israeli policies has become violent, hateful, dehumanising and polarising. People don't listen to each other. They fall back on rigid ideologies and conflicting historical narratives perpetrated in echo chambers. Antisemitism is now conflated with criticism of Israel. Jews are conflated with Israelis or Zionists. Palestinians are conflated with Hamas. The anguish of Jewish and Palestinian communities is politicised from all sides. Who even knows what "Zionist" means? Does "the river to the sea" mean mass murder of Jews or one democratic State? When Jews call other Jews "Nazi collaborators", is that antisemitism, hate speech or free speech?

While we must clarify what is or isn't antisemitic, claims of antisemitism should not be dismissed lightly. The lived experience of antisemitism and all racism must be respected and taken seriously. Focusing solely on one type of racism risks alienating other communities and exacerbating polarisation. New South Wales can only combat antisemitism by combating all types of racism. An effective response to antisemitism requires ongoing, inclusive, cross-cultural, collaborative and responsible leadership, nuanced conversations, and a workable definition of antisemitism which supports freedom of speech and cultural expression.

LYNDALL KATZ: May I just add one piece?

The CHAIR: You've had your two minutes—otherwise, we chop into everyone else's time. Sorry.

LYNDALL KATZ: Fair enough.

CATHY PETERS: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Committee. I'd like to acknowledge that we meet here on Gadigal land—land never ceded by First Nations people, who have survived despite the ongoing and brutal colonisation of their lands, which is what Palestinians are experiencing to this day. I'm a secular, Jewish, pro-Palestine advocate. I'm an anti-Zionist. I'm the daughter of a Holocaust survivor who was arrested and put in the German concentration camp Buchenwald on Kristallnacht. He was a non-Zionist. He was not a supporter of Israel. His parents were not supporters of Israel, and they worked hard to get him out of Germany to a Commonwealth country. They chose not to go to Palestine. That's a little bit of background about me. I have a long experience in advocating for Palestinian rights.

I think the thing that's come up a lot in the proceedings today is the definition of antisemitism, and yet it is absolutely crucial to this inquiry. We've talked about the IHRA and the criticisms of the IHRA. I'd like to draw your attention to Geoffrey Robertson, QC's definition, who in 2018 described the IHRA as not fit for purpose. He

criticised that its definition would be used mistakenly to defame criticisms of Israel by branding them as antisemitic. The recently advanced Australian universities definition of antisemitism has also been roundly criticised for the same sorts of things—for the chilling effect on free speech and legitimate criticism of a state which is in grave breach of international law.

International law has not been discussed here much, but in fact that is the issue with Israel. That is why there is such a huge outrage in this country—because international law has been absolutely trashed by the State of Israel. Amnesty International has said that the Australian universities definition dangerously conflates legitimate criticism of Israel and Zionism with antisemitism, and it represses student rights and freedom of expression—rights that are protected under articles 19 and 20 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

Not to take too much time from Bart, who will actually give more indication about this group that I'm a member of, we have talked about Islamophobia; we haven't talked about the fact that there's been a 250 per cent increase in Islamophobic attacks in the last 12 months. Yes, I agree that antisemitism is real, but I am very concerned that we cannot address all the racism in this country—and, as someone has already said, the racism against First Nations people—by doing it in isolation. Antisemitism is not exceptional. It exists, but other forms of racism in this country are equally important and must be addressed in the same context.

BART SHTEINMAN: I would also like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet. I am here, together with Cathy, representing our community group, Jewish Voices of Inner Sydney. Our group came together last year because we felt that the established Jewish representative bodies in New South Wales were failing to reflect the full diversity of opinion in the Jewish community, particularly with respect to Israel's policies towards the Palestinian people, but also how Australia should respond. Over the past six months we have met with representatives at every level of government and across partisan lines to discuss how best to combat antisemitism.

Speaking for myself, I grew up in the heart of Sydney's Jewish community. I spent 12 years in Jewish schools. I attended the University of Sydney, which, in my experience, was a wonderful institution to attend as a Jewish student. In part, that was because it challenged me to question my ideas and learn from those with different lived experiences. In that time, I helped run interfaith programs that brought together Jewish, Christian and Muslim school students to learn about each other's religions and culture. For me, these experiences of education, dialogue and solidarity are the ingredients of a successful multicultural society. They are what makes Australia, for all its flaws, a truly great country to be a Jew, just like I hope it would for any minority group. You cannot create those things through cracking down on protests, sacking academics or hounding those whose political speech you disagree with. In fact, they will do the opposite.

The weaponisation of antisemitism in service of defending the Israeli Government or the political ideology of Zionism does not protect Jewish Australians. It does the opposite. It conflates Jewish Australians with a foreign government we have no say in and whose policies most Australians oppose. It distracts us from the real threats our community faces from racists and neo-Nazis, for which Jews are by no means the only target. Perversely, it creates cynicism in the broader community about the reality of antisemitism because it polarises views along political and religious lines and erodes the unity we need against all forms of racism. The costs are personal as well as political. Many of our members are descendants of Holocaust survivors. Alarmist rhetoric and false panic, like the reaction to the Dural caravan hoax and associated vandalism—including at my local synagogue in Newtown—triggers our intergenerational trauma. Our political leaders need to adopt far more measured language that seeks to calm and reassure our community and minimise division instead of fomenting fear and suspicion.

I would like to make one final point. Conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism tears at the fabric of Jewish community life. When Jews are told that their friends, their brothers and sisters, even their own children, become a danger to Jewish safety the moment they condemn the Israeli Government, how can our community remain whole? We ask the Committee to consider in their recommendations the diversity of views in the Jewish community, the need for political leadership that unites rather than divides, and the dangers that come from curtailing our civil and political rights under the pretence of maintaining community safety.

TAVEET SINANIAN: I'm from the Tzedek Collective. I will let my colleague Shula explain more of who we are but, in short, we are an anti-colonial, progressive Jewish group based on the unceded lands of the Gadigal people and other Indigenous Australian groups that previously inhabited the land now known as Sydney. I'm an Armenian Jewish person descended from immigrants. My father's family were refugees from the Armenian genocide, and my mother's family survived the Holocaust in the Netherlands.

Like every child of ethnic minority parents, I've been the target of racial discrimination and racism. I have experienced anti-Armenian bigotry, as well as misplaced anti-Arab and Islamophobic bigotry. And, of

course, I have encountered my fair share of antisemitism. The bigotry that I have experienced has largely, with only a few exceptions, come from two groups—the first one being, of course, the far right, including white nationalists, neo-Nazis and conspiracy theorists, who use things such as physical threats, Holocaust denial, conspiracy theories and coded dog whistles, which is language that is secretly antisemitic but only to people who understand the code, such as "cultural Marxists" or globalists, or mentions of funding by George Soros.

The second and more surprising group that I have experienced antisemitism from, as well as other forms of bigotry, based on my identity, have been right wing Zionist supporters of the State of Israel. My Jewish heritage is frequently brought into question and denied. I'm told that I simply must not be truly Jewish, that I must not have Jewish ancestry, that I must be an imposter. I am called an un-Jew, a fake Jew, a secret Arab or Muslim, or even—and I hate to say this—a Paki. I have even been called Nazi German slurs by members of the Jewish right wing Zionist community, namely members of a group known as Kahanists. Kahanists are an Israeli and, frequently now, international group, followers of a convicted terrorist named Meir Kahane, who has many followers both in Israel and around the world.

These slurs and insults and conspiracy theories around my identity are all for being critical of the Israeli army and the Government. It is an antisemitic stereotype that a Jewish person must be uncritical and loyal towards Israel. These insults scrutinising my genealogy are chillingly reminiscent of fascist race science. Those denying my Jewish ancestry are denying the suffering that my family went through during the Holocaust, which is a form, in my view, of Holocaust denial. I absolutely believe that antisemitism is a threat to social cohesion, but the threat to me personally has never come from people of Arab or Muslim heritage. It comes from ethnic supremacy, whether it be white supremacy or Kahanist Zionism.

SHULAMIT KIROVSKY: Hello, everyone. I grew up in Orthodox Jewish communities and was born in occupied Palestine, which you might know as the State of Israel. I'm here representing the Tzedek Collective, an anti-Zionist, anti-colonial Jewish community and action based in and around Gadigal land, on which I'm sitting today. I acknowledge that these lands were never ceded and that I'm living here as a settler, talking to a settler colonial system that represses the First Nations people of this land in an ongoing genocide, starting with the colonisation of Australia in 1788.

Tzedek represents a growing number of Jewish people united in our desire to cultivate an anti-Zionist Jewish community. Not all Jews are Zionists and support Israel, as some of the peak Jewish bodies, who are undemocratically elected, will make you believe. Operating from a position of shared struggle and unity, we are deeply concerned about the attempt to exceptionalise antisemitism and treat it as a distinct and removed form of prejudice. Racism in this settler colony is first and foremost directed towards Aboriginal people, and also towards other racialised communities, for example towards the Muslim community, with 150 per cent increase in offline or in-person incidents over 2023-24, based on the Islamophobic register. Yet there does not seem to be the same concern for Islamophobia as for antisemitism from the New South Wales Government and Australia in general.

When looking at evidence of the reported increase in antisemitism, quite a big proportion of recorded examples are more anti-Israel or anti-Zionist. I believe the organisations collecting them are operating with a Zionist political ideology and therefore conflating criticism of Israel and Zionism with actual antisemitism. For example, slogans such as Free Palestine, Intifada and "Zionism is fascism"—often listed as examples of antisemitism in this report—are actually calls for freedom and resistance to injustice and are also Jewish values that I use in my activism. These charges of antisemitism are instrumentalised to suppress critics of Israel and Zionism, especially racialised communities, like the Palestinian community, and all those like myself who speak out against Israel's crimes of illegal occupation and genocide.

Antisemitism, as mentioned, will exist as long as there is racism in general. That is why we need a united front against all racism. Antisemitism is a form of racism against Jews as Jews, while anti-Zionism is a political stance against Zionism, which is a political movement that has created a state and has a history of massacring, expelling, occupying and now committing genocide against Palestinians. I would say that Zionism is really the source of the current rise in actual antisemitism as well, as it hides behind Judaism while perpetrating violence like killing more than 100 Palestinians in Gaza in just one day this week. How was this atrocious massacre understood by the Israeli Jewish politician Tzippy Scott in the self-proclaimed Jewish state of Israel yesterday?—"Tonight we killed 100 Palestinians in Gaza and no-one in the world seems to care." I consider it a moral duty to stand against Zionism in the same way my Jewish ancestors were fighting against fascism in eastern Europe as part of the Soviet army.

Lastly, one of the strategies proposed in this Committee for combating antisemitism is further education on the Holocaust. This has usually excluded other victims of the Nazi Holocaust, such as the Roma people. It has often been removed and elevated over other genocides and is used to delegitimise the genocides occurring right

now across the world, such as in Palestine by the Zionist State of Israel, or the genocide of First Nations here in this settler colony.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I want to pick up on one of the issues that Mr Shteinman and Mr Sinanian raised in their opening statements. In the submission that we have before the Committee from the Australian Jewish Association, they say on the first page:

> Recently, the phenomenon of "Jewish antisemitism" has emerged: A tiny, fringe group claiming Jewish heritage parrots anti-Jewish rhetoric, rejected by the broader Jewish community but amplifying division and defending antisemitism. This group is used by the other three sources above to "legitimise" their own antisemitism.

What they're saying, and the evidence we heard today, was that they are broadly representative of the Jewish community and that groups like yours that are appearing here today are not. They're effectively accusing you of fuelling and furthering antisemitism because you don't necessarily share their view. What do you say in response to that claim?

BART SHTEINMAN: It would be dishonest to say that Zionism is not an important combination of views to most Australian Jews and many Jewish diasporas around the world. But I think it's really important here to make the point that Jewish identity precedes Zionism by thousands of years. It has always been contested in the Jewish community from its start. From my experience, going to a Jewish school in which Zionism—a political ideology, it being said—is part of the curriculum, I don't think it's a mystery why so many Jewish people follow that particular political ideology. That's entirely their right in a free society. But in a free society, it's not the role of the state to impose a political ideology on a minority group of people. That would be akin to the worst totalitarian states of history.

People need to be respected for their own views, and that includes dissenters from the individual community they're in as well as the right for people to support the policies of a foreign government. I think what has brought more people out of the woodwork to express their dissent, and express their dissent as Jews, is the fact that so often the conversation is turned away from the Israeli Government or its policies and towards a conversation about antisemitism or about our community. In doing these things in our name, as Jewish people, they involve us in that conversation. As others have said, it's a responsibility for all of us to dissent from that and to say, "I do not feel unsafe because people call for the human rights of Palestinians. In fact, I feel safe at the idea that the human rights of any group of people would be so thoroughly violated, if in our name or not." Did you want to add to that?

TAVEET SINANIAN: I'll add to that. I just want to mention the wording of that other statement that was brought up—"claiming Jewish ancestry". That's an example of exactly what I was talking about—how the heritage of people like us is denied or brought into question based solely on our political and ethical beliefs. It implies that one's genealogy can influence one's political opinions, which is chillingly reminiscent of German race science from the 1930s—that if you have a certain amount of Jewish ancestry, you must also be ideologically Jewish. I think that is completely wrong. As I also said, saying that I "claim" Jewish ancestry brings into question the experiences of my Jewish grandparents and my Jewish ancestors who were slaughtered in the gas chambers of Sobibor. I find that grossly offensive. Quite frankly, I would consider that the height of antisemitism in itself.

Not just that; I would also mention the conflation of antisemitism with criticism of Israel. I note that there was no distinction between the two things. We know—and I believe that even the organisation that brought that up would understand—that there is a difference between criticism of Israel, and antisemitism and criticism of Jews for being Jewish. I don't believe that that statement brings in the nuance of the difference between being critical of Zionism, and being antisemitic or being bigoted or racist towards Jewish people. The fact is that there is a rich history of being critical of Zionism or even being anti-Zionist. I note that there is a very old organisation—older than the State of Israel itself—called the Yiddish Bund, which was a European Ashkenazi Jewish secular socialist organisation that was extremely critical of Zionism and espoused a principle called Doikayt, which in Yiddish means "hereness", as in we in the diaspora belong where we are.

The notion that Jews belong in Israel is essentialist, and it doesn't apply to us because it basically gives antisemites an excuse to say, "You can all go somewhere else." That's my reply to that. Also, the notion that Jews must, by necessity, support Israel is a version of the dual loyalty antisemitic trope, saying that Jews must be loyal to Israel so you can't trust them. I don't accept that one bit. Israel's a country. I am under no obligation to be any more loyal towards Israel than a Muslim has an obligation to be loyal to Saudi Arabia. To demand that of me is simply a version of an antisemitic trope.

CATHY PETERS: I would just like to quickly say one thing. The State of Israel has attacked anti-Zionist Jews for decades. It is a tactic; it is a strategy. It is well organised and it is well funded. It has also attacked other human rights and international law based organisations and movements such as the BDS, which has spilled over into the hallways of this Parliament and other parliaments. I think we need to be very clear about

delegitimising my existence, my family's existence and the existence of all the anti-Zionist Jews that I know, and trying to label them as a fringe organisation when, in fact, the organisation that made that claim has put forward quite extraordinary comments, even in this hearing today, calling the protest at Sydney Opera House a riot and a celebration of terrorism. That is hyperbole that I find absolutely insulting, having been to many of these protests, including that one at the Opera House. The examples given by this organisation are extremist, and we need to look at where they're coming from and the sources of them. I do ask the Committee to take some of the things that have been said with a large grain of salt.

LYNDALL KATZ: May I say one small thing about this, which I think is really important? There is a belief that the Jewish community has a single voice. It's really important—and thank goodness—that the Jewish community is not a single voice. It needs to be upheld that there are many, many voices within the Jewish community. Even at this table, we are very different. We have a different relationship to the mainstream Jewish community, the established Jewish community and wherever our Jewish community is. It's really important that we have these sorts of conversations across these groups as well, rather than in isolation, because the isolation does add, in my opinion, to the antisemitism, because it separates Jews from each other and from other people. We do not speak with one voice.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Ms Peters, I've got a question for you arising from what you just said about the Opera House protest. It has been well reported—I won't repeat the words—that there was a video initially circulated in relation to that protest that wrongly captioned a portion of a video. That video was on loop, as well as being wrongly captioned, and suggested that hundreds of people had chanted a particular thing. That video and other video footage was later analysed by an expert, and it was found that a different thing was said—a thing that I would suggest is also offensive. I just wanted to give you an opportunity to talk about what you see as the material difference between what was said and what was originally circulated, if you think there's anything important about that. Also, could you tell us about that protest—what you observed and what you thought was problematic or not problematic?

CATHY PETERS: Like many people there, I didn't observe any antisemitic chant at all, and a number of people have testified to that. The original footage of the video you're speaking of has never been produced for the police. They've called for it. They've never seen the original video. The video that was circulated has been edited, as you said. That speaks enough. And the video came from one of the groups that gave testimony here today. My understanding was that, if any comments were made, it was in part due to the fact that the police wanted the pro-Palestinian protesters to move away because there was a Jewish protest coming next. And I think the call was—and I don't want to repeat it—"Where's the Jews?" It wasn't, "Where are they? We want to get them." It was, "Where are they? You're forcing us to move, but there's no-one here."

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Like a taunting of the police in a way to be sceptical of what the police had told them.

CATHY PETERS: That's what I understand. Exactly. That was the taunting of the police. Police were trying to move them on because, they were saying, there was an alternate protest about to occur. These details have never been reported properly, although they have been given as firsthand evidence by people who were there. So I think we're seeing a lot of distortion of facts here in the community. We're seeing a really cruel escalation of fear in the Jewish community, which in a lot of cases has been unnecessary. We've seen it from the Premier of this State, with the caravan event. I've never felt antisemitism. I've never felt any fear in my life at all. I have been attacked by Jewish right-wing people over the years. My family's been attacked. I take that with a grain of salt. It doesn't worry me, because I know that I'm not antisemitic and that, if you stand strong for human rights and if you stand strong for Palestinian human rights, you're inevitably going to be attacked.

But, when the Premier of this State spreads inflammatory rhetoric around Palestinian protesters, around the threat of a major terrorist attack, which—we will find out, in the next inquiry that you'll be looking into, he knew that there was no attack, it was no credible terrorist attack at all—I think we've really got to ask ourselves, "Who's attacking the Jewish community? Who's making the Jewish community frightened?" And that is not in any way to minimise the impact of the casual racism that is experienced by Jewish communities, by Muslim communities, by Aboriginal communities, not at all. But this large escalation of this antisemitic terrorism in this country, which is being promoted by the Jewish Board of Deputies, which is being promoted by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, which is being heavily promoted by the Australian Jewish Association—three organisations which we don't identify with, which is why most of us are here, because they do not speak for us—I'll stop speaking.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Thanks, Ms Peters. Ms Schwartz, just a question for you, if I could, lastly. When I lived for a period in the West Bank, I observed that there were a lot of people living there who didn't particularly like Israelis. I observed that the word for "Israeli" used was the Arabic word for "Jew".

