



THE OFFICE OF AUSTRALIA'S
SPECIAL ENVOY TO COMBAT
ISLAMOPHOBIA

Submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

—

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Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia

Made in the Special Envoy's independent
capacity under his Terms of Reference

June 2026

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June 2026

Re: Submission for the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

I write to thank the Royal Commission for the opportunity to provide a submission for the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion.

As the Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, I commend the government's enactment of a Royal Commission to examine anti-Semitism and social cohesion as representative of a commitment to probing the events that gave rise to the violent attack and deplorable killing directed specifically at members of the Jewish community at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025. The establishment of this Royal Commission is an important precedent that I hope is extended to any community that has the misfortune of suffering from similar deplorable circumstances in the future. Additionally, its social cohesion remit promises to shed light on any circumstances where prejudice and xenophobia are liable to lead to conflict and violence.

In the immediate aftermath of the Bondi attack, I wrote extensively about ISIS extremism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and social cohesion, contemplating how this terrible moment *could* serve as a potential watershed for Australia. It would require tough questions to be asked, uncomfortable conversations to be had, but would require wisdom, compassion, empathy and moral courage. Above all, it would require this to happen without resorting to the demonisation of one another.¹

By rightfully exploring how Australian Jews are better kept safe, the proper course is to safeguard Australian Jews with due diligence, while unequivocally protecting the rights of all citizens. It needs to be noted however, that if this legitimate objective is pursued at the expense of others' rights, actual or perceived, it will likely generate resentment, potentially fuel further anti-Semitism, and ultimately serve to erode, rather than reinforce social cohesion.

Specifically, in confronting ISIS extremism, authorities must avoid over-securitising Muslim communities through policies, legislation and policing that contribute to fear and suspicion of Muslim Australians. Doing so will also undermine the trust that effective counter-terrorism depends on. When communities feel profiled and surveilled, they stop talking to police. They stop sharing information. The intelligence environment decays, and the security outcome is worse, not better.

Authorities must not criminalise legitimate, humane-inspired protests (e.g. pro-Palestinian expression) through laws that limit freedom of speech, while noting that such freedom does not give anyone the right to incite hatred or violence, or to be violent themselves. Furthermore, when protesting against what the International Court of Justice has deemed a plausible genocide—lawful actions should not be framed as anti-Semitic.² Ultimately, the rightful protection of Jewish Australians, and of all Australians, must not come at the expense of individual freedoms.

1. Malik, A. (2026) Islamophobia, antisemitism and social cohesion after Bondi, *ABC Religion & Ethics*. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/aftab-malik-islamophobia-antisemitism-social-cohesion-bondi/106430394> (Accessed: 21 May 2026).

2. International Court of Justice (ICJ), *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip* (South Africa v Israel), Order of 26 January 2024, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-bic.pdf> (Accessed: 26 May 2026).

I recognise that the limited timeframe within which the Commissioner must deliver her final report has affected the Royal Commission's overall ability to fully address all aspects of the terms of reference, including undertaking a comprehensive examination of social cohesion.

Accordingly, my Office's submission has been tailored to respond directly to the refined scope of the Royal Commission's terms of reference.

In support of the Royal Commission's inquiry into extremism, radicalisation and social cohesion, I have included an analysis as an Appendix which examines the impact of over two decades of counter-terrorism frameworks. This analysis highlights how such frameworks have disproportionately targeted Muslim communities and, in doing so, have contributed to anti-Muslim sentiment. It should form a central basis for any further recommendations made by the Royal Commission, as a failure to fully account for these impacts, risks repeating past harms, further inflaming Islamophobia and undermining social cohesion. It is my hope that the Royal Commission properly evaluate any recommendations that will be made in the final report to the Government against the Appendix. The vile conduct of a few who claim to represent Islam should not be used to draw broad conclusions about, or impose collective consequences on, the wider Muslim Australian community.

A failure to fully account for these impacts, risks repeating past harms, further inflaming Islamophobia and undermining social cohesion.

This submission has been grounded in evidence and research, with input and contributions from several expert specialists in Australia. I wish to acknowledge and thank them for their valuable contributions: Dr James O'Donnell, Dr Kristy Campion, Dr Mario Peucker, Dr Danielle Piper-Ireland, Dr Emily Corner and Emeritus Professor Terence Lovat.³

My Office has made several submissions and responses to recent inquiries that intersect and relate to social cohesion, extremism, radicalisation and hate crime, including the following:

- Independent National Security Legislation Monitor (INSLM) Review, *Submission to the review of the definition of a 'terrorist act' in section 100.1 of the Criminal Code Act 1995*
- ABC, *How can the healing begin? Islamophobia, antisemitism and social cohesion after Bondi*
- OSECI, *A National Response to Islamophobia*
- Parliament of Australia, *Submission to the Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Act 2026*

For further enquiries regarding my submission or any information required, please do not hesitate to contact my office via email at info@oseci.gov.au, or visit the website at www.oseci.gov.au.

I am available to support the Commission's work in any way the Commission may direct.

Yours sincerely,



**Australia's Special Envoy
to Combat Islamophobia**

3. The contributions by the specialists are in their own capacity and not on behalf of their places of employment. Views expressed are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of their places of employment.

Executive Summary



This submission responds to the following provisions of the Royal Commission’s terms of reference, specifically:

- a.** Tackling antisemitism by:
 - i.** Investigating the nature and prevalence of antisemitism in institutions and society, and examining its key drivers in Australia, including religious and ideologically motivated extremism and radicalisation, including in the lead up to the anti-Semitic Bondi terrorist attack on 14 December 2025;
 - ii.** Identifying any opportunities to enhance the responses to governments to antisemitism including, but not limited to, best practice approaches to deradicalisation and strengthening social cohesion;
- d.** Make any other recommendations arising out of your inquiry into the matters set out in paragraphs (a) to (c) that would contribute to strengthening social cohesion in Australia and countering the spread of ideologically and religiously motivated extremism in Australia.

This submission makes three principal contributions. First, it sets out a structural-drivers analysis of the rise in identity-based hate in Australia since 7 October 2023. The structural conditions that have produced the rise in anti-Semitism are substantially shared with those that have produced parallel rises in other forms of identity-based hate. Addressing those conditions strengthens the response to anti-Semitism. Second, it proposes permanent institutional architecture for social cohesion, including five components, each operationally implementable to provide the durable infrastructure. Third, it offers a framework for institutional conduct during sustained-tension periods. All three contributions are supported by the chronology and analysis found in the Appendix, which sets out the legislative and institutional history within which the present moment must be understood.

This submission makes 17 recommendations and includes an Appendix which provides a chronology and analysis of Australia’s countering violent extremism architecture and counter-terrorism legislation since 11 September 2001, and of its documented impact on Australian Muslim communities. The purpose in providing this material is direct: the conditions of hyper-securitisation produced by 25 years of a single-community focus have not made Australia safer from terrorism, and the social cohesion costs they have generated have created the broader environment in which all forms of identity-based hate, including anti-Semitism, have escalated. The Commission has the opportunity to recommend a re-orientation that strengthens the response to anti-Semitism by repairing the institutional foundations that have weakened social cohesion across all Australian communities.

The Royal Commission has the opportunity to begin a re-orientation. The Commission's Interim Report has already established that no urgent legislative reform is required to prevent, detect or respond to an attack like that at Bondi. In order to respond to the highly complex digital era, a proactive approach should be undertaken, seeking to target the underlying drivers, facilitators and causes of extremism and radicalisation.

The accumulated weight of two decades of legislative architecture that has been observed to target one community, and that has produced documented community-impact and cohesion costs, is the foundation on which the Commission's recommendations should operate. Repairing that foundation is the work that strengthens the response to anti-Semitism, to Islamophobia, and to all forms of identity-based hate.



This submission makes the following 17 recommendations:

1. Reform and shift Australia’s current counter-terrorism landscape, including legislative and policy frameworks in order to respond to modern extremism, its risk and drivers.
2. Amend the definition of “terrorist act” in section 100.1 of the *Criminal Code 1995* to reduce a reliance on ideological, political or religious motivation as a central criterion to the offence.
3. Enhance support mechanisms over traditional securitised responses to better incorporate vulnerability, behavioural escalation and environmental risk factors such as social isolation, mental health and exposure to harmful content.
4. Formally examine the role of online and digital platforms as a central component and facilitator of contemporary extremism.
5. Replace the legacy single-community countering violent extremism architecture with an eco-system-level framework and implement a whole-of-society and whole-of-government framework.
6. Adopt through the Australian Cabinet an ideology-agnostic framework in relation to extremism in both legislation and policy, emphasising that extremism is to be classified and addressed by reference to its capacity to mobilise harm, incite violence and erode social cohesion, rather than ideological labels.
7. Reduce the politicisation of responses to extremism through a Cabinet protocol that seeks to reduce the politicisation of operational decisions and create consistency in responses to incidents.
8. Commission the Commonwealth Counter-Terrorism Coordinator to conduct within 12 months of the Royal Commission’s final report, an independent review of Australia’s countering violent extremism programs based on effectiveness, in consultation with key communities.
9. Commission the Australian Research Council (ARC), in consultation with the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Department of Home Affairs to establish a multi-year research program on radicalisation processes consistent with an agnostic-process framework.
10. Strengthen the Australian Human Rights Commission’s (AHRC) funding for the full implementation of the National Anti-Racism Framework.

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11. Establish an independent statutory office of the Commissioner for Social Cohesion within 12 months of the Commission’s final report. This role would operate independently to promote democratic engagement, support education initiatives, strengthen media literacy, and develop strategies to combat information pollution.

 12. Recommend that the Australian Bureau of Statistics in consultation with the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Australian Human Rights Commission and police agencies develop within 18 months of the Royal Commission’s final report, nationally consistent classification of identity-based hate elements of recorded crime.

 13. Mandate that all police forces in Australia should adopt within 18 months of the Royal Commission’s final report, nationally consistent training on anti-racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia conducted on a two-year refresh cycle.

 14. Recommend the development of a national protest policing protocol facilitated by the Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee (ANZCTC) for the policing of periods of sustained community tension, with independent review mechanisms and integration with frontline training architecture.

 15. Advocate for the Australian government to enact an enshrined Bill of human rights to recalibrate its human rights protections at a systemic level for all Australians.

 16. Refer the suite of legislative measures enacted in 2024-26 to the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security for review against the procedural-justice principles with public reporting every 24 months.

 17. Enact a modernisation of the regulatory framework for identity-based hate online through the Department of Communications in consultation with the eSafety Commissioner, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, both Special Envoys and the Race Discrimination Commissioner.
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Acknowledgment of Country

The Office of Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians throughout Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, sea waters and community. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

About Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia



Aftab Malik is Australia's first-ever Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia. He is also a designated UN Alliance of Civilisations' expert on global Muslim affairs and spent almost a decade working in the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet. His work bridges academic insight and policy practice, informing responses to hate, misinformation and structural discrimination at a national level.

Mr Malik led Australia's first government-backed conference on Islamophobia following the Christchurch attack on 15 March 2019, contributing to a shift in how institutions engage with anti-Muslim hate. His role as Special Envoy, dedicated to tackling Islamophobia, is one of the first of its kind globally. He recently marked the International Day to Combat Islamophobia (15 March) by addressing a global audience of diplomats at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Mr Malik has worked with senior global leaders, multilateral institutions and policymakers since the aftermath of September 11, bringing long-term perspective to some of the most complex questions around identity, security and public discourse. His work spans research, advisory and published commentary, positioning him as a key voice in contemporary debates on Islamophobia and global affairs. His message is clear: how societies speak about communities shapes policy, perception and lived reality – and changing that begins with informed, critical engagement.

Follow his work on the Office of Australia's Special Envoy Instagram account [@oseci.au](#) and at www.oseci.gov.au.