And I guess what I'm saying is I picked up a level of chauvinism. I also picked up that people living there, by and large, probably had very good reason not to like the State of Israel much. And I'm interested in your thoughts about—is it reasonable or helpful to describe all types of chauvinism against Israel, particularly that Arab people might hold, as antisemitism? Or should we recognise that you could have a form of racism or chauvinism that's held against Israelis, that is somehow different to antisemitism because it's not based, for example, on the conspiracy theories that have been the hallmark of antisemitism? I'm not suggesting that such views would be acceptable, but I'm just querying, I guess. Are there different sorts of racism here that we should be aware of?

CATHY PETERS: I agree that you can't conflate descriptions used by Palestinians, which are translated as antisemitic here, who have been living under a brutal occupation since 1967—I've lived in the West Bank, too. I understand the oppression that occurs, and I understand why Israel has been clearly and comprehensively defined as an apartheid state, because those people are living under apartheid, both within Israel proper and in all the military-occupied territories. I think, if we were occupied here by the Russians, the sort of things that people would be saying about the Russians would be very similar to what some Palestinians would say about Israelis. But, as a Jewish person living and travelling in the West Bank, I have never had any issue whatsoever. In fact, I've never heard any of that criticism, even of calling Israelis Jews. But I do know that translating the language thing often does that. A lot of Arab people will say something Jewish, and they mean Israeli. That is a problem, I think, that occurs.

TAVEET SINANIAN: First of all, I want to mention that my grandparents never trusted a person with a German accent as long as they lived. I just want to mention that. Second of all, we all know on this panel that Judaism is beautiful. It's a humanitarian faith. It's a humanitarian culture. It's wonderful. It's an ancient culture that espouses principles like tikkun olam, "healing the world", and pikuach nefesh, which means "preserving a soul, preserving life above all else". But, when the only Judaism, the only representatives of Jews you've experienced are at the barrel of a gun or held in the hands of an IDF soldier wearing the Star of David on his uniform or in the hands of a settler wearing payots, the traditional Jewish sidelocks, in their hair and wearing a large yarmulke with fringes, tassels hanging out of his clothes—that person is very conspicuously Jewish, and that is the only experience of Judaism these poor people have had. So of course they're not going to understand that there is Judaism beyond ultra-Zionism, that there is Judaism beyond Israel. The notion that there is prejudice—I completely agree. There is prejudice. But we have to ask ourselves a nuanced question why that prejudice exists.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: So we shouldn't understand, necessarily, all generalisations, stereotyping and prejudice against, for example, Israelis as being antisemitism? There's different types of prejudice. Is that what you're saying?

TAVEET SINANIAN: Yes. But I can even understand people who would feel suspicious against Jewish people simply because the only Jewish people they've ever met have had their worst interests at heart. If they were allowed to, for example, in a one-state solution, experience the full breadth of Jewish culture, where it's not expressed in the form of violent Zionism or Kahanism, as I mentioned, then those prejudices would melt away, because the fact is all they've experienced of Judaism is an angry soldier pointing a gun at them, with a Star of David on his helmet or on his epaulettes, or a settler wearing a large yarmulke and long sidelocks in his hair. So we need to represent a better face of Judaism to these people; otherwise, that prejudice will remain. In order to prevent this kind of prejudice, we've got to present a better face of Judaism.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Just to these points, though, we are not talking about the West Bank. We are not talking about the Palestinian people. We're talking about Sydney. We are talking about New South Wales, and we're talking about the challenges that we face in our community here. And I take the evidence that has been presented, in terms of the rise of Islamophobia. But there has also been evidence presented to this Committee about the rise of antisemitism. And I think, whether there are disputes about some of the origins, there are certainly cases of rising antisemitism and, unfortunately, declining social cohesion here in New South Wales that have been exhibited. And, of course, we've had discussions about what happened on the steps of the Opera House on 9 October. But that was at a point following what happened, of course, on 7 October in Israel and the tragic loss of life and the tragic taking of hostages.

As we move forward—and I've got to say I'm quite surprised in terms of what we're hearing today as well through this inquiry—we can go through some of those challenges, but there are some origins that we have to have for everyone in our community. Just interested in terms of some of those responses and understanding the declared views that many of you have stated in terms of Zionism. But, in terms of Jewish people, regardless of their origins or their views of Zionism, as many here at this table profess to be Jewish people, of course, what are your instances or views in terms of any escalating tensions within the community, particularly following October 7?

LYNDALL KATZ: I would be happy to say something on that, if I may. I live in the Jewish community. I'm part of the synagogue. I have been on the Jewish Board of Deputies. This is a big part of my life, and I'm also very committed to the Palestinian cause. Those things can happen at once. Certainly, for me, unlike what some other people have said, I have felt the change that had happened, as a Jewish person living in Australia since October 7. I've not experienced anything directly at me, but for those weeks it felt like—this is not accurate; it felt like—every day something had happened in the Jewish communities where I live. I woke up literally wondering who is hating us today.

I think there has been a change, and I think it is something that we have to think about, but I also think it hasn't happened by itself. We know that when things get hard for Jews, they get hard for other groups. As other people have said a few times today, it's always been hard for Aboriginal people here. For me, what is effective is to actually state that antisemitism has risen and it has been an issue. Other people that I know of, their children have been—anyway, there are so many examples of it you've heard today. We do need to state it specifically, but we cannot tackle it as a single thing because that will isolate Jews and actually conflate antisemitism even more. We have to tackle it as a whole social cohesion issue in this State and in this country. I think it is important to acknowledge it but not to isolate it.

The CHAIR: We will bring our questioning to an end there. Thank you very much for your evidence today.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Dr MICHAEL EDWARDS, Executive Member, Jewish Council of Australia, affirmed and examined

Dr NA'AMA CARLIN, Executive Member, Jewish Council of Australia, affirmed and examined

Ms JUDITH TREANOR, Member, Jews Against the Occupation '48, affirmed and examined

Dr ALLON UHLMANN, Member, Jews Against the Occupation '48, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: I would like to welcome you all here today to give evidence. Would you like to make a short two-minute statement—perhaps one of you from each organisation?

MICHAEL EDWARDS: I'm an executive member of the Jewish Council of Australia. I appear with my colleague Dr Na'ama Carlin. We also both work as lecturers at universities here in Sydney: I'm at the University of Sydney and Na'ama is at UNSW. The Jewish Council is a diverse coalition of Jewish academics, lawyers, writers and teachers with expertise in areas including human rights law, Jewish history, First Nations justice and anti-racism. We provide an independent Jewish voice opposing antisemitism and racism and supporting Palestinian human rights. Our positions represent a growing number of Jews, in Australia and also around the world, who are outraged by Israel's actions—positions also represented by many others appearing here today and by many of the submissions to the inquiry. Over 1,000 Jewish Australians have signed our core principles, which state:

> We support calls for freedom, equality and justice for all Palestinians and Israelis. We reject any claim that this call is … antisemitic, or that it is antisemitic to criticise Israel's conduct.

It's vitally important for this Committee to acknowledge that the Jewish community is not a monolith who all share the same experiences and positions, or who all support the State of Israel. The Jewish Council is deeply concerned about rises in antisemitism in Australia, which is part of a broader increase in racism that includes Islamophobia, anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Asian racism and anti-Palestinian racism. We're especially concerned about the rise of far-right extremism.

We consider that the only way for us to effectively fight antisemitism is by working in partnership with other groups also facing bigotry and discrimination. At the same time, we're concerned about the ways in which the media, and some politicians and other leaders, have fuelled racism and division by exceptionalising and politicising antisemitism. There's a danger that this inquiry risks forming part of that broader trend in a way which ultimately makes Jewish people, and others, less safe. There's also the danger that this inquiry feeds into a censorial and divisive discourse which seeks to label criticism of Israel as antisemitic. This conflation of Jewish people with Israel and the political ideology of Zionism is also something that can breed antisemitism.

Effectively combating antisemitism in New South Wales means doing everything we can to avoid these overlapping dangers while also recognising the ways in which all forms of racism are interconnected. What this means, in terms of government responses, is that instead of law-and-order approaches, we support those that oppose all forms of racism, which don't create hierarchies of racism, and which target systemic and structural discrimination.

ALLON UHLMANN: First, I should say I speak on behalf of Jews Against the Occupation '48. I'm an Israeli Australian academic with my colleague here, Judith. We, like most Jews, are gravely concerned about antisemitism, but we're also alarmed by the cynical manipulation of this concern by politicians and the Zionist lobby. We oppose the tendentious adoption of the discredited IHRA definition of antisemitism, which conflates Judaism with Zionism and the State of Israel. Zionism is a Jewish ethno-nationalist supremacist ideology, and opposing Zionism is no more antisemitic than opposing Nazism or apartheid is anti-white.

Furthermore, Zionism is inherently antisemitic in its outlook and practice. The Zionist movement and the State of Israel have terrorised non-Zionist Jews, have destroyed Jewish communities in the Middle East and have forcibly eliminated diasporic Jewish cultures. The State of Israel continues to deliberately spread and support antisemitism to attack non-Zionist Jews. The State of Israel, in its pursuit of ethnic cleansing and genocide—ostensibly on behalf of Jews—further endangers Jews, wherever they are.

Regarding the State of Israel, we believe that Jews have the right to live anywhere in historic Palestine and, indeed, anywhere in the Middle East. Jews do not have the right to exclude others from exercising the same right, and non-Jews are no less entitled to live anywhere in historic Palestine. Palestinian refugees since 1948 should be allowed to exercise their right of return immediately and unconditionally. This right is guaranteed by international law, and failure to enforce it amounts to ethnic cleansing. We believe that the Israeli Jewish ethno-state is an inherently racist endeavour.

Regarding what the New South Wales Parliament and State Government should do, we propose that the definition of antisemitism, whichever is adopted, should not in any way conflate Judaism with Zionism. Zionism should be treated in New South Wales as hate speech, similarly to the way national socialism is currently treated here. The Government should act to protect non-Zionist Jews and others from the antisemitic campaign launched against us by Zionists and their sympathisers. We are concerned that some in this room might currently be doing exactly the opposite. Also, if I can, we would like to table some documents here, with your permission, which include some details which you might refer to in the conversation later.

The CHAIR: No problem.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Thank you for appearing today. I want to find out, from both organisations, your opinion on what is legitimate political discourse. Do you think that, if you look at the protests on 9 October, burning an Israeli flag, chants like "F the Jews" and other types of language, and throwing flares onto police is a legitimate form of political discourse that isn't based in antisemitism?

NA'AMA CARLIN: Thank you for your question. With respect to the protest on 9 October at the Opera House, protest is a democratic right that we participate and engage in, in any number of ways. Our speakers, of course, have already raised questions or have brought to the surface questions about the legitimacy, authenticity, of some of the documentation that was circulated at the time. The documentation was circulated by another group that spoke here today that has slandered Jewish people who voiced dissent as enemies within, have un-Jewed us, and have noted many things.

The Palestine solidarity movement has always spoken against antisemitism, even in the wake of that protest. The protest organisers, the demonstrators, have distanced themselves from antisemitism in rigorous ways. Whether forms of political dissent—I think that these are things that we might be uncomfortable with in a society, a democracy. But these are protected under our political freedom of speech in the same way that the same protestors would have been strongly offended by the fact that the Opera House sails were lit up in the colours of the State of Israel, which is a foreign state, not Australian. That lighting up of the sails in the colours of that country felt very discomforting.

I'm not here to say whether that's a sign, effectively, just to round out my argument. I think that forms of political dissent, while uncomfortable, are legitimate. The documentation that was circulating that was used to slander those protests as antisemitic has been debunked by experts. We have talked about it. We have written about it, and the Jewish Council as well. The same organisation that has circulated those images has also targeted and slandered Jewish people, in particular the Jewish Council, as enemies from within, which is rhetoric reminiscent of rhetoric used in Nazi Germany, and have un-Jewed Jews as well, in our submission. We need to be really critical when we think about these positions, these arguments, who they're representing. Ultimately, what we're doing here in this Committee, in this inquiry, is bringing to your attention the diversity of views in the Jewish community and the fact that while some political action and protest can be uncomfortable, it is still protected. It is still political debate. That's where I want to end.

JUDITH TREANOR: I would like to, if we're going to talk about protest, talk about protests on a more general level because Jews Against the Occupation '48 do attend pretty much every protest and have done. The suggestion that these protests are antisemitic, I find absolutely abhorrent. They are the most—I mean, "solidarity" is a word that probably gets overused, but it's solidarity. Many, many protests have Jewish speakers. The appreciation we receive, the love from our brothers and sisters there, is hard to describe. It's the only place I go, and I have gone, really, since October that I feel almost sane, to be honest, among like-minded people who are protesting against a genocide. It's not antisemitic. I have tabled a document. I wrote an article for *Pearls and Irritations* literally entitled, "How can pro-Palestine protests be intimidating to Jews when Jews attend them?" I would like you to read that at your leisure, please.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: What about the flying of Hezbollah flags, Taliban flags? How is that not antisemitic to fly the flags of terrorist organisations at these types of events?

JUDITH TREANOR: What about flying the Israeli flag?

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: No. I'm asking about this.

JUDITH TREANOR: Yes. I get it, and I'm coming back to you with "What about flying the Israeli flag?", which is incredibly hurtful to many Palestinian—

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: It's a nation state.

JUDITH TREANOR: That's currently under investigation for genocide.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: It's not a registered terrorist organisation, like Hezbollah and Hamas.

JUDITH TREANOR: You're actually talking also about one specific protest, which was the only protest in probably the last 18 months where the media attended—funny that. We are ignored. When has the media ever even—actually it's really great that we are being spoken to today because generally we're ignored. The articles that I've written have been printed in *Pearls and Irritations. I spoke to I think it was a Channel 9 presenter, who was there that day, to say, "How about getting a different point of view?", and he laughed at myself and my comrades from Jews Against the Occupation '48. I'm not going to talk about Hezbollah or those flags—hurtful to some; Israeli flags are hurtful to others. There is a genocide that's being perpetuated. I'm watching it in horror every single day. My Jewish heritage tells me to stand up against all crimes against humanity. That's it.*

MICHAEL EDWARDS: Maybe I would just add I think it's really important, as Judith is gesturing to, to situate this in the broader context of the question. I think there has been this concerted effort to delegitimise these protests by linking them to antisemitism that's been ongoing for the past 18 months or more. There's obviously a much longer history to that as well. But, as Judith says, when you attend these protests, what you ultimately see, as previous speakers have said as well, is an extraordinarily diverse cross-section of Australian society: young people, old people, people from a wide variety of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, all of whom have been mobilised by what they see on their screens every day, which is—I think we need to name it in this context—the killing of thousands upon thousands of kids and others. So I think this line of questioning is part of a broader move to delegitimise this protest, which is, in my view, entirely justified in light of everything we see on our screens every day.

ALLON UHLMANN: Just specifically to your question, burning the Israeli flag is not an act of antisemitism; it's protest. Burning flags have been done also in the Vietnam War. In Australia—the Australian flag. It's symbolic protest. Hamas and Hezbollah, terrorists or not, are not antisemitic organisations—not by their statements, not by their governments, not by their actions. Hamas, in fact, calls for a two-state solution, something that I personally would rather not have—I'm one of the one-state solution supporters—and so forth.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Just to clarify, you don't believe that Hezbollah and Hamas are antisemitic organisations.

ALLON UHLMANN: No. No, I'm—

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: That is an extraordinary statement.

ALLON UHLMANN: No, it isn't, actually. As it happens—I mean, I think as a person with an academic specialisation in the Middle East, I know a little bit about those organisations. They're not antisemitic. They do not call for the extermination of Jews. They have not addressed Jews. They have a major problem with Israel and the Zionist state. As it happens, Hamas calls for a two-state solution, which is actually—should, in principle, be Australian Government policy. And, actually, Hezbollah is formed around getting Israel out of Lebanon. That was their major agenda, and their main beef is the continued occupation by Israel of parts of Lebanon. They do not call for the—definitely not for the extermination of Jews or to do anything against Jews.

And, as for the demonstrations, they're entirely safe for Jews. We've been there, like, every week. I have my daughter here, who's 14—attended a few of them feeling quite comfortable. I'm comfortable with my family being there—no problems. I mean, the myth of antisemitism surrounding the Arab or Muslim movements here is ridiculous. There is a problem of antisemitism, and it comes from the right-wing, neo-Nazis, fascists and, frankly, some groups that collaborate with the Zionist organisations, like the Lions of Zion in Melbourne. That's a combination of Nazis and Zionists together threatening to kick heads of people like us.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: So, Mr Uhlmann, will you condemn the massacre that took place on October 7?

ALLON UHLMANN: No. Like—

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: So you won't condemn it.

ALLON UHLMANN: Like Ilan Pappé, Israeli historian, like Ronnie Kasrils, the Jewish South African politician, like Norman Finkelstein and others, we see that in context. Palestinians in Gaza had been held in conditions that are subhuman for many years before. They have actively said that it's going to be a blow-up, and then there was a blow-up. Not only that, the Israeli Government is the one that has been funding Hamas as a countermeasure for the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. So if you have any problem with Hamas' rule, go to Tel Aviv and start arguing with the department of defence over there. Hamas' attack was an outcome of Israel's continued occupation and is inherently not much different from any uprisings elsewhere.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: So it's all just justifiable, then.

ALLON UHLMANN: It was brutal. I'm not justifying or not justifying. It is war. It's an act of war. It is not outside of the realms of what was happening. It does not even get close to the brutality of Israel's occupation and actions in Gaza, both before and after.

JUDITH TREANOR: Do you condemn what's happened every day since?

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: I'm here asking questions. You're here to answer them, and you have absolutely no legitimacy and credibility if you're not going to condemn the atrocities that took place on 7 October.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Point of order: That is just an expression of opinion and a statement of condemnation, not a question. It's not Mr Rath's opportunity to berate; it's his opportunity to ask questions.

The CHAIR: I uphold the point of order.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: And he should withdraw it.

JUDITH TREANOR: I condemn everything that has happened since October 7, and the occupation 77 years before that.

Dr AMANDA COHN: Both of you, in your opening statements and your written submission, talked about the way that media has reported antisemitic incidents actually inflaming tensions within the community—and certainly the behaviour of some politicians as well—rather than promoting social cohesion. I think we just heard some of that in this hearing. In terms of moving forward from here, in the written statements I think the Jewish council has recommended responsible media reporting guidelines. It's something that we've seen around domestic violence and suicide reporting. What do you think that would look like? How can we go about, for media and politicians and people with a platform, talking about these issues in a way that de-escalates tension rather than escalates it?

MICHAEL EDWARDS: Thanks, I think that's a really, really important question. As you say, it's something we mentioned in our submissions. I think one thing that we have been so disappointed by over the last year and a half is the way in which some politicians and other leaders have really sought to weaponise antisemitism for their own political agendas. We saw that playing out in the Federal election campaign. We've seen it play out again over the last year and a half or more. I think that's dangerous for a number of different reasons. It's dangerous because it silences Palestinian voices and censors speech in solidarity with people suffering in Palestine. But I think it also ultimately feeds into fear in the Jewish community in a way that I think is very dangerous and very threatening to social cohesion.