Introduction



The Bondi terrorist attack that killed 15 Jews during a Chanukah celebration at Archer Park on 14 December 2025 was a devastating and morally reprehensible tragedy. The attack was the first fatal attack on Jews in Australia, the worst terrorist attack on Australian soil, and the deadliest mass shooting in this country since the Port Arthur massacre of April 1996. Any person from any community in Australia should be able to freely practise their faith and live, freely.

The government's enactment of a Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion (Royal Commission) was an appropriate response, not only in response to the pain and suffering of the loss of human life but to also provide support in acknowledgment of the ongoing trauma that remains for the Jewish community. This is unfortunately a feeling that the Muslim community also knows all too well. The rise of anti-Semitism is a serious issue with significant implications that must be addressed. Hatred towards any community has implications for all.

Hatred towards any community has implications for all.

In her interim report, Commissioner Virginia Bell identified that there was no gap in Australia's existing legal and regulatory frameworks that either impeded law enforcement to respond or prevent, an attack of the kind that occurred at Bondi on 14 December 2025.⁴ As observed by Professor Ben Saul, Australia maintains some of the most stringent counter-terrorism laws in the democratic world, with capability to address a wide range of threats while its courts impose some of the harshest terms of imprisonment.⁵ Research and academia have for years identified that there is no single profile, hallmark or marker of extremism and radicalisation.⁶ The time is therefore opportune for efforts to be shifted towards addressing underlying drivers and factors of radicalisation and extremism. This includes addressing socio-economic factors such as inequality, marginalisation and isolation, mental health, misinformation and vulnerable or neurodiverse communities at risk of radicalisation.⁷

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4. Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion (2026) *Interim report*, April. Available at: <https://asc.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2026-05/interim-report-ascrc.pdf> (Accessed: 21 May 2026), p. 8.
 5. Saul, B. (2026) 'Islamic State wives' return is no threat, but our cruelty to their kids is shameful', *The Age*, 7 May. Available at: <https://www.theage.com.au/national/islamic-state-wives-return-is-no-threat-but-our-cruelty-to-their-kids-is-shameful-20260506-p5zuf4.html> (Accessed: 21 May 2026).
 6. Parliament of Australia, Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee (2024) *Right wing extremist movements in Australia*, December. Available at: https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportsen/RB000315/toc_pdf/RightwingextremistmovementsinAustralia.pdf (Accessed: 21 May 2026), p. 35.
 7. Parliament of New South Wales (Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety) (2026) *Measures to combat right-wing extremism in New South Wales: final report*, April. Available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/tp/files/193254/Final%20Report%20-%20Measures%20to%20combat%20right-wing%20extremism%20in%20NSW.pdf> (Accessed: 21 May 2026), p. 4.

Australia was one of the key founders of the United Nations, protecting the fundamental aspects of democracy including the right to free speech and protest are hallmarks of this nation. The ability for people of all walks of life to peacefully protest as a direct human response to injustice and the upholding of international law should not be consumed by mislabelling or misappropriation. This not only affects perceptions of inequality or disproportionate responses to the loss of human life, but it also impacts negatively on the seriousness of anti-Semitism. The deterrence of criticising the actions and policies of the State of Israel through the real and perceived risks of social and personal consequences, may foment resentment, as this dynamic reinforces a sense that diverse voices, including Jewish anti-Zionists, are not being treated fairly.

Australian society needs to be in a place where two elements can be true at once: anti-Semitism can be on the rise while people can protest the actions of the Israeli government. Just as it is not anti-Buddhist to criticise the actions of Myanmar against the Rohingya, so the same differentiation between Jews as a people and the State of Israel must be maintained. As stated by Justice Kevin Bell, “human rights belong to everyone, safety is not a zero-sum game. No person or group can become more secure by demanding exceptionalism or by criminalising the legitimate dissent of others. All of us become more secure when our institutions are robust enough to respect and protect the plurality of all our identities.”⁸

**“human rights belong to everyone, safety is not a zero-sum game.
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exceptionalism or by criminalising the legitimate dissent of others.
All of us become more secure when our institutions are robust enough
to respect and protect the plurality of all our identities.”**

JUSTICE KEVIN BELL

8. Bell, K. (2026) ‘Dissenters on Bondi inquiry are being stripped of Jewish identity’, *Australian Financial Review*, 29 April. Available at: <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/dissenters-on-bondi-inquiry-are-being-stripped-of-jewish-identity-20260429-p5zrw6> (Accessed: 19 May 2026).



Section 1: Extremism and Radicalisation

1.1 ISIS extremism

On 16 December 2025, the Australian Federal Police Commissioner stated that early indications regarding the Bondi attack, allegedly carried out by a Muslim father and son was inspired by the Islamic State (ISIS). Australian Muslim leaders unequivocally condemned and repudiated the actions of the attackers, including in Sydney, where leaders refused to perform funeral prayers for the deceased, Sajid Akram. This refusal constituted a clear repudiation of this heinous act. Acknowledging its moral significance cannot be understated.⁹ As I have written elsewhere, ISIS embodies a horrific failure of human compassion and mercy. They stain humanity and stand in stark opposition to the core values of Islam, representing twisted, inhumane violence, rather than the belief of nearly 2 billion Muslims.

ISIS embodies a horrific failure of human compassion and mercy. They stain humanity and stand in stark opposition to the core values of Islam, representing twisted, inhumane violence, rather than the belief of nearly 2 billion Muslims.

Over the past 25 years, there has been significant debate regarding the causes of Muslim extremism and radicalisation, with perspectives ranging from claims of an inherent cultural disposition towards violence in Islam to arguments highlighting the impact of western foreign policy and past support for militant groups in the Middle East.¹⁰ Others instead consider it as a political response to neo-colonisation, capitalism, liberalism and democracy.¹¹ While there is no singular reason why radicalisation occurs, Muslim scholars have adamantly and clearly stated that there is nothing in Islam that justifies terrorism, let alone the killing of civilians, to do so is to be inherently *anti-Islamic*.¹²

While there is no singular reason why radicalisation occurs, Muslim scholars have adamantly and clearly stated that there is nothing in Islam that justifies terrorism, let alone the killing of civilians, to do so is to be inherently *anti-Islamic*.