We do think it's vitally important that media organisations and politicians are very, very careful with their use of language—particular incidents that they might label as antisemitic before the full evidence is actually known. Obviously, in this State, we've seen examples of that. We speak about that in our submission as well. I think a very serious and thoughtful conversation about the language we use around what is and isn't antisemitism is really key for those two reasons: as I say, because it ultimately feeds into and creates more fear in the Jewish community and also because it does threaten to silence and censor speech in solidarity with Palestine.

ALLON UHLMANN: I think there's a major problem with overuse of the label "antisemitism" for nefarious political means, or at least for political opportunism, which actually is counterproductive and dangerous because then it desensitises people to antisemitism when it really happens. The Jewish community is rightly afraid of antisemitism. I mean, we've been traumatised, but over quite a few generations. It's very easy to get Jews to panic over antisemitism. That's a strategy that has been used to keep people within the community in check and to actually create or forge a kind of unity behind things like the Zionist movement. So it's really important to understand what we're talking about here.

I think that goes back to the question that was asked before: Not every generalisation about Jews is necessarily antisemitic. Sometimes antisemitism can appear in many different ways, like support for a Jewish state as a way of, "Let's get rid of all the Jews and put them back in Israel," or something like that. It's very subtle and you need to understand it. Nonetheless, when it happens, it should be condemned, obviously. But we should also be able to have open conversations about it without it immediately turning into allegations or accusations that people don't have credibility because they're saying something which some others might argue is antisemitic and so forth. There's a level of maturity that we can inject into the debate, which probably would be useful.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I wanted to ask a question that draws on what the Jewish council—we've got some evidence before us in submissions, I think from the AJA and maybe from one other group, that Islamic or Muslim community leaders, in the aftermath of October 7, did not condemn October 7—at least not unequivocally, to adopt the language of the submission. I asked some questions this morning of the people from The Great Synagogue and made the point that there are people suggesting that Jewish representative

leaders from different groups have not condemned what could be considered the response to October 7. Obviously, there are very strongly held perspectives about both those issues. Mr Uhlmann, you have basically suggested that October 7 might be compared to a slave revolt or a concentration camp breakout, that it would be completely unfair to judge it by the niceties of international humanitarian law, and that any moral or ethical critique has to be viewed in the light of the context. I suspect that some Jewish representative leaders might say that the response needs to be viewed in light of what occurred and the whole history of the conflict.

My question is how do we in Australia, in the interests of social cohesion, move beyond these continual demands to condemn that on each side that seems to be acontextual? Is there a way that we can agree to disagree in some sense, in terms of interfaith dialogue, and somehow strengthen social cohesion? In asking that question, I'm not suggesting that people should not condemn what they think ought be condemned. I myself have condemned things that have occurred in that respect. But is there a way as communities that we can move beyond this dynamic of continually urging condemnation and not being happy when it's not delivered?

NA'AMA CARLIN: Thanks for that question. I want to move away from the juxtaposition of Judaism and Islam. This is not a battle or a debate between religions. The Jewish Council is driven by a commitment to work in solidarity with every group that is marginalised, that is facing discrimination and prejudice. We can't resolve these issues in isolation, so our commitment is engaging with civil society organisations, with various groups—also religion, also Muslim, but otherwise too. To juxtapose the situation as Jewish groups need do this and Muslim groups need to do this is, again, as you said, repeating a chasm that is manufactured.

What we need to do is recognise the fact that social incohesion and racism are at high levels across all communities. Moving ahead, how do we do that? Our position is to focus on education; on having conversations; on bringing communities together to have these discussions; on working with civil society groups that do this work; and on asking for support from, for instance, the New South Wales Parliament to help us do this work. Across schools and across communities there are other ways of working together that don't necessitate legislation or a law-and-order response or rules around protests, recognising our shared and mutual pain within a society that is facing high levels of racism, not only in the Jewish community but if we think about the aftermath of the Voice to Parliament referendum. Indigenous people have told us that they're feeling deeply hurt. We had a week of silence in acknowledgement of that pain.

There are ways of moving forward that hear and acknowledge communities' discohesion in how we move forward. We have the Human Rights Commission in Australia as an anti-racism, social justice-committed organisation that we need to work with and support. So there are many ways that we can do this, but delegitimising our views or deciding who can and who can't talk for a community is not the way forward.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: I will add that I completely agree on the need to move beyond a discourse or a politics of condemnation. I think that ultimately gets us nowhere, deciding who can't speak based on what they do or don't condemn. As Na'ama has said, one thing we've been so struck by since forming the Jewish Council in February 2024 is how valuable these conversations have been that we've engaged in across ethnic and racial groups, and having very difficult conversations, actually. If we're thinking about precisely what can, for example, the New South Wales Government do to fight antisemitism, to not exceptionalise antisemitism but to fight it as part of the broader problem of racism, it is precisely supporting such initiatives that engage in very serious conversation and relationship-building across communities in the spirit of solidarity, which is ultimately what's needed to combat the rise of racism here and elsewhere.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Lastly, we've seen a bit of a resurgence of the far right, of the neo-Nazi movement. I think about 18 months ago we saw a whole bunch of neo-Nazis on a train wearing masks, and police used existing police powers to break them up. We also saw down in Corowa a rally where antisemitic things were chanted or said by people, and police again used existing police powers—I think around offensive language and move-on powers—to deal with that. My broad question for, perhaps, the Jewish Council is are there more legal mechanisms that we need to deal with the far right, or do you fundamentally not think that a law-and-order approach to them is likely to be efficacious? I ask that question in the light of the fact that there was recently a statement from one of those neo-Nazi groups that they intended to register and contest elections. So that raises a question, I suppose, about whether they ought legally have a role in our electoral politics. In light of that potentially occurring, do you think they should be, in effect, stamped out using legal mechanisms or do you think that's likely to be counterproductive and we need to deal more with societal responses and cultural responses?

MICHAEL EDWARDS: Thank you for bringing this up. As our submission states, we're very concerned about the rise of the far right. We're also concerned about the ways in which particular discourses around antisemitism tend to divert attention from this very serious problem online, but also, increasingly, offline by focusing instead on Palestine solidarity, activism on protests, on arts festivals, on universities and the like. We

think this is an issue that government and others need to take very seriously. In general, we're not particularly supportive of law-and-order approaches. We don't think it's possible to arrest your way to ending antisemitism or other forms of racism, and we do think it's particularly important to invest in programs around education and also particularly around early intervention when it comes to recruitment for white supremacist organisations and the far right, because we think they're probably more effective ways of combating what is this very serious threat.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: That's helpful. Thank you. I've got more questions, but I'll hand over in case other people do.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Uhlmann, in your opening statement you outline that you thought that Zionism should be listed as hate speech. Is that correct?

ALLON UHLMANN: Yes.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Could you explain for us why you believe that's the case and how you think that should be reflected?

JUDITH TREANOR: We've tabled quite a few examples.

ALLON UHLMANN: We have tabled some documents that will give an example of what we're talking about. As you know, the Arab community in Australia is under pressure, especially with what's happening in the Middle East and so forth. When you think about, in the midst of this, the State of Israel through a member of Knesset called Eli Cohen, a Likud member—he has a large following in the Arabic world. He puts out a tweet saying, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion are actually being implemented in reality. We are those who will rule the world with wisdom and not force, with guile and not with arrogance." That's the kind of stuff that the State of Israel puts in order to fan the flame of antisemitism in various communities around the world. We also have other examples if you want hate speech from Zionist groups. This is from a tweet put out by Mark Leibler—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: But, Mr Uhlmann, I guess in terms of—

ALLON UHLMANN: I'll just read this:

> Nothing, but nothing, is worse than those Jews who level totally unfounded allegations of genocide and ethnic cleansing against the State of Israel. They are repulsive and revolting human beings. Their relatives who were murdered by the Nazis - the role models for Hamas - will undoubtedly be turning in their graves. Their avowed anti Zionism is clearly no more than a cover for the reality that they are vicious antisemites.

Now that is hate speech.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Okay, but in terms of the concept of Zionism, the concept of a state for the Jewish people on the ancestral homelands, is that your classification of what constitutes hate speech?

ALLON UHLMANN: Let me quote to you—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I'm interested in what your definition of Zionism is being equated to hate speech.

ALLON UHLMANN: Zionism has many different versions. If you talk about Jewish chauvinism, yes. This is a quote from Theodor Herzl.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: No, I'm not talking about that. I'm asking you for your definition. You've outlined that you believe that Zionism should be captured under hate speech laws. What is that definition you would like to see covered by hate speech laws?

ALLON UHLMANN: The one that deals with the Jewish supremacist right of certain lands, to the exclusion of others; parts of the speech that call for the extermination of Arabs, the Arabs as Amalekites, meaning that we have an injunction to eliminate them physically—those aspects, I think, should be considered hate speech. I do not necessarily agree they should be banned or anything like that. I believe in freedom of speech, and I believe in freedom of speech, also, for people who are—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: And this is my interest, Mr Uhlmann, in a sense, in terms of the demarcation. As you were saying, in terms of supremacy and the like, there is one marker when it comes to that, but there's another marker when it comes to the constitution of a homeland for the Jewish people or the existence of the State of Israel, for instance. That's where I'm trying to draw you as to what is your marker that you're advocating for that should be captured as hate speech?

ALLON UHLMANN: I think, when it comes to talking about the rights of others and hatred towards non-Jews, I would probably take the line of someone like Yeshayahu Leibowitz, the leading Israeli intellectual, who referred to Israel's policies as Judeo-Nazi when he talked about the settlements in the West Bank and so forth. I think that is totally unacceptable. As I said, I don't think those things should be outlawed or anything like that.

I do not believe in banning people, and I believe in open engagement, but just alert us to the fact that calling for that ethnonationalist supremacism is the same, whether it's done in the name of Jewish, Aryan, white or other ideologies, and they should be treated similarly. Does that answer your question? I mean, I'm not sure—

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I think it has given me a greater understanding of what you were saying, to begin with.

ALLON UHLMANN: I mean, I come from Israel. I have no—like I said, we definitely agree. We definitely support the right of any Jew to live anywhere between the river and the river, between the Euphrates and the Nile—anywhere. I think Jews should have the right to live in Hebron but not to exclude others from living in Hebron. There was a Jewish community that lived in Hebron for a very long time before the Zionist project began, but the kind of animosity that was built between Zionists and non-Zionists are very much by Zionist provocations. Of course, it made it impossible for that community to exist. We want to assert the right of Jews to live anywhere. We just do not accept the right of excluding others from exercising the same right, and we want the legally guaranteed right of Palestinian refugees to return by force. Without the majority, it will not be a Jewish state and a democratic State. At the moment, Israel is a democratic State for Jews and a Jewish state for Arabs. That is something that is not acceptable and does not stand in line with also the values that we promote here in New South Wales and in Australia of free, open societies that are multicultural. That's what we're calling for.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I have a question, if there's still time. It's often said—and we've got evidence to this effect—that most Australian Jewish people are Zionist. I'm interested in your view on that, in the sense that obviously Zionism was an ideology or an idea that started, I think, in the nineteenth century, or certainly formed in a substantive way. It then culminated, I suppose, in the declaration of Israeli independence. But Israel has now been a reality for a long time, and I suspect for a lot of Australian Jews Israel has always been there. It has been there for their whole lives. Maybe they haven't necessarily turned their mind to the intricacies of Zionism as an ideology in the same way that many Jews might have prior to the formation of Israel and prior to Israel just being, I suppose, part of the furniture, internationally. I'm interested in your opinion on what percentage of Australian Jewish people do you think are ideological Zionists, as opposed to just supporting Israel, which has always been there?

ALLON UHLMANN: For one, the majority of Jews are probably not members of a Jewish community, and therefore it's only the minority, already selected by supporting and joining the Jewish communities that are Zionists, that are linked to Israel. But the majority of people identify as Zionists, when you actually come to talk to them, they would identify as Zionist because they like Israel, they like the Jewish community in Israel, and they want to support the Jewish community in Israel, which is understandable. But then when it comes to what does it mean when the majority are not Jewish, then there are those who try to fall back on all kinds of mystification, saying, "Well, they left. The Arabs left. The Arabs went there," and so forth. Not many of them are actually thoughtful Zionists in that sense.

When you actually talk to people who are on the very right wing of the Zionist movement and so forth, they would also acknowledge that, "Yes, this is what it is. It's ethnic cleansing. It's racist. We have to do it. We'll do what we have to do." But I think those that are the very ideologically committed would be a small number. The majority of people would like to see everybody live in peace. There'll be also many Jews who might have prejudice and hate Arabs, and Arabs hate Jews. That's what happens. In Australia, there are Catholics who are not crash hot about Protestants and vice versa. That's fine. That's part of life. People can have the right to like one another and hate one another, so as long as they don't kill one another or get in the way of one another.

Most Jews who identify as Zionists are not racist, murderous people. They're just thinking about one thing, not the other. I think the majority of people just want to get on with their lives, live in peace and continue with their little pet hates, lives and so forth, but without interfering with other people's lives. That applies to most people and also Jews and the Jewish community. Many of them also, like I said, are motivated by fear—understandable fear. Antisemitism is very scary and, unfortunately, we have way too many people who are willing to drum up the threat when I don't think it really exists to that extent. We should focus on it when it does exist. We should understand the sensibilities.

MICHAEL EDWARDS: Can I just add a very quick answer to that question as well. I think we simply don't have good survey data on this question about the proportion of Jewish communities in Australia who do or don't identify as Zionist. The surveys which are often cited are surveys which are distributed by, amongst other organisations, the Zionist Federation of Australia, through their network. As academics, we're very sceptical of that survey data. But I think the other thing to recognise is that we're at a watershed moment, I think, not just here in Australia but in Jewish communities right around the world—in the US, in Europe and elsewhere as well—where there is a very serious and very deep and very widespread questioning of Zionism, what Zionism entails when it's expressed in the actions of the State of Israel, as we've all seen over the last 18 months or more.

I think it's worth in this context noting not just that there is a diversity of views in in the Jewish community, which should be plain, based on what you've all heard today, but that also this is a very serious moment for Jewish communities, where there are a lot of people, particularly young Jews in Australia and elsewhere, who are questioning in very serious ways their relationship to the State of Israel and, indeed, to the political ideology of Zionism as well. Your question is a live one, and we do need better data on it.

NA'AMA CARLIN: I just want to add on that point, finally, that Zionism is espoused by many non-Jewish people, groups and religions. Christian Zionists are a strong lobby group. One of the risks is deeply affiliating Zionism with Judaism, and it manufactures these conditions. We actually need to acknowledge that Zionism is not a precondition and necessity of Judaism, which I know other speakers to the inquiry today have tried to make the point that they are one and the same. That's simply not true. We have to acknowledge the diversity of views and the shifting views. For instance, in the US, polling data shows that younger people are moving away from this association. We need to be Jewish. We need to be safe in our Judaism but also be able to be critical of a State that's committing what the ICC is investigating for plausible genocide. There are currently arrest warrants out for the head of State that is committing genocide in the name of Jewish safety. That does not make anyone safe, Palestinians and Jewish people. We need to be really mindful of what the issues that are at hand here. We can't keep playing that game.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Thank you for your moral clarity.

The CHAIR: We'll draw questioning to a close there. Thank you very much for coming today. We'll have a break and return at 1.15 p.m.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

(Luncheon adjournment)

Mr HASSAN MOUSSA, Chief Executive Officer, Arab Council Australia, affirmed and examined

Mr NIKOLAI HADDAD, Member and Former Secretary of the Board, Arab Council Australia, affirmed and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome. Thank you very much for coming forward to give evidence today. Would either of you like to give a short two-minute statement?

NIKOLAI HADDAD: If it pleases the inquiry, I will give a short statement and then Mr Moussa will say a couple of words as well.

The CHAIR: That's fine.

NIKOLAI HADDAD: At least 370 Palestinians were killed last week in Israeli attacks that have targeted hospitals, schools, tent encampments and homes. Another 144 people were killed since dawn yesterday. For 79 days no food, fuel or medicine has entered Gaza. A report released Monday by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification initiative found that half a million people face starvation in Gaza and 93 percent of the population are at severe risk. The Australian Arabic community is deeply affected by the ongoing catastrophe in Gaza. In real time we watch images every day of people being burned alive in tents or blown to bits in the rubble of what was once their homes. The emaciated bodies of children fill our screens.

What has this to do with antisemitism you might ask? The deep feeling of pain, mourning and hopelessness in the community is aggravated by the efforts of institutions to silence our reactions to this unimaginable horror and to police our response to what Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Lemkin Institute, a UN special committee and a growing consensus of experts in the field have termed a genocide. People have been disciplined at work for speaking out, others have lost their jobs, sometimes for the mildest criticism of Israel's actions or even just pro-Palestinian speech.

Arab Council Australia deeply opposes antisemitism and acknowledges the harm done to Jewish communities by a spate of attacks over the past 19 months. We now know that many of these crimes were carried out by criminal actors who were not motivated by ideology, but that does not lessen the impact on communities. At the same time, we are deeply concerned by the risk that the fight against antisemitism will be weaponised as a means to supress advocacy for Palestine and freedom of speech to engage in robust criticism of the State of Israel and its practices.

That is why we join scholars, legal experts and many of our friends in the Jewish community who have made submissions to this inquiry in opposing the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism, which, in its examples and application, conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism. When such definitions are adopted by universities and institutions, they can have a chilling effect on free speech, as has already been demonstrated in the United Kingdom according to a September 2023 joint report by the European Legal Support Centre and the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies.

I am just going to make one final point. We are also concerned about the dataset in relation to antisemitism in Australian universities. A December 2024 report by the Jewish Council of Australia, which analysed 501 submissions to the Federal Senate inquiry, found that just one in five of the specific incidents reported were antisemitic under a definition of antisemitism that is "discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews, or Jewish institutions as Jewish".

HASSAN MOUSSA: Arab Council Australia has a specific aim of assisting the successful social inclusion of people from Arabic-speaking backgrounds and promoting their active participation and contribution to the wider community. We are committed to social justice and discrimination in any form is incompatible with our values of equality and equity for all. To that end, we support a broad anti-racism strategy that avoids giving quasi-legal force to special categories of bigotry. We are against creating hierarchies of need and attention as this sets up a structure whereby communities are in competition with each other instead of working together to fight racism. We support a broad anti-racism framework that recognises that the only special category of racism in Australia is that faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who have faced generational, institutional and structural racism born out of dispossession and denial of human rights.

In New South Wales, we submit that it is important to promote adherence to existing anti-vilification laws, as opposed to imposing criminal sanctions on speech that does not incite violence. We take this approach despite evidence of a record number of anti-Arab, anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian hate crimes since 23 October. The examples are many and include physical assaults of women in front of their children, threats to carry out a Christchurch massacre in a mosque, and women being spat at and being publicly threatened with rape. Anti-Arab, anti-Palestinian and anti-Muslim bigotry and attacks are vastly under-reported. There is no register of

anti-Palestinian or anti-Arab crimes, and Islamophobia registers are community driven and operate in circumstances where many of those who would report or should report have limited awareness about such initiatives and have little faith in the willingness or ability of institutions to take their issues seriously. That is an understandable attitude when high-profile members of the Federal Parliament feel comfortable enough to deny the very existence of Islamophobia.