9. Malik, A. (2026 Forthcoming). *How Can the Healing Begin? Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism and Social Cohesion after Bondi*. Office of the Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, p.9.

10. *Ibid*, p.2.

11. *Ibid*.

12. *Ibid*.

It is crucial to understand that ISIS recruits have been found to be religiously illiterate, with some arguing that many are “MINOs” – Muslim in name only, with little to no proper grasp of theology, ethics, or moral reasoning.¹³ ISIS places Muslim Australians in a double-bind. Not only do their actions drive Islamophobia, but ironically, Muslims remain among their primary victims.¹⁴ In other words, not only are Muslims blamed for their actions and bear the consequences, but they too are also killed by ISIS fanatics.

Several factors continually emerge following an attack similar to Bondi, which includes responses that propel Islamophobia, where the tragedy is instrumentalised by a range of actors, including across mainstream media, political discourse and online spaces. The same, anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic tropes resurface repeatedly, online, in the media and they involve the following four tenets:

- Islam is culturally incompatible with Australian values – Muslims do not belong in Australia
- Islam is violent – to be a Muslim is to be a terrorist; or support terrorism
- Muslims are a threat – Muslims seek to impose *Sharia law* on Australia
- Islam is Monolithic – all Muslims are the same and should be held responsible for one another.¹⁵

It is important to recognise that commentary linking terrorism to Islam systematically fuels hatred and prejudice towards Muslims. For example, when senior political figures frame Bondi as “radical extremist Islamic hatred” as distinct from, violent extremism of two radicalised individuals, many people only hear “Islamic hatred.” The noun and the modifier collapse into each other, and the result is that Islam itself and by extension every Australian Muslim becomes the problem to be solved. This is not mere semantics; it has been perpetuated since 9/11 and is a mechanism of harm that has measurable consequences. In the fortnight after the Bondi attack, Islamophobia in Australia increased by 740%.¹⁶ This increase is a predictable result of a permission structure built in real time by language and a public discourse that continues to conflate ideology with faith. A return to the post 9/11 framework of suspicion, profiling, guilt by association, and constant pressure on Muslims to prove their innocence or loyalty is simply not acceptable.

A return to the post 9/11 framework of suspicion, profiling, guilt by association, and constant pressure on Muslims to prove their innocence or loyalty is simply not acceptable.

Despite academic research identifying there are several pathways to radicalisation, there is a tendency to ignore this and fixate on religion as the sole cause. Australia already has a significant counter-terrorism legislative framework, coupled with the recent finding from the Royal Commission’s Interim Report that there were no significant gaps, the result should not be to create more moral panic and societal fear of both Muslims and Islam.

13. Ibid, p.3.

14. Ibid, p.2.

15. Ibid, p.15.

16. Malik, A. (2026) ‘Islamophobia has surged since the Bondi attack. Australia’s Muslim community should not have to endure this abuse’, *The Guardian*, 2 January. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/jan/02/islamophobia-surged-bondi-attack-australia-muslim-community-ntwnfb> (Accessed 19 May 2026).

1.2 The multifaceted causes of radicalisation

The concept of radicalisation, while widely referred to across scholarly, public and policy domains, remains relatively underdeveloped. Scholars consistently highlight that the term emerged into public consciousness following the 9/11 attacks.¹⁷ This origin has led to a disproportionate association of the term with Muslim communities. The subsequent skewing of theoretical and empirical research, as well as policy decisions, towards ideological motivations emphasise the tenets of Islamic denominations.¹⁸

Because researchers typically focus on the form of terrorism most relevant to the security climate at a given time, most existing models focus on “radical Islam”. The extensive proliferation of these models across research, has fed back to policy and practice, further entrenching the security focus on this cohort, and shaping research directions. This circular relationship has contributed to the continued emphasis on *Islam* in violent extremism and terrorism prevention (see Appendix).

As a result, the growth of the adoption of the term radicalisation in research, policy and public discourse has drastically outpaced advancements in understanding what radicalisation *is*. Despite the extensive number of studies examining the nature, and drivers, of extremism and terrorism, the one consensus is that radicalisation is a process.¹⁹ However, there is far less agreement about which risk factors are involved in that process.

A 2023 systematic review identified 99 unique radicalisation models, each attempting to describe how ideologies develop and influence decision-making.²⁰ The earliest models were fairly simplistic, consisting of four to six stages demonstrating how individuals develop the intent and capacity to carry out an act of violent extremism.²¹ Over time, a wide range of more complex models has emerged, incorporating a broad range of risk factors.

For example, Dr Corner and Taylor’s systematic review found that while all models treated the adoption of attitudes and behaviours of terrorist ideologies as a process, this is where the commonalities ended with 786 unique risk factors identified across 99 models.²² Many researchers argue that these models are vague, lack scientific grounding, and have not been sufficiently validated against real cases or general population benchmarks.²³

Post 9/11, academics and researchers all agreed that in most situations, and according to most criteria, violent extremists and terrorists do not fit a specific profile or a checklist of experiences, conditions or attributes.²⁴ Instead, attention shifted towards the process of radicalisation, reflecting the understanding that no single trait or profile can explain engagement in extremism.²⁵

Consensus among Australian think-thanks, researchers and academics similarly demonstrates that there is no single reason why radicalisation occurs.²⁶ Over the past 25 years, significant

17. West, L., Platow, M.J., Taylor, H. and Corner, E. (2025) ‘Beyond antecedents: the application of reciprocal determinism to understanding radicalisation process(es)’, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 19(3), pp. 21–45.

18. Kundnani, A. (2012). Radicalisation: the journey of a concept. *Race & Class*, 54(2), 3-25.

19. Corner, E., Bragias, A., Church, J., & Taylor, H. (2025). ‘Modelling Drivers of Grievance-Fuelled Violence’. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 37(7), 979–998.