We also know that way more Australians hate Muslim people than Jewish people. According to a 2024 survey by the ANU and supported by the Scanlon Foundation, 34 per cent of Australians surveyed reported a negative attitude towards Muslims compared to 13 per cent for Jewish people. Yet the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim communities have been given a fraction of the funding and attention that has been afforded on a State and Federal level to Jewish communities. How many other communities have been left out of the debate entirely? That's why Arab Council Australia supports the broad anti-racism and discrimination framework developed in consultation with community experts to develop a better approach that is inclusive of the diverse communities of New South Wales.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: I'll start with a couple of questions. Thank you for your evidence and for appearing today. Obviously, the crux of the problem that we're trying to address here in New South Wales Parliament is getting the balance right between freedom of speech on the one hand and then protecting minorities, in particular in this case the Jewish community, against violence and racial hatred on the other hand. Where do you think that line should be drawn? Do you think that there should be allowed some of these examples that we have seen in the media that has been reported, like the flying of Hezbollah and Hamas flags, like the lighting up of an Israeli flag? Obviously, we have seen vandalism and graffiti. We have seen the torching of cars. Where do you think the line should be drawn in that way?

NIKOLAI HADDAD: I believe that the State of New South Wales has very strong anti-vilification laws, and we also have strong laws that protect against criminal actions of the kind that you mentioned. We believe that freedom of speech is something that is a deeply held value in our society, and it is hard to draw that balance sometimes. But it is also important to note that there already exist robust laws for anyone who threatens violence. In fact, many of the anti-vilification laws that exist under the Racial Discrimination Act at the Commonwealth level and the Anti-Discrimination Act at the New South Wales level cover hate speech.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: You've said in your submission that antisemitism shouldn't be exceptionalised, yet we've seen this enormous increase in antisemitism of late. I think one figure was a 339 per cent increase in antisemitism. Don't you think that it has reached a crisis point now where it does need that special attention given to it? Of course there's Islamophobia; of course there's racism in many forms. But since October 7, we have seen this drastic increase in antisemitism that we've just never seen before.

HASSAN MOUSSA: Obviously we believe there is antisemitism in this country, in the same way there is anti-Arabism, anti-Palestinianism and anti-Islamism. They are all forms of bigotry that we should be combating. We should be living in a society where we look at how we can live cohesively as a society, free from prejudice and bigotry of all forms. There is obviously antisemitism, but there are also other forms of racism that we should be attacking as well. You may not be seeing a lot of that. There's a lot of under-reporting in terms of anti-Arabism and anti-Palestinianism because the Arab community is not used to reporting. It has never had this option of reporting in the past.

We have had two new Islamophobia registers that were created recently, but still a lot of people get spat on, they lose their scarves and they're attacked. They never report it because they don't feel there is redress in law that allows them to get any rights or that they can get retribution against the action that has been taken against them. That's why I think this level of reporting in terms of an increase in one level of racism or another level of racism is not necessarily correct. It does not reflect the reality on the ground. We need to combat all forms of racism. There is no one form of racism higher than another. There should not be a hierarchy of racism. We should all be working together, all communities, working for an inclusive and multicultural society that is free from racism for everyone.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: I understand that. But where would you draw the line between anti-Zionism on one hand, in terms of that being legitimate freedom of speech, and then antisemitism on the other hand, which this inquiry is looking into? That's a very complex area. There are lots of examples that we've seen. Wouldn't you agree that some people are pushing that boundary and going over that boundary, in fact, in some of their statements, either written or oral?

HASSAN MOUSSA: Zionism is an ideology. Antisemitism is part of racism and anti-racism. I think you should separate between antisemitism and anti-Zionism. People have the right to criticise a particular ideology, wherever it comes from. You can't call anti-Zionism as being antisemitism.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Thanks to you both for coming along and thanks for your written submission. One of our tasks as a Committee is to look at the difference between antisemitism and legitimate criticism of Israel. One of the things that I've noticed in this debate is that some, if not all, of the phrases that are used or the criticisms that are made of Israel could be used by an antisemite but could also be used by someone who is legitimately criticising Israel. For example, if you saw a Neo-Nazi chanting, "From the river to the sea," you might think that they're motivated by antisemitism and not support for the Palestinian cause.

It seems to me that an important part of understanding the ambiguity and recognising the true intent is to have empathy and understand the position of the other. It seems to me that a lot of people fail to do that in respect of the Palestinians. They don't see the plight that they're in and don't truly appreciate the history. Maybe that leads them to adopting a worst-case interpretation of what people are saying. I'm wondering if you could inform the Committee by talking about the experience of particularly the Palestinians and the Lebanese and why it is that there are such strong feelings about the actions of the State of Israel. Can you put that in some context for us?

NIKOLAI HADDAD: I'm not a Palestinian. I won't speak for Palestinian people, but I'm an Arab Australian of Lebanese heritage. I'm extremely familiar with the history of the region and with deep connections to that region. To sum it up in a nutshell, it would appear that part of the issue is with institutions and media focusing more on a slogan that calls for freedom and self-determination for Palestinians—"from the river to the sea"—than the actual occupation in material terms of the real life of Palestinian people from the river to the sea.

There have been numerous reports by credible human rights organisations that have declared that Israel is practising the crime of apartheid in Palestine, in the West Bank, in Israel proper, in Gaza and in the denial of the right of return. This long history comes back to the fact that there was a Palestine and a Palestinian people that were replaced and ethnically cleansed. When we talk about the slogan "from the river to the sea", we've got to look at what happened from the river to the sea from before the period of the British mandate, when Britain took over control of Palestine from the Ottoman Empire, to right now, when we're seeing openly declared plans for the ethnic cleansing of Gaza and the relocation of its population.

HASSAN MOUSSA: Only last night the Israeli Government, the Netanyahu Government, decided to invade Gaza from the south and the north. We have seen over the past 19 months that basically every hospital has been demolished and every university has been demolished. The whole of Gaza is rubble at the moment and people still live there. I think 1,000 journalists have been killed. Medicos have been killed. People from any international organisation have been killed. United Nations staff, I think close to 200 of them have been killed. We're still numb to what's happening. How can you not be moved by what's happening in Gaza? By being moved with humanity, you've got to react to these things and basically support and show some emotional expressions of support for the Palestinian people under occupation. This is the worst occupation in history that we have had over the last few decades. It's normal for any human being. People are expressing their emotions.

Now I think we've been asked to suppress those emotions, to not express any solidarity with Palestinians. Even the Palestinian flag is now being called an antisemitic flag. The keffiyeh is antisemitic. We talk about Palestine. Even the word "Palestine" has become antisemitic. That's the problem we have. If we keep suppressing that kind of expression, we're going to go into a much bigger problem in the future. The other issue that's important in all of this is that what you see on the mainstream media is probably 1 per cent of what members of the Arab community see. I get hundreds of videos every day, real-life videos from people on the ground, who are showing us what's happening in Gaza. The media here does present the two-sidedness of the equation. There is no two-sidedness. There's one side committing genocide, and the other side that is subject to genocide. We've seen videos of this real life on our screens, whether it's TV or phone, every single day of the week. It's very difficult not to react to any of this.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: It's sometimes said that we can't solve the problems of the Middle East here in Australia. I suppose that's true to some degree. But it's also sometimes said by others that Australia is a key international supporter of Israel, Australia is a key part of the Western alliance with the United States and other countries and our position does matter. That's obviously an ongoing debate in the community. In the context of that debate, how do we make sure that community and social relations remain as harmonious as they can be while, at the same time, allowing those debates to be had?

NIKOLAI HADDAD: I suppose one of the ways of doing that might be to adopt positions that are in accordance with international law and apply that across the board, because then we have this objective standard that we're adhering to. That would help to explain why we are taking this position.

HASSAN MOUSSA: In what's happening, there's a call on our humanity and our decency. We have no option but to react to what's happening. If we don't react, we've lost our humanity. We can have a socially cohesive country here—Australia is a multicultural country—by being inclusive and by treating everyone equally, not to have this hierarchy of looking at different communities where one form of discrimination is more important than

another form of discrimination. Discrimination should be eliminated full stop—across the whole of society. The Australian Government has a role to play. It has actually been involved in Middle East policy for a long time. It has had a lot to say on the Middle East. We have to take a stand in Australia saying we support international institutions, and we support the United Nations' decisions. What we are asking for is nothing different from what international law has provided for us. No-one is going outside international law.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: We've had some submissions asking us to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism. That, in part, says that it's not antisemitic to criticise Israel, but it would be antisemitic to criticise Israel if one, for example, was calling for the elimination of Israel or denying the rights of the Jewish people to self-determination. I'm just wondering if you could talk about the problems with adopting a definition that says that calling for the elimination of Israel is antisemitism in the context of, for example, legitimate expressions of sentiment about a one-state solution that includes everybody there. That's something that's called for quite often and would have been a prominent part of the weekly protests. Could you talk about the problem in adopting a definition that fails to explicitly deal with the question of what is elimination and what is a one-state solution?

NIKOLAI HADDAD: I think part of the problem is that the definition itself and the examples are very broad and open to interpretation. Some of them are clearly restrictive of free speech—for example, saying that it's antisemitic to call Israel a racist endeavour when the reports of the highest court in the world, the International Court of Justice, has found that it is practising apartheid. In terms of the question of the elimination of the State of Israel and what calls for that mean, we're elevating discourse over reality. The reality is that Palestinians are being eliminated from the river to the sea, and we're not focusing anywhere near enough attention on that.

Of course, when people say, "We want to see the end of the State of Israel," we're talking about the end of the supremacist state where one person is—let's not forget, in addition to apartheid, we have over five million people in the occupied West Bank and Gaza who have no freedom of movement, no control over their borders and are taxed for goods coming in and out of the territory. They have had, for 58 long years, zero representation and zero votes. If we take a step back and look at what people are saying and provide the right amount of focus on what's actually happening on the ground and shift the attention from slogans to reality—and if we're going to talk about slogans, let's ask people who are saying them and what they actually mean.

HASSAN MOUSSA: The problem we have with the IHRA definition is it really conflates antisemitism and weaponises antisemitism to prevent commentary on Israel, Israeli practices and policies. If we're talking about the IHRA definition that defines antisemitism—you're talking about the Jewish community, the Jewish religion and so forth—you've got seven out of the 11 examples provided in the IHRA definition that talk about the State of Israel. Why are we talking about the State of Israel in the definition of antisemitism in Australia? If you criticise Israel for being an apartheid state—or for calling it an apartheid—or for the policies that it's enacted for the last few decades, not just since 23 October, you will be called an antisemite under the examples in the IHRA definition. That's the problem we have—weaponising the definition to curtail free speech and open debate about the politics of the State of Israel. No-one is calling for the elimination of the State of Israel. We're calling for ensuring that Israel be a good international country that can abide by international law and humanitarian law.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: We've had some evidence from one or two groups saying that no Muslim groups unequivocally condemned October 7. In some questioning this morning of one of the Jewish representatives, I made the point that we haven't necessarily had a condemnation of recent events in Gaza from a lot of Jewish groups either. My question is, how fair is it to expect representatives of different groups who might be seeing things through their particular lens and, I suppose, have a bias—how useful or helpful is it to be expecting them in particular to condemn things that are occurring? Is there an interfaith dynamic that we maybe need to get to where we agree not to engage in those continual calls because we need to recognise that everyone's seeing this through a particular lens and a particular context? Is there a community-level way in Australia of agreeing to disagree about some of this and concentrating very much on social cohesion while not losing our right to advocate on particular issues and perspectives? Everyone's got the right to ask the Australian Government to do or not to do certain things.

NIKOLAI HADDAD: Very good question. I would start by saying that, often, this question is asked as an exercise of narrative power.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: It sure is.

NIKOLAI HADDAD: In the sense that it is asked by institutions and media people, and we don't see those same questions being publicly asked when representatives of the Jewish community are being interviewed. It's not across the board, and that's the thing. That's why I do think that it is unhelpful to ask this question because the answer is a lot more complicated, often. Most of us—in fact, many of us, I would say—do believe in upholding international law, but the question of condemnation as a blanket statement without looking at history is a very

difficult and a different question. People might condemn with qualifications. People might take different views. I don't believe it's helpful to ask either community to condemn as a kind of gotcha moment.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I might ask you this, Mr Moussa. Is there a role for government in somehow playing a leadership role in imparting to the community and to different representative groups the importance of not doing that—the importance of trying to see things from the other person's perspective and agreeing to disagree—and focusing on what we can achieve here?

HASSAN MOUSSA: Definitely there is a role for government. We are disappointed in the role of government so far, particularly when the New South Wales Government has not engaged directly with the Arab community or the Muslim community. There's been basically zero contact at the highest level of government here with the community, and that's a problem in itself. If we are to talk about an inclusive society, we need to engage with everybody. We need to engage and include everybody because we are suffering. We are in pain, and we need that pain to be recognised by government and other people in power.

We felt suppressed in the media, suppressed in Parliament, suppressed in government circles and now in educational institutions. That creates a problem. When we feel suppressed, it means we're out of the equation, we're out of the discussion and we're out of the debate. We're not able to internalise our emotion. We're not able to express ourselves anymore, and that's the problem. In relation to the condemnation of what happened on 7 October and without justifying what happened on 7 October, we've been warning against a similar event for a long time and saying what Israel is doing—a 16-year blockade after depriving the people of Palestine and the people of Gaza of food and of aid and deciding what goes in and what goes out.

There's a total blockade happening against the people of Gaza. They are already under occupation. Naturally, they can't look at it in a vacuum as if it happened overnight. There's been occupation happening for a long time—for many decades. We recognise occupation of Ukraine by Russia. We've got the same thing happening in Palestine, and we don't recognise it. We see it with totally different eyes. That's the problem that is internalised within the Arab, Muslim and pro-Palestine community—seeing things differently at different levels with different reactions.

The CHAIR: Are you saying then that the views expressed by Arab Australians are justified by the history of what's happened in the Middle East, especially in Palestine?

HASSAN MOUSSA: Which views?

The CHAIR: The views that you're talking about now, in terms of antisemitism. You're saying that is supportive of what goes on with any antisemitism and—

HASSAN MOUSSA: I'm not saying this, sorry. I don't think you're interpreting correctly. I never said that.

The CHAIR: Then please explain.

HASSAN MOUSSA: I'm just saying that the reaction to what's happening is natural. I'm not saying that I justify what happened on 7 October. I'm just saying the natural reaction of people, when they've been denied—

The CHAIR: I'm not saying you justified October 7. I'm simply saying it sounds like what you're saying is that the development of this antisemitic outbreak at the moment—because we heard evidence this morning that Australia, prior to October 7, didn't see the level of antisemitism we're seeing now. Are you saying that's not causal, then?

HASSAN MOUSSA: No, I'm saying there's definitely a higher level of antisemitism in the country than it was before October 7. But at the same time, there's also a higher level of anti-Arabism, anti-Palestinianism and anti-Islamism, so it's not really restricted to one particular group of people. But one form is reported more than others, and that's why we don't see it.

The CHAIR: With respect, where is the Jewish protest against Palestinians occurring in New South Wales?

NIKOLAI HADDAD: That's because our Government is supporting Israel.

The CHAIR: No, answer the question. Where is the Jewish community that is protesting on the streets, in front of mosques, on the stairs of the Opera House—where is the equivalent? I understand your argument. I'm not arguing with your argument. I'm simply asking where is the equivalent?

HASSAN MOUSSA: But what are they protesting against? What should they be protesting against? We've got 52,000 people who have been killed since October 7. The whole of Gaza is demolished. They have a reason to protest on the grounds, for the people who support—

The CHAIR: We've listened to evidence this morning saying that the State of Israel should not be conflated with antisemitism, but you're giving evidence that that is the cause of the antisemitism we're seeing here.

HASSAN MOUSSA: I don't think we said that.

NIKOLAI HADDAD: I don't think either of us gave that evidence. I also reject the premise that any of the protests that have occurred in Sydney have targeted synagogues.

The CHAIR: We have seen protests outside The Great Synagogue. We have evidence to that effect.

HASSAN MOUSSA: That's the root of the protest. This is not intentionally against—outside the synagogue. That was the root of the—and it was diverted after a few protests. There was really nothing outside the synagogue, and there was no attack on any synagogue or—

The CHAIR: That's not the evidence we got this morning. Once the police left, protests started—but that's another issue. We also heard evidence this morning that the solution was for the future of the river to the sea is a one-state solution. Do you want to comment on that?

NIKOLAI HADDAD: There's a range of solutions that have been proposed over the last 50 years: two state, bi-national state, one state. I think it's important to note that when we talk about solutions, we're actually more concerned with talking about violations of human rights and denial of self-determination. The fact is, it's up to Palestinians to determine their future and what they'd like to see as the exercise of their self-determination. It seems to me that, on the ground, we are looking at the reality of a one-state solution because of the continual expansion of Israeli settlements into the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem. It's very hard to untangle all this. It is a call that complies with international law. It is not a politically outrageous call to say that every person that lives in that land should have equal representation.

HASSAN MOUSSA: Can I say, the international law states that there would be a two-state solution. The Australian Government supports a two-state solution. I always pose the question: How can we support a two-state solution and we basically turn a blind eye to the thousands of settlements that are being created within occupied land? There are hundreds of thousands of basically non-Palestinians living on Palestinian land. How do you work out a two-state solution? I'd like to see a solution. I personally, as an inclusive person, would like to include everybody. I would support a one-state solution where everybody is equal in that one-state solution. But if that's not possible and we need to separate, have two states, we've got the international law that dictates there will be two states on the pre-1967 border.

The CHAIR: I commend you on your position in relation to anti-racism in general, but you're saying antisemitism is getting too much play; I suppose those are the right words. But that's what this inquiry is all about. We're here to talk about antisemitism, its causes et cetera. It's in the terms of reference. Do you think education should play a bigger role—

HASSAN MOUSSA: Absolutely.

The CHAIR: —in terms of that trying to legislate ourselves out of it is not the only answer? What are your views on education?

HASSAN MOUSSA: I think we should be educating all our young people, and adults as well, in terms of being an inclusive society where we all have equal rights and we are all part of the same society, and that we are free from discrimination and prejudice. I need to have kids and grandkids who live in this country and feel free to behave in a way that is within the law, obviously, and are respected for who they are. It doesn't matter which country they come from, which religion, which ethnicity, which colour—all that sort of stuff. That's irrelevant to us. We keep talking about Australia being a multicultural, inclusive country. If we are truly a multicultural and inclusive country, then we should really erase racism. We should work together to eliminate racism.

The last survey I think of the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute says that 63 per cent of our people, of Australian people, think there is at least somewhat—racism is somewhat of a problem. So 63 per cent of our population recognise there is a racism problem in this country. We have a problem with social cohesion. We need to work together, whether it's communities, whether it's Parliament, whether it's government, whether it's educators—all of us, every institution, media and universities as well, to combat racism at every level and ensure we have a society where people are free to live in that society at equal level.

The CHAIR: Does high levels of protest in relation to this promote your point of view?

HASSAN MOUSSA: Of course it does. I've actually been to most of the protests. I've never seen a view that ever amplifies any antisemitism. It always looked at, basically, an inclusive society. I think there's been people

from different backgrounds and different religions speaking at these protests, at every one of those protests, and amplifying an inclusive view.