20. Corner, E., & Taylor, H. (2023). *Grievance-fuelled violence: Modelling the process of grievance development*. Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

21. This includes Borum’s 2003 four-stage model of the terrorist mindset or Moghaddam’s 2005 staircase to terrorism.

22. Corner, E., & Taylor, H. (2023). *Grievance-fuelled violence: Modelling the process of grievance development*. Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

23. Bartlett, J., Birdwell, J. and King, M. (2010) *The edge of violence: a radical approach to extremism*. London: Demos.

24. Droogan, J. and Waldek, L. (2019) ‘Religion, radicalization, and violent extremism?’, in Codwell, E., Fleming, H., Hodge, A. and Osborn, M. (eds.) *Does religion cause violence? Multidisciplinary perspectives on violence and religion in the modern world*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, p. 179.

25. Ibid.

26. Parliament of Australia (Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee) (2024) *Right wing extremist movements in Australia*. Available at: https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportsen/RB000315/toc_pdf/RightwingextremistmovementsinAustralia.pdf (Accessed: 21 May 2026).

attention has been given to Muslim extremism and radicalisation; however no unified explanation has emerged. There is no one consensus on the exact causes, with some arguing that there is an inherent cultural disposition towards violence in Islam, while others point to western involvement in supporting extremist actors in the Middle East, or broader foreign policy dynamics.²⁷

Debate also continues regarding the role of religion in radicalisation, with some questioning whether religion itself is a causal factor in violence. Additional explanations emphasise perceived injustice and humiliation, generational alienation and nihilism among youth, as well as social marginalisation and untreated mental health issues as contributing factors.

What emerges from this extensive body of scholarship is that radicalisation cannot be attributed to a single cause. This conclusion is consistently reinforced by research from Australian think tanks, scholars, and academic institutions. No single race, religion or ideology has a monopoly on extremism.

However, despite common perceptions, threat environments have evolved. Across most western democracies, since 2014, acts of terrorism have predominately been perpetrated by lone offenders who are inspired by, but not part of, a larger terrorist group.²⁸ These offenders have held a broad range of ideological commitments, including ideologies that “borrow” tenets of a range of political and religious structures.

1.3 Understanding contemporary extremism beyond ideological labels

Extremism is commonly understood as a belief system comprised by rigid, uncompromising views that exist outside the general norms of society.²⁹ These beliefs may emerge from a range of ideological bases but are united by a desire to bring about change and to reshape political, social or religious structures in line with a specific vision. Critically, the peer-reviewed evidence demonstrates that holding extreme beliefs does not inherently lead to violence: the majority of people who support these beliefs do not commit or engage in acts of violence.³⁰ These behaviours however, can inflict harm at the individual level on the wellbeing of victims and at the societal level by contributing to social division, polarisation and intolerance.³¹

Violent extremism, by contrast, refers to the use of violence to further extremist aims, while radicalisation describes the process through which an individual comes to view violence as an acceptable and effective tool to address their grievances.³² The dynamics of extremism continue to evolve, with ideologies increasingly intersecting, adapting and converging. For example, the ASIO Director General noted in the 2025 threat assessment that “intersecting ideologies” are increasingly shaping Australia’s security landscape, including anti-authority movements, conspiracy theories and nationalist-racist extremism.³³ He also further observed that threats and ideologies are diverse, dynamic and degraded, intersecting in ways that are both cascading and simultaneous.³⁴

27. Malik, A. (2026) ‘How can the healing begin? Islamophobia, antisemitism and social cohesion after Bondi’, *ABC Religion & Ethics*. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/aftab-malik-islamophobia-antisemitism-social-cohesion-bondi/106430394> (Accessed: 20 May 2026).

28. Europol (2021) *European Union terrorism situation and trend report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/main-reports/tesat-report>.

29. Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain (2020) *Ko tō tātou kāinga tēnei: report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019*, 26 November. Available at: https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/20148/ko-to-tatou-kainga-tenei-volume-1-v2.pdf (Accessed: 5 May 2026), p. 100.

30. Commission for Countering Extremism (2019) *Challenging hateful extremism*, October. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e74b07ad3bf7f467a27a188/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf (Accessed: 5 May 2026).

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid, p. 101.

33. Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (2025) ASIO annual threat assessment 2025. Available at: <https://www.oni.gov.au/news/asio-annual-threat-assessment-2025> (Accessed: 14 May 2026).

34. Ibid.

The ASIO Director General noted in the 2025 threat assessment that “intersecting ideologies” are increasingly shaping Australia’s security landscape, including anti-authority movements, conspiracy theories and nationalist-racist extremism.

Similarly, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has highlighted that individuals are increasingly motivated by what Director Christopher Wray describes as “salad bar ideology”, a “jumble” or mixture of ideologies that do not fit together.³⁵ He notes that individuals may combine conflicting beliefs with personal grievances to justify violence with each other, mixing them with their own personal grievances to justify violence.³⁶ As Director Wray notes, “it is more about the violence than it is about the ideology.”³⁷ This aligns with academic work on “ideological convergence” and “fringe fluidity” which describes the blending of beliefs across traditional ideological boundaries. These dynamics are often facilitated by online environments that attract individuals seeking purpose, alongside a broader shift towards lone actor or “leaderless” models of extremism.³⁸

These dynamics are often facilitated by online environments that attract individuals seeking purpose, alongside a broader shift towards lone actor or “leaderless” models of extremism.

In addition, gender, specifically constructions of masculinity, plays a significant role across many forms of extremism.³⁹ The overwhelming majority of extremists are men, and research identifies that masculinity intersects with radicalisation pathways, including through attempts to assert identity, prove masculinity and respond to personal experiences of social and economic marginalisation.⁴⁰ For example, far-right groups have been known to promote misogyny and recruit through “manosphere” subcultures, building upon anxiety that men and masculinity remains under threat, interlinked with social isolation in young men, the increase in toxic online gaming networks and ‘involuntary celibate’ (incel) groups.⁴¹

In addition, gender, specifically constructions of masculinity, plays a significant role across many forms of extremism.

This reality is reflected in the current review being undertaken by Australia’s Independent National Security Monitor of the definition of a “terrorist act” in section 100.1 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.⁴² A terrorist act is generally defined as an action or threat of action designed to influence a government, intimidate the public, or advance a political, religious, or ideological cause.