The CHAIR: We've had evidence this morning from people who are Jewish. They said that they couldn't go to those protests—even though they were fully supportive of the position of the Palestinians in the Middle East—because they felt uncomfortable.

HASSAN MOUSSA: Because it's been amplified in the media as such, but I think some of the people who joined the protest and had signs. So they've been part of the Jewish community and they felt comfortable with it, week after week. I don't see any problem with that. I didn't see any problem. I've never seen a single antisemitic statement being made on stage at one of those rallies.

NIKOLAI HADDAD: I think we also heard evidence earlier on in this inquiry about members of the Jewish community who expressed feeling comfortable going to those rallies every week. I think we've also had many—the speakers, not just attending. We've had speakers on the podium, often from the Jewish community.

The CHAIR: We heard that evidence this morning as well. What I was trying to get to was what the position is in terms of what is being said. What you're saying is there is nothing to be seen here. Is that what you're saying, in terms of antisemitism?

HASSAN MOUSSA: I'm saying I've not seen any evidence—

The CHAIR: Those protests were not antisemitic. Is that what you're saying?

HASSAN MOUSSA: That's what I'm saying. From the ones I attended—and I've been to quite a lot of them—I haven't seen a single incident of antisemitism. I think the organisers of the rallies have actively worked to ensure that any people who may inflame that are rejected from the rallies.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Moussa, you indicated before that you had a challenge—or a fear, at least—in terms of being able to speak out on issues with respect to Gaza and Palestine. Are there any recent legislative changes that have caused that fear or restricted your speech at all in terms of what you can say about the situation in Gaza?

HASSAN MOUSSA: We've seen examples where people go to put the kufi on and aren't able to display it anymore because they're worried about the impact of being classified as an antisemite. People carrying Palestinian flags in support of what's happening in Palestine are also being called antisemitic. With the change of law recently in relation to the hoax incidents, that basically denies people, or creates new laws that effectively curb, freedom of speech, with hefty penalties. That's what we're commenting on. We are deprived of the right to speak up because we are fearful of the new laws that are being created.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I'm just interested in that. In terms of those laws, what do you believe that you're not able to say now because of those laws that you otherwise would have said?

HASSAN MOUSSA: Basically, I'm contained in terms of what I present through some social media because, for me, every time I criticise what's happening in Israel, I might be misinterpreted by the powers that be. That's the problem I have. I think there is a huge fear in our community in people being able to express themselves. We talked to a lot of people and they said, "I'm worried about losing my job if I'm identified to be a pro-Palestine person, because of what's happening. I'm fearful of going to school because of the restrictions that schools have started to put on people within the school, whether it's students or teachers." That's the problem we're talking about here. Basically, people aren't able to express themselves or display their own culture. They can't do this anymore because every time there is a pro-Palestine stand or they show an expression of support for Palestine, they are denied. That's what we're talking about here.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Just returning to this issue of the conflation of criticism of Israel with antisemitism, I'm not sure whether or not either of you watch Sky News or read *The Daily Telegraph*, but it seems to me that those two media organisations are a high point of the conflation of the two and, in the last two years or so, have taken a highly irresponsible and dangerous position in caricaturing the Palestinian protest movement and conflating criticism of Israel with antisemitism. I'm wondering if you'd care to comment about that, and if you've got any general thoughts about ways that the media could more responsibly, in the interests of social cohesion, report on these matters.

HASSAN MOUSSA: I don't intentionally watch Sky News or read the Telegraph, unless it comes as a link. Unfortunately, you can't avoid Sky News because every time you open your browser, you get Sky News in front of you, so it's imposed on you. I think the media has a lot to answer for about inflaming divisions within society—in particular, those two media organisations you've mentioned. They have a lot to answer for in basically deflating the capacity of people to respond to what's happening in Gaza and to be themselves and express

themselves rather than suppressing their emotions. That's why I think people are fearful to speak up in this country—because Sky News and Fox News could damage their reputation, could damage their future, could damage their job, their pay and their future in this country. I think that has happened to many people. A lot of high-profile people have paid a huge price for taking a stand on Palestine and from attacks by these organisations.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Mr Haddad, do you have any thoughts on that?

NIKOLAI HADDAD: I think we have seen a lot of hit pieces by News Corp media that have targeted people who have spoken out. I also think News Corp media has, in general, promoted an extreme pro-Israel position about the conflict, has failed to properly report on the civilian harm that has been caused over the last 19 months and has essentially repeated the talking points of the Israeli Government in justifying what has gone on. That has had a flow-on effect on how people view the situation and even how people view the protests, because they're not seeing what we're protesting against and they're not seeing what our Government at the Federal level is doing in support of Israel. People ask why we are focusing so much on this issue. It is important to note that Australia does provide some support to Israel, but we are part of a Western alliance and our ally, the United States, has provided 70 per cent of Israel's military budget that it has used to perpetrate this genocide.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Thank you, Mr Haddad. Thanks, Chair, those are questions.

The CHAIR: No more questions? Okay, thanks very much for coming.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Sheikh MOHAMMED TRAD, Religious Education Co-ordinator, Lebanese Muslim Association, sworn and examined

Mr GAMEL KHEIR, Secretary, Lebanese Muslim Association, sworn and examined

Dr IJAZ KHAN, Senior Advisor, Australian National Imams Council, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming in to give evidence today. Would any of you like to give a short opening statement?

IJAZ KHAN: I'm happy to unless one of my colleagues would like to.

The CHAIR: Each of you can if you really want to, but maybe start with you, Mr Khan.

IJAZ KHAN: We accept that there has been a rising experience in antisemitism. However, this cannot be viewed in a vacuum or in isolation. To do so risks misidentifying the issues and also exacerbating the very problem sought to be addressed. Sadly, we live in a time where there is a heightened experience of Islamophobia as well, much of it unreported. No doubt, there are other communities which have their own experience of marginalisation and prejudice. To elevate one community above others risks undermining social cohesion and gives rise to a greater resentment directed to that community by other communities that are suffering but neglected.

Regrettably, the State Government rushed to amend the law—specifically, section 93Z of the Crimes Act New South Wales 1900—contrary to the overwhelming advice of pre-eminent Chief Justice Bathurst and the Faith Affairs Council, of which ANIC is a member. The pre-eminent Chief Justice cautioned against using criminal laws to achieve social policy objectives. Yet that was precisely what the Government did. Disregarding the experiences of other faith communities and further expanding the protections afforded in section 93Z of the Crimes Act, so that it provided protection against hate speech for only one community, created a situation of differential treatment and different laws applying to different communities, further alienating that group from the overall community at large. Whether intended or otherwise, to the Australian Muslim community it said, "Your experience of Islamophobia does not warrant the same concern or response."

As a related point, care needs to be taken—and we've heard this in earlier sessions—to avoid conflating antisemitism with legitimate criticism directed at Israel's aggression related to Palestinians and Zionist ideology. Otherwise, there is a misplaced assessment and identification and a resulting suppression of the ability of people to express their grievance, their distress, their concern about the tragedies unfolding in Palestine. Summarily, there needs to be a considered and appropriate approach to addressing antisemitism, without diminishing other prejudice faced by different communities or using the label of antisemitism to stifle legitimate concerns of what is happening in Palestine. Otherwise, any responses and measures might have the opposite effect, of contributing to the problem, undermining social cohesion, rather than bringing us all together. I thank you for the time.

GAMEL KHEIR: Thank you, Chairperson and Committee members. I appear today on behalf of the Lebanese Muslim Association, one of the largest and oldest Muslim community organisations in the country. We serve tens of thousands of families and have been at the heart of community development, religious leadership, youth work, social services and cross-cultural dialogue for more than six decades. Let me begin by stating clearly and unequivocally the LMA condemns all forms of racism, bigotry and religious hatred, including antisemitism. No person and no community should ever be subject to vilification, intimidation or violence because of their faith or background.

We support strong, meaningful responses to antisemitism, just as we support responses to Islamophobia, anti-Arab racism, anti-Asian racism and the ongoing structural disadvantages faced by our First Nations Australia. But our appearance here today is not just to affirm that basic principle. It is to respectfully but firmly raise a deeper concern: that this inquiry, while well intentioned, risks reinforcing a dangerous perception that some forms of hate are taken more seriously than others. In recent months, thousands of Australians have taken to the streets to express their outrage and sorrow at the catastrophic loss of life in Gaza. Those were not fringe demonstrations. They were large, peaceful, multi-faith gatherings calling for the most basic human demands: a ceasefire to stop the killing of civilians, particularly women and children. And yet, time and time again, these protests have been smeared, often by politicians and commentators, as breeding grounds for antisemitism.

A handful of isolated incidents, already denounced by protest organisers and community leaders, have been used to delegitimise entire movements. People who marched in good faith—students, mothers, teachers, doctors—have been made to feel like suspects, extremists or even threatened. Consider the case of a young Muslim teacher from Western Sydney who attended a rally with her extended family. She carried a sign quoting Nelson Mandela: Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians. The next day, she was called into a meeting by her school principal and warned that her presence might bring reputational damage to the school. Or

the 15-year-old student, who told her teacher that she felt afraid when politicians called for arrests at pro-Palestinian rallies. When asked why, she said, "Because they don't mean people breaking the law. They mean people like me."

These are not hypotheticals. These are real people in our community, people who are starting to believe that their voice, their identity and their grief are not welcome in Australian public life. Why is it that, when Australian Muslims speak out, we are accused of fuelling division but, when we are vilified, threatened or targeted, the response is silence or, worse, justification? Mosques across Sydney have reported an increase in hate messages and threats. Our imams and funeral workers have been sent abusive emails accusing them of supporting terrorism. A community centre in the inner west had its front doors graffitied with the words "Go back to Gaza", even though the people who use that centre are Australians born and raised here.

Meanwhile, politicians share platforms with organisations like the Australian Jewish Association, a group whose public commentary includes statements that label Palestinians as inherently violent and incompatible with the Australian society. When these associations are criticised, we're told that they don't represent the mainstream Jewish community, and we agree. But why, then, is it so easy to paint all Muslims or pro-Palestinian groups with the same broad brush? While this inquiry rightfully examines antisemitism, it takes place at a time when young Muslims on university campuses are being intimidated for peacefully expressing support for the Palestinian human rights. University management in several New South Wales institutions has removed students' posters, shut down peaceful vigils and threatened disciplinary action, all under the guise of safety.

Yet no evidence has been provided that these students pose any threat. Their only crime was caring publicly about the suffering of others. What message does this send to a generation of Australians growing up Muslim, Arab or pro-Palestinian? That their freedom of speech is conditional, that their safety is negotiable, that their belonging in this country depends on remaining silent in the face of injustice. It is this double standard, this selective moral outrage, that is fuelling a deep and growing distrust in institutions. The Muslim community has worked tirelessly for decades to build bridges. After the Cronulla riots, it was organisations like mine, the LMA, that launched programs in schools, created dialogue circles with Jewish and Christian leaders, partnered with police and built resilient projects with government funding.

We have been at the front line of social cohesion, often quietly and without recognition. But the burden cannot fall on us alone. Social cohesion is a shared responsibility, and it begins with fairness. We call on this Committee to ensure that the fight against antisemitism does not come at the expense or stigmatisation of another community, that a concern for Jewish safety does not transition into Muslim silencing, that defending one community's dignity does not mean ignoring another's pain. Let this inquiry be a starting point for a broader, braver conversation, one that upholds justice, equality, that protects all communities from hate and that restores faith in the idea that this country belongs to all of us. Thank you very much.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Thank you for that opening statement, Mr Kheir. Something that I noticed when I spent some time living in Ramallah in the West Bank was that a lot of Palestinians didn't like Israel very much. The other thing I noticed was that there seemed to be a lot of reasons for that. Ancient antisemitism, to my mind, seemed to be far down the list in terms of reasons not to like Israel. I think, in terms of social cohesion, it is important for people to try to see things from the position of the other and understand the context and the history that informs the position of the other. I wonder if you could talk about why so many members of the Arab community, and maybe the Lebanese community, have very strong criticisms of Israel and explain why, by and large, those are not antisemitism motivated?

GAMEL KHEIR: Thank you very much for that question. I'm glad you mentioned it. Let me first address the fact that it's a criticism of Israel. To correlate that with a criticism of a faith is unfair because I have never met, and I would not be a part of, an organisation that was based on anti-religion or denigrating one religion against the other. That is not the agenda and nor is it the principle that we all believe in. I think criticism of Israel is rightfully condemned because just like we condemned South Africa when they isolated the black community, they were rightfully condemned as well. Any form of bigotry, and any form of treating the other as a lower specie than the other, should be condemned. I think we rightfully should be condemning those sort of actions, and shame on us if we don't.

More to the point, of our community—let me speak for myself. I'm 54 years old. I've lived with the idea of the Palestinian resistance, and I've lived with the idea of the Palestinian state being a dream. The sad reality is that when I went to school—I went to school here in this country and I studied history. I love history. I remember talking to my teacher. I asked my teacher, "Well, what was the point of history?" And he said, "So we don't repeat the same mistakes." Sadly, we're here experiencing another genocide. I thought after I learnt World War II, I would never live to see another genocide, thankfully. But, sadly, I am. What have we learnt from that historical lesson? What was the point of learning history if not to not repeat the same mistake again? This is what this community

feels, that we've been isolated, marginalised and yet we're seeing our brothers and sisters being—a genocide taking place, and we don't feel able to speak out. That's the pain that this community feels right now.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Sheikh Trad, there have been views expressed that you somehow achieve social cohesion maybe by banning protests or prohibiting particular movements or particular expressions of opinion. I want to know your opinion on—in the context of very strong, conflicting views on this—how we achieve social cohesion and avoid antisemitism developing in Australia in terms of community relations, in the context of these strong opinions that are going to continue to exist on this issue.

MOHAMMED TRAD: I might base my answer on a follow-up on the feeling of isolation, because I don't think that is a solution to the problem that's being suggested, that if these thoughts are allowed to be expressed, it's going to damage social cohesion. The alternative is that, if they are not allowed to be expressed, we're going to have a more dangerous problem come to the front. So what happens with that? People have a lot of anguish and frustration that is building up inside them and they don't have an outlet for it. They, rightfully so, feel like there are injustices being committed and they know, based on their upbringing, both as Muslims and as Australians. I'm speaking about Muslims now, but I would say even other faith communities, when they see something which is perceived to be an injustice, they should stand up and say something, even if it does come at some kind of personal expense. But what we are finding is that because of the sensitivity around this topic—which is really unfortunate, to be honest—it is causing people to really feel that isolation.

If you'll allow me, I'll give an example of somebody that I sat with maybe six or seven months ago. I was recently the imam in North Sydney—in Hornsby. A teacher reached out to me, expressing some of these frustrations at what's happening in the school system. Students are not being allowed to express their frustrations or their thoughts about what's happening, and teachers are not being allowed to teach students and to help students navigate these thoughts and these feelings. This teacher was extremely frustrated and was unsure how to cope and how to express what she knows, as a teacher, she should be expressing in these situations. So I went and sat down with her. If she had sent me the details of what she had said, I'd be able to read them to you, but it was to the point where she did not want to send them in a message; she just wanted to sit down with me and have a discussion. I think that's also telling, that we are in a very strange situation right now where people feel like the cost is very high to be able to express your feelings and to be able to help young people navigate the situation.

I actually have some of the notes that I sent back to her in relation to this, because I think this situation and what's happening with regards to what one might call the silencing of the pro-Palestinian narrative is affecting all aspects of our community. It's affecting students in our schools who are seeing the footage of what's happening overseas, and they are not permitted to express it in a space where they should be able to express their ideas, where they would have rational, mature adults who have been educated in how to teach students and how to help them navigate things like this. They are not being allowed to express them openly in front of their teachers. If I may, I'd like to read just a few of those notes that I sent. I sent these notes to her as some suggestions on how she may approach the school executive about the situation. I started by saying:

- Unfortunately, the decision to put a lid on any pro-Palestinian sentiment was made at a department level so many schools have been facing difficulties.
- I think it's a good idea to focus on what the present decision does to the students because they are the primary stakeholder in the school apparatus.
- The decisions we make and the messaging we employ are teaching students how they should respond to clear violations of human rights and what kind of values we place on human life. It is therefore unbecoming of the school leadership to model the behaviour of a minimalisation, what-aboutism, and willing dismissal of a serious and significant world event.

This is both in relation to our students and our teachers, because our teachers are experiencing a lot of this frustration as well. "How can we ignore the fact that our students and our teachers are very likely regularly exposed to footage and news about the ongoing violations in Palestine? Are we employing best practice for how to manage this? Are we validating the right kind of emotional response or the wrong kind? Are we acknowledging there are violations, or pretending that there are not so? Leadership is often not easy and we need to remember our duty of care."

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Mr Khan, a question for you but, Sheikh, feel free to answer this one as well. There have been some high-profile examples reported in the media of antisemitic things being said in mosques in sermons. I wonder if you could comment on the extent to which this is a problem and any perspectives on how to deal with that within the context of law reform issues that oppose, sometimes, about strengthening hate speech laws and whatnot.

MOHAMMED TRAD: After the events of October 7 there has been a heightened alert to what's happening in mosques and religious spaces. I would say that the fact that there is only a very, very small number—probably less than the five fingers of my hand—that have come up in this light is very telling. We have hundreds,

if not thousands, of prayer spaces in New South Wales alone and we are not seeing this issue arise. I cannot speak directly to the sentiments that were echoed in the places that have been identified, but I can definitely say that in the numerous centres that I have been exposed to—that I have given sermons in—there has not been any indication of antisemitic expressions or anything like that. I think people have been very careful, and maybe more careful than they need to be, in addressing the matter of Palestine.

What needs to be kept in mind as well is that the community is looking to their leadership for how to think about this, how to respond to this and how they can continue living their lives knowing that—because we believe that our fellow Muslims, wherever they are, are our brothers and our sisters, like our children. The young children in Gaza are like our children. They're the ones that are suffering right now. So they are looking to their leadership to understand how do I deal with this? How do I deal with these emotions and these feelings and the fact that something very real is happening to our brothers and sisters, children, and so on? I think sometimes we are more careful than we need to be. But it's like I said, in many of the places that I'm involved in—I'm in Lakemba mosque now and previously I was the imam in Hornsby, like I mentioned, and prior to that I was in Zetland—we have not seen any clear manifestations of this antisemitism on the pulpit.

IJAZ KHAN: I might add that, from ANIC's perspective, hate speech is not acceptable. It's not a position that we condone, it's not a position that we accept and it's something that we are regularly educating all of our imams and community leaders to be vigilant of, both at a representative level within their mosques and upon those who visit their mosques. We are very careful, although we are unable to direct the imams on what to say. They do have prerogative to voice their opinion during sermons. But we are regularly educating our imams. We bring them together in forums on a very frequent interval through various committees, and we are very careful about informing them about the type of speech which is considered to be acceptable and unacceptable. We don't have specific events to hand where we note that there is clear antisemitic behaviour or rhetoric being issued in the mosques at an imam level. If indeed that is the case, we would be happy to review it on a case-by-case basis.

GAMEL KHEIR: Can I quickly add that sometimes we've got to be careful what we wish for. How much do we value freedom of expression and freedom of speech? The problem is, if you want to solve this problem by trying to legislate against it, you're driving it underground; you're not solving the problem. The problem is we have to address the fact that there is a lack of social cohesion taking place effectively at the moment. The more you try to isolate, the more you make martyrs of these extremists, and this is the problem. You can legislate as much as you want. You're just driving it underground and you're making martyrs of their cause because then they say, "Look, we are the ones speaking the truth. That's why they want to ban us." You can't address it the way that we're approaching it. We have to be challenging ourselves here and we have to go outside the normal. We all talk the social cohesion talk. We need to talk less about it and start practising it more.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Perhaps this question is for you, Sheikh Trad. Are you able to talk about the way that the religion of Islam works? I understand that it doesn't have a hierarchical structure like the Catholic Church, so there's no pope who has ultimate authority. I know that there are different strands of thought and so forth. It just seems to me that it is quite important for people to understand that, when they see certain extreme things reported, it's not necessarily the view of Islam or the view even of mainstream thought.

MOHAMMED TRAD: Thanks for that. I think that's a very important addition. For us, we don't have a very clear hierarchy where everybody reports back through levels all the way up to—as you mentioned in the Catholic tradition, they have the pope. We do have what people refer to as the mufti, but the mufti is more someone who we turn to for advice on a particular jurisprudential matter, so an Islamic legal matter. They would give advice on those matters. In terms of taking a position on "Okay, this is the direction of our community. This is what Islam stands for. This is what it is and it isn't", it's kind of decentralised. We don't really have that kind of—so me being responsible back to that higher hierarchical structure.

I would say probably what we do have—and this is not in a formal way or not a very structural way—is that you have the older generation of sheiks or imams. They might have a bit more influence over the younger generation. But that's a very informal type thing. Because we have people with very varying ideas on certain matters, they don't always respect each other and fall in line to, as you mentioned, the mainstream. I think it's important to consider the mainstream, because it's like we mentioned. Those instances of where you might see concerning views or ideas put forward, they're a very small handful and they're not representative of the mainstream. If they were representative of the mainstream, we would be seeing a news article every other day about the matter. But we aren't. We're not seeing that.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: That's very helpful, thank you. Any thoughts on that, Mr Khan?

IJAZ KHAN: There's a social aphorism. We say, "Don't follow the follower. Follow the religion." When in doubt, don't take your example from the follower. Take your example from the text of the religion.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: I want to continue a similar line of questioning. Some of the sermons that have been reported from some of the imams have been concerning, like the Roselands sermon from over a year ago now. I'll quote from it. This is probably one of the worst parts from, I think, November 2023. It said, "Count the Jewish Zionists and kill them one by one. Don't keep any one of them alive." That's purely an example of hate speech, I would assume. Do you agree that it is antisemitic hate speech and how do you go about addressing something like that? If the comments like that are so strong and so violent in nature, it's very hard for organisations like yours to address that type of hate speech, isn't it?

MOHAMMED TRAD: Or to police it. Can I ask, were they quoting scripture when mentioning this?

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: It was from November 2023.

MOHAMMED TRAD: The person giving the sermon, was he quoting a line of scripture?

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Not to my knowledge.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Is that a line of scripture in the Koran?

MOHAMMED TRAD: No, not that I'm aware of.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I wouldn't have thought so.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Not that I'm aware of.

GAMEL KHEIR: If I may add a bit more to that, you could take any isolated incident or speech and take it out of that context—not that I'm defending the context of that speech. I haven't heard it before. But if you're asking me, as part of the mainstream organisations, that would not be tolerated if that was the speech. However, having said that, if you're going to hold everyone to the same balance which the law does, then I would be questioning a lot of the remarks that the AJA have been putting on their Facebook and internet pages as well. Either we address this wholeheartedly or are we aiming at certain statements, whether they're taken in or out of context? My point is, we are not defending those statements. To the contrary, the religion in a whole would condemn that sort of statement—the mainstream. I can't speak for every organisation here, but I can speak on behalf of the mainstream. We would condemn that. But we also condemn the same violent, reprehensible language being used by the AJA. They should be held to the same brush that you're holding that speech to.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: What's your working definition of antisemitism then? Do you agree with the IHRA definition of antisemitism? What sort of statements do you see as antisemitic? Where's the line drawn between anti-Zionism and antisemitism? Obviously, that particular comment that I made just then is clearly antisemitic hate speech. It would fall very much not just as anti-Zionist.

IJAZ KHAN: Thank you for the question, honourable member. Whilst we're not completely clear about the context of those particular comments—and this is the first time that we hear such rhetoric—I think all three of us here unequivocally accept that it is unacceptable to issue such rhetoric, without knowing the context of the same. This is one comment. It's in isolation. We've accepted that it's unacceptable. We don't understand the context and we don't even know whether it was actually made by an imam or it was made by any other participant within that institution. We're happy to take the question on notice and report back to the Committee. But we do say, happy to hold us to account. Hold our cousins to account. Hold us to the same account. Don't hold us to a greater or lesser account. We may not have the same appearance, we may not eat the same food, we may not worship the same way, but we are still citizens of your country, Senator.

The CHAIR: I'd quibble with the food.

IJAZ KHAN: I take your point. I concede and retract, honourable Chair.

The CHAIR: Especially the baba ganoush!

IJAZ KHAN: Yes, I concede and retract, honourable Chair. I accept. Hold us to the same account, Senator. We are very happy to tell the people within our community to pull their head in and behave if they do something wrong. We are not the police. We are not government. We are not a regulator. We issue guidelines. Those guidelines are not mandatory. They are not enforceable. We are citizens of the same country. If we will be held to account to those laws and our cousins held to the same account, we have no argument. We are both eventually sons of Abraham. There is an Abrahamic accord internationally which accepts this.

The CHAIR: We'd like to have one.

IJAZ KHAN: Honourable Chair, we would be obliged to be held to the same account. We are here for social cohesion. We don't attend today in an antisemitic environment to prejudice the cause of our cousins; we come to facilitate it. We come here to help a Senate inquiry. We give up time. We give up energy. We give up

family. We are not at work today. We are here to serve our community and you. Antisemitism, like Islamophobia, corrupts social cohesion; it does not further it. Hold us to the same account, Senator. Bring us equivalent speeches or equivalent website snippets from our cousin organisations. Sit them alongside us and ask them the same question.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: We did have an opportunity to talk to them today.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: If I could just jump in for a second, Mr Rath's question is very valid because this was an incident which was investigated, and it was found by the police not to have actually met the threshold of hate speech laws because it was deemed to be referring to Zionist Jews, being in Israel. Of course, there have been subsequent changes to the hate speech laws in New South Wales, and section 93Z in particular. This question, in a sense, as Mr Rath has put to you, is looking at that. Where should the marker be drawn in terms of what constitutes freedom of expression and what constitutes hate speech? Where you would give edicts—or guidelines, sorry, as you said—in terms of that communication within mosques or the like, where should that line be drawn? Where should the Committee be recommending that the line be drawn?

IJAZ KHAN: I thank you for the follow-up question, honourable member. It's actually the hardest question I'll probably be asked today. We think, in an educated capacity within our organisation, that the guidelines should be non-offensive speech mutually. Anything that we say to our community about offending any other community is not acceptable. Now, if, by virtue of our existence, we are offensive, we cannot help that. If, by virtue of our existence, we wear a scarf, we cannot help that. If, by virtue of us saying that there are atrocities being committed, and those are backed up by the ICJ, we cannot help that. But if we say anything that is equivalent to what honourable member Rath has said, we accept it's unacceptable. We are on record as having accepted it's unacceptable. All three of us have said it's unacceptable. Hold our cousins to the same account, honourable member.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: To that point, this is where we have to draw markers, so to speak. There's one thing in saying something is unacceptable. You and I might have different views as to what's acceptable and unacceptable. The Parliament then determines what is unacceptable by law and what is punishable as a criminal offence. There comes the demarcation of what should be unacceptable speech—we shouldn't have it; we shouldn't like it—and then what should be criminalised.

IJAZ KHAN: An excellent follow-up. This requires stakeholder engagement, Senator. This requires interfaith dialogue with interfaith community leaders in the same room with lawmakers, discussing what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Educative, institutional, organisational and parliamentary measures need to be taken to draw lines in the sand between what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. We will comply. Bring our cousins and we will comply. We do not feel that it is fair to say we have no right to exist—that by calling out atrocities, we are being antisemitic. We accept the swastika is offensive and shouldn't be displayed. We accept that the Hitler salute is offensive and should not occur. If it's offensive to you, we don't want to do it; we don't want to be part of it. We don't want you to be offended.

We accept the Holocaust was an indescribable horror. I cannot fathom, in my rightest mind, how an event like that occurs between humans in history. With my own background in medicine, even one human suffering is intolerable for me. The fact that six million died—I cannot believe that it occurred in human history. But 50,000 now dead in today's day—what have we learnt? What are we teaching our children? "It's okay. Pick up a gun. Go to war. Defend a country. Participate in human aggression." I went to school one street from here. I practise medicine across the road. It is not acceptable for me as a citizen—in which you are a lawmaker, sir—that we allow the suppression of calling wrong "wrong" and not accepting that anyone has the right to do the right thing anymore. Call our cousins and put us on the table; we will comply.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Kheir, I could see that you were trying to say something as well.

GAMEL KHEIR: I think my brother just said it beautifully, but can I conflate that? My personal opinion—let's rule out criticism of a country being criticism of a religion. How about that being a starting point? Because if I condemn Russia, I'm not being anti-Orthodox. If I criticise China, I'm not being anti-communist. I'm criticising the acts of a political party or a political government; it's not condemning a religion. Can we start that as a starting point? Because we only use this terminology exclusively when it comes to Israel. We don't use that same barometer for any other country on earth other than Israel.

Let's start by saying antisemitism—any form of bigotry to our Jewish brothers and sisters—is offensive, just as I would find offensive any bigotry against any Muslim or Christian, or any other faith for that matter. Let that be a starting point. Let's start by saying that criticism of a country's act is not criticism of the religion. The two should not be conflated together. And by doing it exclusively for one, it is demonising by nature everyone

else because then we're saying we're all antisemitic. We're not. We are humans who are seeing a human tragedy happening and we're calling it out. That's it.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: I have a quick follow-up question to what my colleague has just been asking about the point at which things should be criminalised. It's right, isn't it, that the way to solve this problem—as Sheikh Trad said earlier, criminalising can have unintended consequences, where it just drives conduct that none of us want in society underground. So it's really got to be a process that's driven first by interfaith dialogue, as you put it, by education and by other measures. If we resort to criminalising, that's got to be at the end of that process, once other things have not worked, not the first step in that process. Is that right? What's your view about that—any or all of you?

GAMEL KHEIR: I'll give it a quick one as I want to give my brothers and sisters a chance to put their point. From my point of view, and I've said this verbatim—I've been saying it consistently on every media outlet when I get a chance to speak about the issue of Gaza—the only solution for this is education. We can legislate as much as we want, but if we don't address the fact that there's a racist bigot element in our community—and we need to educate our youth, most importantly, that this is not the Australia that we love.

I experienced, as I said, the Cronulla riots, and I hope to God I never experience anything like that again because that was the only time in my life that I actually felt threatened to be an Australian and Muslim at the same time, and it just happened to be that they were the two that someone didn't like. It was the first time ever that I had the Australian flag used against me as if I didn't fit into that narrative of what it means to be carrying the Australian flag. We address that sensibly by education, by integration and by addressing social cohesion. Let's stop talking about social cohesion and let's start putting some money and community effort into actually practising it, because that's the only time we're going to solve this problem. You can legislate as much as you want, but if you don't address the key concerns, which are a lack of education and bigotry on every side—and that's what needs to be addressed.

MOHAMMED TRAD: I'll just add that—I think it's a bit more of an elaboration on what I mentioned earlier—I'm trying to look at it from the perspective of the work that I do on the ground, what I see people going through and the thoughts that are going through their heads. When I stand there and they're talking to me or they're sitting down and talking to me in the mosque or in the musalla, meaning the prayer centre, you feel like they're just waiting for someone to express their feelings to them in a way that they can then go and convey without getting themselves into some kind of trouble. I think what we need to be very careful of—and this speaks to your point that legislation really should be the last step in this process. What we are seeing with the current approach to the matter and the real sensitivity, in that any speech or rhetoric that people don't like—and I'm not referring to anything that's been quoted today by the honourable members—goes straight to the antisemitism point.

But what ends up happening—what I'm seeing is that we end up with one of two eventualities: One is that people just keep bottling that anguish and that anger inside, and we know that's a very maladaptive way to deal with hurt, to deal with pain and to deal with these kinds of feelings when they see injustices in front of their eyes. And I think what exacerbates that is that, with regards to this, because it's not the only atrocity that's happening in the world—we talk about what's been happening in Sudan, and we talk about what happened in Bangladesh recently and in other areas. But with regards to this particular situation, it's like you're seeing it in front of your eyes while at the same time it's out of your reach, so you're unable to really do much about the situation. What are the two eventualities if you don't really have an outlet or a way to express your anger and your frustration? It either just keeps getting bottled up inside, and that causes a lot more anguish, or we just become very desensitised to injustice. I don't see a third alternative. That's why I think it's really important, and I really appreciate the comment that you made that we do set up avenues for people to really express legitimate and justified thoughts and ideas about what's happening.

The Hon. CAMERON MURPHY: Yes. Otherwise, what you're really saying is, the fear of being labelled an antisemite if you're engaging in legitimate criticism or expression of your point of view leads to a form of self-policing and it bottles things up, and that just encourages extremism eventually. Is that right?

MOHAMMED TRAD: Yes.

The CHAIR: We might bring our questioning to an end. Thank you very much, gentlemen. Thank you for coming and for your evidence.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Miss DANIELLE TISCHMANN, Co-President, Australasian Union of Jewish Students, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Welcome, Miss Tischmann. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: I would like to start by acknowledging that I'm here today before you on the Gadigal land of the Eora nation, and I pay my respects to Elders, both past and present. I would also like to thank you for the opportunity to be here before you today and express our appreciation for the work you are doing to address antisemitism in our community. For many Jewish and Israeli students, being on campus today means hiding who you are. It means being kicked out of your share house for being a Zionist, knowing that if you speak up, if you wear a Star of David or mention family in Israel, you risk being labelled, harassed or shut out entirely. It means watching your peers turn their backs when you try to share your lived experience or engage in respectful debate. Antisemitism is no stranger to our campus or our streets, but over the past 19 months we've seen a disturbing surge.

Universities, meant to be sanctuaries of learning, have become places of fear and exclusion. The war in Israel and Palestine has intensified a campus culture already teetering on division and hostility. On many campuses, anti-Israel and anti-Zionist rhetoric has become a vehicle to vilify Jews as a collective, creating an environment where discrimination, even violence, is framed as justified resistance. And this isn't just about Jewish students; it's about the kind of society we are shaping. The values we foster on campus don't stay there; they follow us into our workplaces, our politics and our communities. Right now, too many students are learning that it's acceptable to harass, intimidate or exclude someone because of who they are or what they believe. We are raising a generation disconnected from one another, unable to build bridges and unable to have hard conversations with respect, and that's dangerous not just for Jewish students but for the future of our society. So I thank you for allowing us to engage in this inquiry and assist in the process of building a stronger, more inclusive society, both on and off campus. I look forward to answering your questions.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Thank you for appearing today. In your submission, you said that antisemitism on campus is persistent and embedded. Do university policies give any comfort or protection to Jewish students, and are things better now than where they were a year or two ago? It seems to me that the University of Sydney was maybe quite slow to act, but maybe things are getting a little bit better now. But do the university policies actually help in any way?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: I think, when it comes to university policies, each campus is different with what policies they have and how they affect campus culture. Obviously, in the past 18 months and the past Federal inquiries, we've seen an influx of policies being introduced as a result of those inquiries. In terms of the general anti-racism and anti-vilification policies that some universities do have, we've found it really difficult for incidents of antisemitism to be recognised, taking into consideration that incidents of antisemitism have significantly been under-reported due to a general lack of trust in university reporting and complaints processes.

We have data from prior to October 7 that really demonstrated a genuine lack of trust. I think when it comes to handling, if a student is to put forward "I've experienced antisemitism" without a definition of antisemitism, a lot of them, if they are put forward, go unaddressed or are dismissed. We've also had instances where the complaints handling process has been frustrated by the person handling those complaints having preconceived notions of the current conflict. Whilst everyone is entitled to their opinion, we question the validity of that complaints handling process because of that situation.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: It's a bit of both then. It's that a lot of Jewish students won't report, so it goes massively underreported, but then is it also the case that, when it is being reported, it's often not taken seriously or it's too slow or the policies aren't fit for purpose? Is it a bit of both?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: Yes.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Sydney Uni in particular I wanted to focus a little bit on—my former uni. I wonder if you could talk to the encampment that was there and some of the examples that Jewish students would have faced at Sydney Uni. I've heard of examples of flying the Taliban flag; I've heard of connections to Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is an outlawed terrorist organisation in many countries around the world. What has life been like for Jewish students at Sydney University over the past 2½ years and going through that encampment experience?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: It's been incredibly difficult for a lot of Jewish students at the University of Sydney. Some have deferred their studies at the University of Sydney; some have just moved entirely from the University of Sydney. The encampments, whilst they were on—the environment they created and the examples you mentioned—students were avoiding campus, and that sense has stayed with those students on campus, despite the encampment obviously not being there anymore. The feeling of Jewish students at the University of Sydney has been a bit of despair and a lot of apprehension to engage in any conversations. Those who do are a lot of the

times harassed and intimidated, and it's just been a really isolating and hostile environment, to the point where Jewish students are just not engaging in any parts of campus life. The language on campus at the University of Sydney and the justification we've seen by senior leadership over the past year just created an environment that was really unwelcoming to Jewish students.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: Obviously we need to try to get the balance right between freedom of speech and combating antisemitism, but when a Jewish student hears chants like "From the river to the sea" and "Internationalise the intifada" and sees flags like Taliban flags—I think there was an example of that at Sydney Uni—what impact does that have on them? It's not just seen, I assume, by Jewish students as being anti-Israel, but it's seen as being quite antisemitic and hurtful to them when they hear it. Is that a fair comment?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: Yes. We always advocate obviously that academic freedom, freedom of speech and the right to protest are integral parts of a healthy, functioning democracy. There's no question about that that I wish to impede on. This environment and those chants—when we hear them, many Jewish students question our legitimacy as people. It calls for the eradication of the existence of Israel. For many, especially right after October 7 when we were hearing calls for "Globalise the intifada" or "Resistance is justified", there is really no other way but to walk on campus and think that this isn't a place where you should be or where you're welcome. The impact, as I said, just creates an atmosphere where Jewish students are hiding their identity and at many points are petrified to go on campus. I know there's intention, obviously, behind those phrases and the uses of those phrases, and it's not always the intention to be antisemitic, but there is also no room for conversation. To engage in conversation about what those phrases mean is not had on campuses.

The CHAIR: You say in your evidence that the student representative council was promoting antisemitism. Is that right?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: Which example are you referring to?

The CHAIR: I think under "(c) Student Testimonies" you talk about the encampment and hateful rhetoric surrounding Jews by the student representative council.