35. Meleagrou-Hitchens, A. and Ayad, M. (2023) The age of incoherence? *Understanding mixed and unclear ideology extremism. Program on Extremism*, George Washington University, June. Available at: <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs5746/files/2023-06/the-age-of-incoherence-final.pdf> (Accessed: 14 May 2026), p. 5.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid, p.5-6.

39. Gottzén, L. (2025) ‘Exploring the link between masculinity and violent extremism: remasculinization as individual and political project’, *Sociology Compass*, 19(8), p. 1.

40. Ibid.

41. Parliament of New South Wales (Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety) (2026) *Measures to combat right-wing extremism in New South Wales: final report*, April. Available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/tp/files/193254/Final%20Report%20-%20Measures%20to%20combat%20right-wing%20extremism%20in%20NSW.pdf> (Accessed: 16 May 2026), p. 15.

42. Independent National Security Legislation Monitor (2025) *Defining terrorism – issues paper: review of the definition of a ‘terrorist act’*. Available at: <https://www.inslm.gov.au/system/files/2025-08/INSLM-terrorism-Issues-Paper.pdf> (Accessed: 14 May 2026).

This requirement means that any prosecution of a successful charge of a terrorist act offence, will require that a motivating factor be categorised as either political, religious or ideological. This framework was developed by the Howard Government as part of its response to the September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks.⁴³ However, now over 20 years later this characterisation remains ill-equipped to address the reality of modern extremism which features hybrid, intersecting, fluid, non-coherent ideologies that are also progressively driven by personal grievances.⁴⁴ In addition, since its inception, in Australia there has never been a successful prosecution of a terrorist offence based purely on religion as a motivating factor, it has always also included either political or ideological motivations.⁴⁵ This suggests that the existing framework does not necessarily support or justify the continued use of this framing, particularly noting its significant impact on Muslim communities. This is in scope with the broader understanding that Islam, in its normative, mainstream interpretation categorically prohibits terrorism, indiscriminate violence and the killing of civilians.⁴⁶ This categorisation has also contributed to the creation of a dissonance between the public perception of the reasons for terrorism and the reality of its driving factors and risks.⁴⁷

However, now over 20 years later this characterisation remains ill-equipped to address the reality of modern extremism which features hybrid, intersecting, fluid, non-coherent ideologies that are also progressively driven by personal grievances.

This shift has also been reflected in emerging research. In response to the recognised harm to social cohesion caused by the historical focus on Islam, and in light of evolving threat environments, recent work has reconceptualised radicalisation as an ideology-agnostic process of belief adoption. Under this perspective, the outcome of developing a radical belief system may differ depending on ideological context (e.g., extreme right, extreme left, religious), but the underlying process by which an individual adopts their beliefs and endorses or undertakes behaviours in furtherance of those beliefs is consistent. This approach differs from earlier research as it shifts focus away from an ever-expanding list of risk factors and towards the underlying processes from which those risk factors emerge. This perspective conceptualises radicalisation as both a consequence of, and driver of changes to, an individual's cognition and identity.⁴⁸

43. Hardy, K. (2011) 'Hijacking public discourse: religious motive in the Australian definition of a terrorist act', *UNSW Law Journal*, 34(1), p. 333.

44. Woods, C. (2026) 'Ideology and terrorism: report considers definition', *LSJ Online*, 29 April. Available at: <https://lsj.com.au/articles/ideology-and-terrorism-report-considers-definitions/> (Accessed: 6 May 2026).

45. Independent National Security Legislation Monitor (2025) *Defining terrorism: issues paper—review of the definition of a 'terrorist act' in section 100.1 of the Criminal Code Act 1995*. Available at: <https://www.inslm.gov.au/system/files/2025-08/INSLM-terrorism-Issues-Paper.pdf> (Accessed: 12 May 2026), p. 39.

46. See, e.g., Muhammad Afifi Al-Akiti, *Defending the Transgressed by Censuring the Reckless Against the Killing of Civilians* (Aqsa Press, 2005); Abdal Hakim Murad, *Bombing Without Moonlight: The Origins of Suicidal Terrorism* (Amal Press, 2008); Abdallah bin Bayyah, *The Culture of Terrorism: Tenets and Treatments*, tr Hamza Yusuf (Sandala, 2009); Joseph E.B. Lombard (ed), *Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition* (World Wisdom Inc, 2009); HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, Ibrahim Kalin, and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (eds), *War and Peace in Islam: The Uses and Abuses of Jihad* (The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre and The Islamic Texts Society, 2013); ElSayed MA Amin, *Reclaiming Jihad: A Qur'anic Critique of Terrorism* (The Islamic Foundation, 2014). See also, Charles Kurzman, *The Missing Martyrs: Why There Are So Few Muslim Terrorists* (Oxford University Press, 2011), as all cited in my submission to the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor (INSLM) on Defining Terrorism: Review of the Definition of a 'Terrorist Act' in section 100.1 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (28 October 2025).

47. Woods, C. (2026) 'Ideology and terrorism: report considers definition', *LSJ Online*, 29 April. Available at: <https://lsj.com.au/articles/ideology-and-terrorism-report-considers-definitions/> (Accessed: 6 May 2026).

48. West, L., Platow, M.J., Taylor, H. and Corner, E. (2025) 'Beyond antecedents: the application of reciprocal determinism to understanding radicalisation process(es)', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 19(3), pp. 21–45.

This approach differs from earlier research as it shifts focus away from an ever-expanding list of risk factors and towards the underlying processes from which those risk factors emerge. This perspective conceptualises radicalisation as both a consequence of, and driver of changes to, an individual's cognition and identity.

Within this framework, cognition both influences and is shaped by how individuals navigate social environments. Cognition determines what is noticed, how it will be understood, and how individuals position themselves psychologically and behaviourally within different contexts. Importantly, these processes are not unidirectional. Behaviours (as a product of radicalisation) are self-regulated through changes in social environments, identity and the cognitive frameworks individuals use to interpret the world.