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: What we've seen on campuses is student representative councils partake in these protests and initiate them. Obviously for Jewish students, our thought process is—I know that there are Jewish students who have been a part of the SRC or affiliated groups or have been tempted to engage in it, and then when they see these kind of actions they no longer feel like they're going to be welcome. The student representative councils on a number of campuses have been key players in some of these incidences.

The CHAIR: I noticed the quote also goes on to say, " I have never been so unhappy. This place was once my dream, and now I can't wait to get out of here." Is that the general experience of Jewish students?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: Yes, that's the general experience.

The CHAIR: Antisemitism is not only practised by Arab students. Who else is it practised by?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: I think—

The CHAIR: Some Arab students, I should say.

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: It is practised by a lot of the people—pretty much anyone really. It can be the far-left movement—Trots, if you'd call them that. I don't know if that's appropriate.

The Hon. CHRIS RATH: I call them that all the time.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Don't worry—we call them Trots as well.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: We've heard it before. Let's put it that way.

The CHAIR: Comrades!

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: It's student representative leaders and presidents of student councils. It's a lot of people on campus, but not everyone obviously. Obviously a lot of the people I think don't really know that maybe what they are doing is antisemitic or harmful—spreading ideas that are harmful to Jews. I think that's where we really advocate for those respectful debates and education.

The CHAIR: Has Sydney University cleaned up its act?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: I think they're trying to. I do appreciate that they have made a really valid effort to address the concerns, after a lot of scrutiny, I might add. I think we're getting there.

The CHAIR: Has the Sydney University Students' Representative Council cleaned up their act?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: I wouldn't go that far.

The CHAIR: Are they actually representative of all students?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: I would not go that far, no.

The CHAIR: They're not representative of Jewish students?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: No.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Thanks so much for coming along, and thank you for your role as a student leader as well. I've got a couple of questions. There's obviously a number of critiques of the State of Israel that you'll be exposed to as a university student. You're obviously going to be exposed to the critique about the displacement of Palestinians and the fact that Palestinians don't have access to Israel. They can't live there, and I'm talking about the ones who left in 1948 and afterwards; they can't return to that place even though any Jewish person can. There's also a critique that I think you might call a left-wing critique. You'll hear critiques that Israel's a settler state and Israel's part of the American alliance. There are criticisms of that nature. How do you distinguish between those critiques that might be advanced in a way that you don't agree with but are advanced in good faith, as opposed to antisemitism? What do you see as the dividing line there?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: I would start by saying I don't think anything in those critiques would amount to antisemitism. I think it can turn into antisemitism when it's a malicious vilification and dehumanisation, which usually on campus we see as "All Zionists are nazis", "Zionist pigs" and a general complicity placed on Jewish students. You could walk up to a booth or something and a question might be posed. If you pose a question that might open up a discussion about the war or October 7, there is no room for debate then and there. Like I said, those critiques are not inherently antisemitic, by any means. It's this conspiratorial nature that goes onto Zionists, and I say in the submission that the use of "Zionism" or "Zionist" as a filler word for "Jew" is what we feel is happening in many cases. Again, I emphasise that there is not intention to do that by a lot of the people. But when it comes to criticism about Israel on campus, it's those kinds of conversations. It's the use of "Eff the Zionists", "Zionists are not welcome on campus", calling for the elimination of the State of Israel. I think that's when Jewish students start to become vilified under the label of "Zionist".

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: In terms of the elimination of Israel, would you include within the breadth of that concept calls for a one-state solution, if I can put it that way?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: I've thought about this a lot and I think that, on the face of it, calls for a one-state solution are not antisemitic. I think that when you use the term that you call for the elimination of a state—if I walk on a university campus and I hear calls for a one-state solution, I might be uncomfortable. I might have my opinions on that. Whether I'm allowed to express those opinions in a reasonable and respectful manner is another question in and of itself. But when I hear chants for the elimination of the State of Israel, it's a very different environment I'm facing. I think the call for the elimination of the State of Israel can be antisemitic, and in many cases we have heard it and it is antisemitic.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Something that is a reality of this inquiry is that we've had Jewish people come along and say that they've attended the weekly protests; they've attended the encampment. They didn't, by and large, feel threatened. I think we had one woman who said she was uncomfortable at first but subsequently was not uncomfortable, whereas you've described what seems like a different experience, perhaps, or a different perception of those things. Something that we all notice in our lives is that we aren't always the most objective judge of our own cause, if I can put it that way. So what are we to make of these dramatically different experiences and perceptions from Jewish people? Where's the middle in all of this? The middle isn't always the right place, but how do we reconcile those two things?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: From my position, I can speak for Jewish students, and it might be a different experience for someone that isn't a student. When you're 18 or 19 and you're going onto university campuses for the first time, you hope to have those uncomfortable conversations. I think that's inherent to university life. What we're seeing is that, whilst the people you referred to might be inclined to enter the encampment, that's not the experience of many Jewish students. That isn't something an 18-year-old or 19-year-old is even considering doing, because there has never been any inkling other than intimidation. There's never been any display other than intimidation on the campus.

There are, of course, many opinions in the Jewish community, and I'm by no means suggesting otherwise. I always preface what I'm saying with "many Jewish students", because I know that there are Jewish students that might not agree with what I'm saying. But from what I know and from the students that we have spoken to and represent, it breaches an uncomfortability to a point where they have completely removed themselves from campus life. It really does come down to—unless you stand before the person and disavow parts of your identity.

You admit that the family you have living in Israel doesn't exist to you. You have to kind of meet that threshold before you can even engage in any uncomfortable conversation you might potentially have. You really have to put it all on the table and give—if that's a key part of who you are, you have to hang that up at the door to enter.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Something you said before I thought was interesting—about students not necessarily realising that they're being antisemitic. It made me reflect on the way that we sometimes interpret people's behaviour in light of our own understanding and experiences. For example, when you're a bit more mature in life, you obviously learn things along the way and then you might bring those assumptions to what you observe in the behaviour of another, whereas a much younger person might not see it that way at all. They've had different experiences, I suppose. In the context of this issue about antisemitism, one thing I'm interested in is to what extent we're talking on both sides in the university debate about a failure to understand and appreciate the history of other people.

I imagine for many Jewish students, when they are confronted with calls to eliminate Israel or very strident anti-Israel rhetoric—if not rhetoric that slips into criticism of Jewish people sometimes—they're informed by their own experiences, their family experiences and things that they've learnt about the collective past of the Jewish people. On the other hand, I suppose Palestinian Arab students are obviously informed by their experiences and their family histories. In the university context, where there's often a collision of ideas and people generally are young, how do we better facilitate true informed debate in an understanding way on these issues so that people are less likely to slip into tropes, whether unconsciously or somewhat unconsciously, or adopt language that resonates differently with another person—as you said, not always intended?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: If I'm getting the question correct, it's how do we teach or how do we manage to have respectful debate, despite our lived experiences that might guide our opinions on the matter, whether knowingly or not. I think, one, it comes down to a general education of each person's lived experience, and really encouraging that patience and empathy and curiosity. I know when I speak to Jewish students, that's how I encourage them to engage in these conversations. I think that message can be taught from a young age, and it can be fed into broader community and society, so really encouraging that curiosity from a young age is important. The binary language that is often used to discuss the current war can really be divisive. You can hold two truths at the same time. You can be empathetic to anyone and everyone. I think that's another way in which to host those more respectful conversations. I do think it comes down to, as I said, education—not just antisemitism and Jewish history education but also empathy training, pretty much.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I think you said before that it feels on campus that you can't enter conversations about this issue without denouncing Israel, denouncing Zionism or renouncing family who might be living there—things like that. That resonated with me in terms of—we've got evidence about an expectation on Muslim leaders to denounce October 7, for example, and to consistently do it and to do it without the context that they might have or believe about it. I've asked a few witnesses about this. I'm interested in your thoughts on how we move away from a culture where we are continually asking each other to denounce things that each of us see in fundamentally different ways and have different contexts and perceptions around. That means that it's sometimes not a yes or a no; it's sometimes difficult to respond to these requests for condemnation without explaining your world view at length. Are we able to agree to disagree on some of these issues?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: I think there are some aspects of debate where there is room for an agree to disagree kind of mentality, but I also do think that there are things that should be condemned and things that should be acknowledged. I would say that, in my own right, and in the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, there are matters that we would condemn that aren't particularly inherently related to just us. I think that's just being a part of society and being part of a community. We look out for each other and there are things that should be condemned. Hate and violence is one of those. I think when we reflect what we want to see in the other person, in the other community, we can start to build a more cohesive community. As I said, I think there are some aspects that should be condemned, and I think there are others where we can respectfully disagree.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Miss Tischmann, you outlined a couple of the tropes that you hear on campus, or the slurs that you hear on campus, and I noticed a little bit of a theme in terms of "Zionist" coming through constantly. We've had a lot of discussion about Zionism today in the inquiry. Do you think "Zionism" is being substituted somewhat in the antisemitic phrasebook, in a sense, because people don't feel that they could say "Jew", for instance, but feel that it's acceptable then to say "Zionist" and then that makes everything all right in whatever they're saying because they're not attacking you as a Jew, for instance, but are attacking you as a Zionist?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: Yes, I do. I think that the ambiguity that I don't see, but some do, around when it can cross the line—when Zionism is used to kind of be that shield. I think they leverage that on campus particularly, and in broader society. I think that there have been instances where the word is being used to replace

"Jew" and the phrases that they're using and the antisemitic tropes that they're employing to do it. They know that if they said "Jew", it'd be a lot easier to file a complaint, make it very clear. I think that's where Universities Australia has adopted a definition. Although there are operational questions about the enforcement of that, that definition allows that conversation to be had about whether "Zionism" or "Zionist" is being used as a filler word.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: In terms of that definition, we've had quite a bit of discussion today about the IHRA definition on antisemitism and some criticisms about the IHRA definition. Tell us about the definition that's been adopted by universities, how it differs from the IHRA definition, and also maybe some of the criticisms you may have of that definition.

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: The definition that's been adopted by Universities Australia is the Group of Eight definition. It is the IHRA definition just—I think the term "watered down" has been used, understandably. I think that a definition obviously needs to be fit for purpose. It needs to address the issues of the time and, critiques aside, we always advocate that there is a need for a definition for the number of reasons that I've mentioned: complaints, trusting that complaints will actually be handled, that there's a point in actually raising a complaint. There's always value to having a definition, despite the critiques. At the moment, many universities have not put it into place that makes it effectual to some degree. I note that in their submissions a lot of universities call on TEQSA to put it in the higher education standards threshold.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: We've had some debate and discussion today about membership sizes of organisations and the like before us. How many members does AUJS have?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: I was meant to double-check this, and I really apologise. I don't have that information in front of me. I know that by the end of last year it was about 5,000 on campuses across Australia. In New South Wales, in particular, it was over 1,000 and, so far, I imagine we're halfway through that, but I'm happy to take that on notice and clarify.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: So you're a broadly representative organisation?

DANIELLE TISCHMANN: Yes.

The CHAIR: That draws our questions to a close. Thank you very much for coming today.

(The witness withdrew.)

Professor GREG ROSE, Director, Australian Academic Alliance Against Antisemitism (5A), and Honorary Professor of Law, University of Wollongong, sworn and examined

Mr DAVID KNOLL, AM, Director, Australian Academic Alliance Against Antisemitism (5A), and Adjunct Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales, sworn and examined

Dr CHARLES SMALL, Director and President, The Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

Dr JOSHUA ROOSE, Fellow, The Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, and Associate Professor, Alfred Deakin Institute, Deakin University, before the Committee via videoconference, sworn and examined

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for coming. I welcome you all this afternoon. This is the final part of the hearing today, so thanks for turning up. Would any of you care to make a short opening statement?

DAVID KNOLL: Yes, indeed. Thank you. I should indicate that I've brought copies, which I'll tender formally so that you each have a written copy. 5A represents just under 300 academics and professional staff across 32 Australian universities. Our members are both Jewish and non-Jewish. They are concerned with the emergence of antisemitism on their campus in the tertiary sector in this country. The written submission which you have was limited to four of the terms of reference: (a), (b), (c) and (h). We're going to focus a little today on (b) in particular. There are record levels of antisemitism on university campuses, and in schools, that we consider undermine student safety. The survey 5A conducted last year, and which has now been released, revealed how severe the situation on campuses actually is. Sixty-seven per cent of students and staff reported experiences of antisemitism that had a significant impact on their lives. Only a third of students and staff felt physically safe on campus. That echoes Miss Tischmann's testimony just a few moments ago, and the question we ask is: How is this possible in Australia in 2025?

We're not proposing to repeat everything that's in our opening statement, but I want to come in and deal with a couple of questions that were asked of Miss Tischmann, which we anticipated would be asked, and preface it by saying this: I would echo the sentiment of Dr Jamal Rifi, a very good friend, that we have got to learn to respect ourselves and to disagree respectfully, and we are a long way from that at the moment. Australian Zionists include most Australian Jews, some 91 per cent. That proportion is similar to that which is found in the Jewish diaspora throughout the world. Moreover, Israelis as a national group are overwhelmingly Zionist, and they comprise almost half the global Jewish population. It is a common false proposition set out, for example, in submission No. 41, that there has been a conflation of antisemitism with criticism of Israel and Zionism. These assertions misapprehend sometimes, as Miss Tischmann said, inadvertently, but sometimes deliberately, what Zionism actually is.

Zionism is the belief, grounded in centuries-old Jewish prayer and held by many people not of the Jewish faith in the Jewish right to self-determination in their own indigenous land, just like all other people on the earth. That right is embedded in the UN charter. But over 3,000 years ago, before the UN was even conceived, the children of Israel lived in the land. The State of Israel plays an important part in Jewish identity. Anti-Zionism is the belief that all people, but not the Jewish people, are entitled to self-determination in their own indigenous land. I quote the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks from a piece published in 2016 almost a decade ago. He said antisemitism is a virus that survives by mutating. He further said:

> In the Middle Ages, Jews were hated because of their religion. In the nineteenth and twentieth century they were hated because of their race. Today they are hated because of their nation state, the state of Israel.

Rabbi Sacks also said that anti-Zionism is the new antisemitism. From our perspective, anti-Zionism is traditional antisemitism disguised as wine, but truly an old poison rebottled labelled with new academic terminologies that misrepresent and deceive. It has become a vehicle for contemporary antisemitism and the exclusion of Jewish views and people from campuses across Australia, and in particular in New South Wales.

I know you've been discussing the University of Sydney, but the University of Sydney is not unique. An illustrative example, though, was the meeting of the SRC last Wednesday 14 May, at Sydney university, where resolutions were adopted for the dismantling of Israel and to end academic exchange programs with Israeli universities. The purported purpose of that meeting was to consider the university's adoption of the Universities Australia definition of antisemitism, which the SRC inevitably rejected. The student representatives literally turned their backs on the Jewish students at the meeting and rejected Jewish student views on what constitutes antisemitism. They would never deny the right of Indigenous Australians to call out racism against Australia's First People, but they openly deny the Jewish people's right to identify and to respond to anti-Jewish racism, because that's what antisemitism is.

That example last Wednesday is far from unique, and we ask: Why does it matter? It matters because singling the Jewish people out alone as having no right of self-determination, a theme that has become normalised in the academy and now in the public square, makes Jewish citizens unsafe. That normalisation facilitates harassment and other forms of violence, including firebombs against actual and perceived Jewish targets. I don't need to read the examples. They are all across the news. It has to stop. To reinforce the legislation passed by the Parliament of New South Wales, which we wholly support, the recommendations made by us at 5A and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, whose submission we have read, if implemented, will go a considerable way towards turning back the tide of normalising antisemitism. There isn't time in three minutes of opening remarks to explain the history or sociology that underpins the aberrant behaviour that we're now seeing, and there's plenty of academic work that addresses that, but the adverse impact on social cohesion in this State should be obvious. I thank you for the opportunity.

The CHAIR: Professor Rose, do you want to say something?

GREG ROSE: I'm happy to answer questions.

The CHAIR: Dr Roose, do you want to make an opening statement?

JOSHUA ROOSE: I'll defer to Dr Small to speak for ISGAP.

CHARLES SMALL: I'm very honoured to be here with you today, and thank you for the opportunity. Thank you, Chair, and members of the Committee. I'd also like to note my appreciation to Professor Knoll's previous statements. I agree with many of them and my opening statements were touching on a few similar things, so I'll cut it a bit short. My name is Dr Charles Asher Small. I'm the founding director of ISGAP, which is a global research centre with over 80 research fellows associated with it. We do programming at Oxford university, Cambridge university and universities around the world. I'm honoured to be joined by Associate Professor Joshua Roose, who's also a research fellow at ISGAP, based in Australia. His work is on political violence and ideology, particularly in the Australian context, which has been central to our submission. I would also like to state that antisemitism is not a parochial issue or problem for Jewish people or for the State of Israel.

Professor Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize winner and the founding president of ISGAP, who I had the honour to work with, taught us several things. He first taught us that antisemitism may begin with the Jewish people, but it never, ever ends with the Jewish people, and this assault of antisemitism, the virus of antisemitism, once it's unleashed, knows no bounds and attacks the very democratic institutions and principles that Australia and other democratic countries are based upon. He also taught that the Holocaust did not begin with the crematoriums or the railroad tracks. It began with words and ideas and, tragically, as Professor Knoll mentioned earlier, the universities have become the front line in the war against the Jewish people, which is also a war against democratic principles.

It has gone from the classroom, at the intellectual battle of ideas, if you will, to the encampment, and from the encampments to our streets. This, ladies and gentlemen, is an assault on the very democratic principles that the great nation of Australia is based upon. As everybody knows, antisemitism is rising sharply in Australia and around the world, and it's especially dangerous today as extreme ideologies are converging. The extreme left, the extreme right and radical political Islam also is attacking the democratic centre.

While their politics and ideologies may differ, tragically they use antisemitism as a core element of their ideology and a core element of these reactionary social movements to gain support. While peaceful protest is essential in any democratic country, we are seeing far more aggressive activities throughout Australia and other democratic countries. Jewish Australians are being doxxed, silenced and excluded, especially those who do not disavow their connection to Israel and to Zionism. It's important to note that this affects the Jewish community broadly.

Our Jewish Australians who identify as anti-Zionist are entitled to their views, as anyone is in a free society. However, they represent a very small and extremely vocal minority. Their high visibility should not be taken for a general consensus. The overwhelming majority of Jewish Australians and Jews around the world identify with Israel and with Zionism as an integral part of their culture and heritage. In fact, I should say that some groups like Jewish Voices for Peace, who are connected to SJP—Students for Justice in Palestine—kind of come out of the Muslim Brotherhood ideology in Europe and North America. It's not different in Australia. The Muslim Brotherhood identity—we should remember that the Muslim Brotherhood started about 100 years ago. It's a reactionary social movement that takes European genocidal antisemitism, the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion", with connections to Nazism, and fuses it with a perversion of Islam.

The regime of Qatar has a spiritual oath to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. They're using their connection and their oath to the brotherhood to spread the ideology of radical political Islam—not Islam and not the vast majority of Muslims, but a very toxic form of Islam. Qatar is investing in Australia and other democratic

countries around the world to push this ideology. This, ladies and gentlemen, I would submit to you, is a strategic threat to the stability of Australian society and should be taken very seriously by the parliamentarians and security forces in your country. The risk of violence is real. Antisemitic incidents, including attacks on synagogues, schools and individuals, are becoming more frequent. We are now facing the prospect of lone actors and small groups committing acts of terrorism, radicalised by rhetoric that conflates Australians with the actions of a foreign government.

I can say that ISGAP is working with security forces in Europe and police forces in the United States. We see SJP and student groups going to synagogues and Jewish communities and probing to see how the community and the police will react. There is major concern for significant acts of increased violence. We should pause and reflect on what is happening in our society, in places of worship and in universities to ensure that all Australian citizens, regardless of their background, are free from harassment, exclusion and silencing. Efforts by the Jewish Australian community to organise to address the surge of hatred, "our friend" in conspiratorial terms by our adversaries, and as Jews somehow pulling the strings behind the scenes as core antisemitic tropes throughout the ages—which is really the most insidious forms of antisemitism you can imagine.

Our submission identifies three central concerns. First, that institutions, especially in education, are failing to act when antisemitism is presented as political activism. This includes corollary institutions, including university unions. Second, that ideological actors from across the spectrum—the extreme left, political Islamists and extreme right—are aligning in practice and at times in coordination. Third, the fabric of democratic inclusion is being torn. Jewish Australians are being told that, unless they renounce a core element of their identities, they cannot participate fully in public life, which is an attack on democratic principles, not just the Jewish community. The Universities Australia definition of antisemitism is a positive step forward. It affirms the right to political debate while protecting against vilification and exclusion. That balance must be preserved. This inquiry is an opportunity to draw the line to protect the rights of all Australians, including Jewish Australians, to speak, to participate and to belong without any fear. Thank you for the seriousness with which you are addressing this issue. We welcome your questions and we're very grateful for your time.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Knoll, you picked up on the point that I'd put earlier to Miss Tischmann with respect to the increasing terminology of Zionism. We've heard quite a bit of that today. I think you outlined in your—I can check against your very kindly pre-prepared submission—opening remarks that 91 per cent of Australian Jewry identify with Zionism, and that's a similar rate to the rest of the world. There has been some dispute about those levels of support today. I think some criticise that those figures may have come from the Zionist Council or the like and may be somewhat biased. Do you have any reflection on that and the closeness of the Australian Jewish community—particularly the Jewish community in New South Wales—with Zionism?

DAVID KNOLL: Without any difficulty. There are a series of surveys, which have consistently reflected virtually the same number with a per cent or two difference. Significantly in New South Wales, in 2008 and 2017 we had very deep communal surveys undertaken by the Jewish Communal Appeal across a range of community attitudes. The answer to this particular question is consistent with the 91 per cent, and our own survey of academics and students last year reflected the same figure. Neither organisation can be accused of being part of the Zionist Federation. In the United States, a similar figure comes from the Pew survey. Pew is not, I should mention, a Zionist organisation. They're a public survey organisation, so any suggestion that those figures might reflect a camp is just wrong.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Mr Knoll, with respect to Zionism, there is, I guess, this balancing act. I've asked several witnesses, no matter what their views are on this, how we get to that balance between what can be legitimate, justified criticism of the State of Israel—even potentially in terms of a State of Israel existing—and what then becomes antisemitism or hate speech. I'd be interested in your views as to where that line should be drawn.

DAVID KNOLL: I'll add a few comments and Professor Rose will add a few comments. I differ somewhat from Miss Tischmann, whose lived experience as a student—and it was very observable from the way she was very careful in her responses. She, like so many of the students—including some who I have seen on campus who have come and talked to me privately after classes—respond from a position of genuine fear, and that fear is pervasive across campuses. Why is it a matter of fear? The reason is that, when you choose only one nation on the planet as not deserving of existing with a criticism that you would never level against any other nation, then you are engaging in a form of discriminatory speech. That type of discriminatory speech is called antisemitism.

No-one has said that, for example, because of civil conflict, that Sudan should cease to exist. No-one is jumping up and down for the rights of Tibetans anymore. No-one is jumping up and down for the Kurds. In each

case, that would involve reducing the sovereign territory of another nation state. But, in the case of Israel, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" simply means that the Jewish people lose their right to self-determination, but nobody else does. That is racist and that is antisemitic, and I'm not going to mince words about it.

GREG ROSE: There's little to add to such an elegant explanation. Of course it's possible to criticise Israel. Israelis love doing it. There's more concern in the diaspora about dirty laundry being hung out due to it being attacked and weaponised, used for leverage by anti-Zionists and antisemites, who are largely an overlapping group. In the IHRA definition, which you have heard about in previous sessions, there are examples of criticism of Israel where those are specifically identified as being antisemitic that involve demonisation, delegitimisation, double standards, Nazi equivalencies, and such like. I would simply say that there are limits, there is work that's been done that's been published on this, and that the controversy over it is largely the product of an ongoing and sustained effort for over 100 years now to ensure that there will be no Jewish state.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: I turn now to Professor Small. Thank you for joining us. I note that your organisation is the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy Australia, but looking at the experience internationally, is what we're seeing here in New South Wales and Australia isolated or is it something that is happening all across the world? I think you touched upon this partly through universities, in a sense, being part of the front line in what we're seeing globally.

CHARLES SMALL: Thank you for your question. Yes, I think it's a global phenomenon. The increase of antisemitism is an international problem. I know in Australia there's been an explosion of it. The same is happening in parts of Europe and North America, and beyond. What we're seeing is basically what we call the red-green alliance—the extreme left, which has a space in the university and the media of record in Western democratic countries, and the extreme Islamists. I referred earlier to the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood represents a very reactionary, if not perverted, form of Islam which wants to rid the Middle East of Jews, of Christians and of democracy and replace it with a very narrow notion of a caliphate. They want to subjugate women, murder gay people and destroy democracy. At the same time, in universities the radical left wants to do away with Western hegemony. They see Israel as the colonial output in the region and the resistance to the so-called occupation should take place by all means.

This red-green alliance is really having an impact internationally, funded by Qatar. Qatar, as I was saying, really has a spiritual oath to the Muslim Brotherhood. In our research we found at least $100 billion—with a B—of Qatari money, a country of less than 350,000 citizens. A tiny country is giving more money to American and Canadian universities than any other country in the world, and they're pushing an agenda that's anti-democratic and antisemitic. I will finish; I know time is of the essence. One of our reports, which will be coming out in the next few weeks, is called "the project". The Muslim Brotherhood's strategic goal for the past 40 years has been to move Israel away from Western countries, to alienate it, to weaken it, to destroy it, to murder Jews around the world and Israelis, and then to use antisemitism—and this is very important for the Australian context and other contexts—to fragment and weaken democracies. So Israel is the little Satan; America and other democracies is the big Satan. Sadly, and I'd say terrifyingly, they're making progress in their strategic goals.

I'll end by saying that Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who's the spiritual head of the Muslim Brotherhood, preached his entire life—and this is what the Qatari royal family has an allegiance to—that the true believer, the true Muslim, is obligated to complete the work of Hitler. Yusuf al-Qaradawi started Islamic studies at Oxford University, my alma mater. They are establishing a foothold in our academic discourse to the point where we don't recognise the democratic politics of some of our students—students who go to universities to learn how to be citizens. It's a serious situation for the future of our democracies.

GREG ROSE: Mr Chair, I might make a personal intervention at this point. It's not something I've ever bragged about in the past, but I established a fledgling profile, writing a couple of op-eds during the second intifada in the early 2000s. I was approached personally by, if I remember rightly, the Doha Foundation and offered $2,000 for each review I did for applications for grants from the Doha Foundation. Why did they choose me, in Wollongong? It's your guess. Because I developed a profile, I believe.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Professor Small, I have one last question, because we haven't really dealt with this today in the inquiry. We looked at a lot of physical instances of antisemitism and some of the attacks that have occurred. I note in your submission that you raise some of the online issues and what social media is doing as well in fuelling some of this. I wondered if you could perhaps outline that and what we should potentially be looking for, particularly with algorithms and the like, and how this is being reflected not just physically on the streets of Sydney, but also online as well.

CHARLES SMALL: It's a very important question. If it's okay with you, can I turn it over to my colleague Josh Roose, who knows the subject matter better than I do?

JOSHUA ROOSE: Social media is playing an absolutely critical role in contemporary antisemitism globally. Not only is it linking actors internationally, but it's building a global discourse in which we're seeing an ideological convergence across far-left Islamist groups but also allowing the extreme right to build a global movement. It's the technological affordances of social media. By that I mean it's the different ways it can be used to target specific groups. Algorithmic radicalisation is critical here. Once someone steers into a group and engages with certain material, they then might be fed more of that material. So people may well be drawn into a world in which extremist ideas become increasingly normalised.

I'll give you the example of the Hamas red triangle, which was used in online videos for targeting Israelis. They'd post it online and showed where they were about to attack and then show a successful attack using that red triangle. That has now become mainstream as a way of expressing your support for the war in Gaza, but obviously on the Palestinian side. It's allegiance, effectively. Despite it becoming a known hate symbol, which has been painted on people's houses and on businesses, it continues to be spread online without any form of governance or any form of attempt to take it down. We're seeing this play out across many platforms. If you look at platforms like X, which are mainstream, we're seeing it, but then increasingly we're seeing a wider array of new encrypted messaging apps but also video sharing. We're talking here Rumble; we're talking Discord, which is a gaming forum; we're talking Telegram, which is really at the fore of contemporary antisemitism in so many ways, particularly on the extreme right.

We're seeing a complete failure at the government level, but also in terms of regulation of social media companies as well, to take this seriously. Why is it not okay to use a swastika—it's now been legislated against, to use a Hakenkreuz—or to make a Nazi salute in a public space and yet people can do that in their own homes, publish that material online, spread it and yet not be held to account at all?

We're not seeing social media companies being forced to regulate and to govern it, but we're also seeing a lack of action from policing agencies in taking that on as well.

Social media is playing an absolutely critical role in spreading hate. We're seeing that play out both at the extreme level, in terms of violent extremism and terrorism, and we're also seeing it play out at everyday grassroots activism level. People have a right to hold differing views and to criticise the State of Israel. That's beyond doubt. But what we're seeing here is a normalisation of extreme, hate-fuelled, anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish bigotry, which is really targeting everyday people in the streets for doxing and for sharing their personal information, like we saw with the case of Jewish creatives having their names shared online and being targeted. This is reminiscent of what we've seen historically. It's not only deeply concerning; it really speaks to the potential escalation.

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Thank you, Mr Roose. I guess we've seen it in recent weeks as well with Kanye West's *Heil Hitler*, which is only being transmitted on Twitter at the moment, or X these days, and banned everywhere else.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I have a few questions. Thanks very much for your evidence and for your submissions. It seems to me that the history of antisemitism is so entrenched and so broad in terms of its tropes against Jewish people that a lot of stinging critiques that one might make of Israel might resonate with a trope. I just thought of it when Professor Rose was talking about Qatar, money issues and offers of money. If that was levelled against Israel or a Jewish person, it might resonate with a trope about international finance and Jewish people using money to control the world or something of that nature. When we're dealing with this issue of entrenched antisemitic tropes but then, on the other hand, stinging criticism of a state that might perhaps unintentionally invoke a trope—because it is a stinging criticism—how are we truly to differentiate between a stinging criticism that might resonate with a trope but it might resonate with that trope if it was levelled against any state? How do we distinguish between that and true antisemitism?

DAVID KNOLL: I think we'll both contribute on that one, because we have slightly different experiences.

GREG ROSE: I would suggest simply that one has to understand in context. The trope has a context. Where it's out of context, then it lacks the historical weight and significance. We've seen references to the tentacles. You can have the tentacles of the Treasury department or the State Department in the US, or you can have the tentacles—

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Or the American empire, which might be talked about in an anti-imperialist discourse.

GREG ROSE: Yes, or you can have the tentacles of the Jews—Jewish money, control of the media, entertainment and so on. One of them is antisemitic. It resonates with the trope. So it's a question of judgement in context.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: It is. Mr Knoll, any thoughts on that?

DAVID KNOLL: The aspect I would add is that which Emeritus Professor Alan Dershowitz spoke about when he came here and lectured literally 20 years ago. He asked the question, "Is the criticism that has been levelled, with or without the illustration, one that has been levelled against any other nation-state actor?" If the answer is yes and you can point to the example, then what you've got is a criticism of policy or conduct. If the answer is no and it only singles out the Jewish state—and as a practical matter, these days, it's usually followed with a call for the termination of the State of Israel; not theoretically but as a practical matter—then you've got something that is profoundly antisemitic. It's that singling out of the identity of Israel and its capacity to be a nation-state among the nations, as opposed to a criticism of a particular policy.

If this were a forum on discussing whether the current Israeli Government policies in relation to recovery of the hostages in Gaza are the best approach, I would sit here and echo the view of the hostages forum. That's a discussion that's being had worldwide. But if what you say to me is that because of the conduct of the State of Israel, Israel should simply cease to exist and be taken over by a secular Palestinian state—which, by the way, was originated before even Yasser Arafat joined the PLO in 1964—then what you've got is a statement that is designed to be antisemitic.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Okay. Lastly, you said in your opening statement, Mr Knoll, that anti-Zionism is antisemitism. It occurred to me that we heard evidence this morning from non-Zionist Jewish people, who obviously would have a view to the contrary. Now, they're not Zionists. You've got the view that anti-Zionism is antisemitic, but you are, as I understand, the supporter of Israel. So it seems to me there is, I suppose, a chicken and the egg issue, which is that all of the people who tend to conflate the two tend to be Zionists and the people who don't conflate the two tend not to be Zionists. What are we to make of the political motivation that would seem to be linked to that sort of a statement?

DAVID KNOLL: Let us both give you two perspectives that might be more helpful. If someone says, "I am not a Zionist, but I am Jewish," I've got no problem with that. Simply saying, "I am not someone who is politically active in relation to the State of Israel" is usually what a person who describes himself as non-Zionist means. That is different to being an anti-Zionist. An anti-Zionist is a person who espouses the view that all peoples on the earth are entitled to self-determination, except the Jewish people. That is what it is.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I think what we heard this morning, just to put it to you fairly, from a Jewish fellow was that he believes that all Jewish people should have the right to live in that place, but he thinks that the Palestinians should also have that right, which is obviously not a Zionist belief.

DAVID KNOLL: And it's fundamentally the proposal of the two-state solution, which is, "You're not getting along very well, so let's make sure that we've got some sharing, and you live in peace side by side with each other."

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I think his view is a one-state solution.

DAVID KNOLL: His view is a one-state solution. The reality of a one-state solution, when you compare the demographics, is that Jews would no longer be able to govern their own affairs and would have to live in an environment where—again, let's talk practical reality. There is only one democratic State in the region: It's Israel. No Arab State operates as a democracy. If that's the example we're going to follow, we're going to lose the very democracy that Professor Small has been talking about as so valuable. Professor Rose might offer you an additional perspective.

GREG ROSE: I was just going to say something about anti-Zionist and non-Zionist Jews. According to the survey, you have 10 per cent—I think it can be slightly larger—when you're talking about non-Zionist.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: But does size speak to the correctness of the position on whether it's antisemitic or not? There are a lot of things that 10 per cent of people think are right.

GREG ROSE: I think that it's a mistake to commence the discussion by thinking in binaries and that it's either right or wrong. So in fact, what it is is a social phenomenon. You have different groups; they overlap. You have a group of Jews. The Jews, if you think of it in terms of a Venn diagram, have smaller circles and larger circles and overlapping aspects. Within the anti-Zionist, non-Zionist circle of 10 per cent or slightly more, you have basically three groups. You have ultra-orthodox Jews who believe that the secular effort to establish a state before the coming of the Messiah is a denial of the divine role in the return of the Jews and of redemption with the coming of the Messiah. That's one group. It has to be noted that a lot of the people in that group go and study in Israel, so they're not anti-Zionist necessarily. But this is one of the areas where one can have a huge debate about Israeli policy because there's huge controversy over their failure to serve to defend the country.

So you've got one group, ultra-orthodox. Then you have two other groups that are related. One is Bundists, who are cultural Yiddishists who believe in a Jewish culture that is basically a diasporic culture and that Judaism has moved beyond its original anthropological roots as a tribe in a place. Bundists are typically socialists. And then you have your Marxist socialists who believe in a universalist notion of Judaism doing moral good throughout the world, much like some church philosophies or Baha'i philosophies. It's not attached to land. Within that 10 per cent, you have three groups who, with varying degrees of energy, oppose the State of Israel. Clearly, the strongest opposition comes from the Marxist socialist group, and that group is particularly prevalent within the university sector.

Within the university sector, you'll find your anti-Zionists are located primarily within the humanities, anthropology, sociology, philosophy and literature. So they're the small but highly active and very high-profile Jews who are used as a fig leaf wheeled out to say, "We're not antisemites. We have Jews who support us." But these Jews are, I believe, a form of self-hating Jew in that they don't recognise the people of Israel and the land of Israel, a connection that's central to Judaism. They deny a part of themselves. There should be no surprise with this. You have Catholics who lapse. You have Catholics who are anti-papist. You have all kinds of dissent within religious groups, within cultural groups, as we do within Judaism. But within Judaism, because of the fact that you have 100 Muslims to every single Jew, you have 50 Arabs to every single Jew, you have 600 times the size of Israel's geographic area to the land of Israel, we're grossly outnumbered.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: I suppose that's to assume a monolithic conception of the Arabs, though, isn't it? Isn't that a form of racism?

GREG ROSE: I'm generalising. It's not racist to generalise that the Arab League has been engaged in a boycott of Israel and generally expresses antipathy to Israel.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Sure, but if you're, for example, a Polynesian expelled from Tonga, it's no answer that Hawaii is a Polynesian country, is it?

GREG ROSE: That's irrelevant, isn't it?

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Just by way of analogy.

GREG ROSE: Explain the relevance.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: Just by way of analogy that you can say that the land mass of the Arab countries is X times Israel, but what does that mean for a Palestinian?

DAVID KNOLL: Can I come in on that one, if you don't mind? I spent my former life working for the Australian government, principally in the Muslim world, and the vast differences across different Muslim countries, whether it's the southern Soviet republics, as they then were; Iran and Iraq when it was safe to go to Iraq; and Pakistan—in each of which I spent considerable time looking after the interests of Australian entities working there. Without question, there are differences of nuance, differences of view; some are Arab, some are not Arab. One of the most curious things is that there is a glue that holds them together. They all believe that they have an accurate understanding of the Koran, even though there are some differences. In Sydney, we have five Islamic high councils. They don't agree on everything. When you ask them, however, about whether the idea of a Jewish state in the middle of the Muslim world is acceptable, they are united in answering that.

The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE: So do you think that the argument that Israel is unfairly subjected to a double standard if one questions if there should be a one-state solution, for example—is there really a double standard or are we dealing with a situation that is so unique there's almost no comparator among the countries of the world?

DAVID KNOLL: We do have an immediate comparator in the region. Within Türkiye and Iraq, Kurds have no self-determination, even though they are an entirely separate people. The one-state operation for them is a complete failure. Why would you replicate a complete failure?

The CHAIR: We might pull to a close there. Thanks very much for coming.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

The Committee adjourned at 17:25.