Further, in this perspective of radicalisation, while the interactions between cognitions, identity, and behaviour are present in all cases, the relative influence of these elements will vary for different individuals under different circumstances. For example, for a person with lower self-efficacy, the impact on their social context and changes to their identity will differ compared to a person with higher self-efficacy. This perspective has the potential to offer a far more in-depth understanding of what radicalisation *is*.

Together, these developments make clear that a fundamental shift in how extremism is understood and addressed is no longer optional, but necessary in order to truly manage its underlying causes. Efforts to categorise extremism solely by ideology are increasingly insufficient. Instead, greater emphasis must be placed on the actual outcomes of extremist activity, namely the capacity to mobilise harm, incite violence and erode social cohesion, regardless of the ideological pathway involved.

Instead, greater emphasis must be placed on the actual outcomes of extremist activity, namely the capacity to mobilise harm, incite violence and erode social cohesion, regardless of the ideological pathway involved.

Shifting away from rigid ideological classification reduces the need for law enforcement to assign individuals to fixed categories that do not reflect the complexity of contemporary extremism. A continued fixation on ideology risks obscuring this complexity, ultimately limiting the effectiveness of policy and prevention efforts.

Adopting an outcome-focused framework would enable a more comprehensive understanding of modern extremism, including the role of gender-dynamics, socio-economic factors and social isolation. This approach is better suited to addressing the fluid, hybrid and adaptive nature of modern extremism.

1.4 The limits of ideology-driven frameworks

Ideology-centred approaches have been the norm since 9/11 and have formed the basis of modern contemporary understanding of radicalisation and extremism. However, they are no longer adequate to manage the current realities of contemporary extremism. The limitation of this approach is further illustrated by the Bondi attack. As Dr Wesam Charkawi states, the assumption that ideology is *the primary driver of violence* is not supported by evidence, yet it reflects

longstanding policy and institutional bias.⁴⁹ Post-incidence evidence and analysis conducted in the aftermath of the Bondi attack identifies a pattern and trajectory of isolation, control, secrecy and deterioration, rather than a specific ideological pathway.⁵⁰ This includes clinical observations from forensic psychologists, family members and testimony from people who encountered them in ordinary settings, and these findings all correlate to the evidence referenced above and supported by years of research.⁵¹

The evidence demonstrates, that despite monitoring by law enforcement early on, there was no clear identification that Sajid Akram had developed an ideological trajectory.⁵² The system did not detect this precisely, because it was not looking for these factors. For example, the video referred to by police which signals the identification of a flag helps frame a story attached to the act, yet does not explain the foundation of it.⁵³ The terrorism framework still embeds political, ideological and religious causes as a defining element.⁵⁴ For example, the Perth Invasion Day rally attempted bomb attack resulted in law enforcement taking nine days to declare that it was a terrorist attack as they tried to identify an ideology for the attacker.⁵⁵

The hyper-fixation on ideologies, diverts attention away from the underlying drivers and outcomes of violence, limiting the effectiveness of the current framework.

The hyper-fixation on ideologies, diverts attention away from the underlying drivers and outcomes of violence, limiting the effectiveness of the current framework. It also has contributed to disproportionate responses for communities while continuing to treat other communities as suspect. This framing has shaped law enforcement responses, media narratives and public perceptions for more than two decades. There is a significant risk that continuation of the current framework will inevitably be outpaced by the ongoing proliferation of online platforms and the inability to manage the core underlying issues such as mental health, education, socio-economic concerns, lack of trust in government and institutions and lead to an environment where it will outpace the ability of government to regulate.

The terms “terrorism”, “radicalisation” and “extremism” remains dominant in Australian public discourse and is more frequently and consistently directed at Muslim Australians than at others engaging in comparable conduct. The nuances that are routinely applied to non-Muslim actors are less consistently applied where the actor is Muslim. The framework that has embedded this asymmetry, across two decades of Australian counter-terrorism legislation, media practice and political rhetoric, requires sustained and disciplined re-development. The accumulated peer-reviewed evidence attributes the documented condition of Islamophobia in Australia substantially to this framework. The Commission’s final report has the opportunity to recommend the institutional, communicative and procedural changes that will progressively undo this asymmetry.

49. Charkawi, W. (2026) ‘The Bondi attack has exposed the limits of Australia’s “ideology first” anti-terrorism model’, *Deepcut News*, 4 May. Available at: <https://www.deepcutnews.com/p/the-bondi-attack-has-exposed-the> (Accessed: 6 May 2026).

50. Robertson, J. (2026) ‘Secrecy, “manipulation” and a long interest in guns: Sajid Akram’s road to Bondi’, *ABC News*, 2 May. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-05-02/secracy-guns-manipulation-sajid-akram-road-to-bondi/106621098> (Accessed: 18 May 2026).

51. *Ibid.*

52. Charkawi, W. (2026) ‘The Bondi attack has exposed the limits of Australia’s “ideology first” anti-terrorism model’, *Deepcut News*, 4 May. Available at: <https://www.deepcutnews.com/p/the-bondi-attack-has-exposed-the> (Accessed: 6 May 2026).

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

55. West, L. (2026) ‘Why did it take 9 days to declare the Perth bombing attempt a terrorist act?’, *The Conversation*, 5 February. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/why-did-it-take-9-days-to-declare-the-perth-bombing-attempt-a-terrorist-attack-275223> (Accessed: 6 May 2026).

The consideration of radicalisation programs should be approached with considerable caution, especially noting their demonstrated impact on Muslim communities. Deradicalisation programs have a history of pathologising religiosity as markers or indicators of potential radicalisation, leading to disproportionate targeting of Muslims including children and youth.⁵⁶

Deradicalisation programs have a history of pathologising religiosity as markers or indicators of potential radicalisation, leading to disproportionate targeting of Muslims including children and youth.

These programs operate within an already complex legal and policy frameworks that are often vague, expansive with limited procedural safeguards while continuing to encroach on human rights and liberties, particularly of children and young people.⁵⁷ Critically the programs continue to exist without proper formal impact assessments, which raise concerns regarding their effectiveness and proportionality.⁵⁸ For example, in 2023 the carriage of violent extremist material was made a federal offence and since that time, 60% of those who have been charged have been children.⁵⁹ This offence does not require intent to be proven. Legal groups and advocacy bodies have raised serious questions regarding the way in which young people may come across material, unbeknownst to them.⁶⁰ Many of the children charged under these offences have additional vulnerabilities such as an autism diagnosis, language challenges and social issues.⁶¹ This also includes a court finding that an undercover AFP officer had “fed” a fixation and “doomed” rehabilitation efforts for a 14 year old boy with autism.⁶² This important example is a reminder of the way in which counter-terrorism initiatives focused on a securitised response operate in a context where vulnerability and human rights considerations are not at the forefront, leading to long-term impacts to individuals and communities.

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Any recommendations put forward should also consider the long-term impact these programs will have on children and young people going forward, acknowledging the challenges and issues over 20 years’ worth of securitisation, disproportionate scrutiny and policing and the normalisation of Islamophobia within a national security discourse continues to have for the Muslim community. Criminalisation should not be the only mechanism in which to facilitate change.

Criminalisation should not be the only mechanism in which to facilitate change.

56. Muslim Votes Matter (2025) *Submission to the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor (INSLM) review of the definition of a “terrorist act” under section 100.1 of the Criminal Code*, 14 October, p. 29.

57. Ibid, 34.

58. Ibid, 32.

59. Bogle, A. and Bucci, N. (2026) ‘Australian children are being arrested under laws to “disrupt” extremism: on balance this is a bad law’, *The Guardian*, 15 March. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2026/mar/14/australian-children-arrested-charged-possessing-extremist-material-ntwnfb> (Accessed: 1 May 2026).

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

1.5 Far-right and far-left extremism

While contemporary extremism cannot be confined to a single ideology, certain forms of extremism, including far-right and far-left extremism, currently pose pressing and documented threats to a range of Australian minorities and communities.

1.5.1 Far-right extremism

For many years after the 9/11 terror attacks, the public and political debate on violent extremism in Australia revolved primarily around al-Qa'ida-inspired and later ISIS-inspired violent extremism. However, other forms of political extremism, in particular far-right extremism, received comparatively little attention. This has changed in recent years, partly as a result of increasingly brazen public conduct by white nationalist and supremacist, openly anti-Semitic neo-Nazi groups, which has attracted significant media and political attention and produced several state and federal inquiries, including the 2024 report of the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee, *Right-Wing Extremist Movements in Australia*.⁶³

The growth of right-wing extremism has shifted from what was once considered a localised or fringe movement to a transnational phenomenon.

The growth of right-wing extremism has shifted from what was once considered a localised or fringe movement to a transnational phenomenon. The current composition of right-wing extremist groups encompasses racism, misogyny, anti-Semitism, anti-LGBTQ sentiments, Islamophobia and perceptions of government overreach.⁶⁴ Historically, right-wing extremism has comprised a combination of neo-Nazism, other forms of fascism, white supremacy and nationalism.⁶⁵

Right-wing extremism is a spectrum of socio-political movements with three core criterion. The first is that these movements exhibit “anti-democratic opposition to equality”, and the rejection of democratic politics that justify the use of a violence as an effective way in which to gain change both at societal and political levels.⁶⁶ They are also identifiable by authoritarian and exclusionary nationalistic attributes, identifiable by mandates that exclude or “other” fellow citizens on the basis of behaviour (such as personal or social morality), politics, race, or religion.⁶⁷ Conspiratorial beliefs, moreover, have long had a place in the extreme right worldview, with conspiracies around a “Zionist Occupation Government” and the “Eurabia Project” prominent among them.⁶⁸ During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the far-right landscape has become more complex with an expansion of these conspiratorial beliefs, and the increasing intersections alongside misinformation, anti-government sentiment and mistrust.⁶⁹

63. Parliament of New South Wales (Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety) (2026) Measures to combat right-wing extremism in New South Wales: final report, April. Available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/tp/files/193254/Final%20Report%20-%20Measures%20to%20combat%20right-wing%20extremism%20in%20NSW.pdf> (Accessed: 16 May 2026).

64. Spence, S. (2020) ‘Right-wing extremism: the new wave of global terrorism’, *The Conversation*, 23 October. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/right-wing-extremism-the-new-wave-of-global-terrorism-147975> (Accessed: 20 May 2026).

65. Campion, K. (2024) ‘Right-wing extremism in Australia: current threats and trends in a diverse and diffuse threatscape’, *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 16(3), p. 1.

66. Khalil, L. (2024) *Submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee of the Senate: inquiry into right-wing extremist movements in Australia*, April 2024.

67. Carter, E. ‘Right-Wing Extremism/Radicalism: Reconstructing the Concept.’ *Journal of Political Ideologies* 23, no. 2 (2018/05/04 2018): 157-82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2018.1451227>; Mudde, Cas. *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*. New York: Manchester University Press, 2000.

68. The Zionist Occupation Government is a conspiracy that suggests a secret cabal of Jews and/or Zionists secretly control the governments of the world, often through wealth or bank bonds. The Eurabia Project refers to a conspiracy that suggests Muslims are using their supposedly vast oil wealth to purchase positions of power in order to Islamise Europe.

69. Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS) (2022) *Submission to the Victorian Parliament Legal and Social Issues Committee inquiry into extremism in Victoria*. Available at: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/495e7c/contentassets/89bc79feca7a4e728a679eba36bfe069/submission-documents/011.-centre-for-resilient-and-inclusive-societies.pdf> (Accessed: 21 May 2026), p. 3.

Academics have argued that right-wing extremism began to re-emerge in Australia in the mid-2010s on a scale not been seen in decades, often inspired and emboldened by international developments.⁷⁰ The post 9/11 mainstreaming of Islamophobia also paved the way to a resurgence of openly racist variants of right-wing extremism, often intersecting with anti-immigrant rhetoric. Many of right-wing extremist groups share grievances, which can lead to overlapping and intersecting views advocating different, and sometimes conflicting beliefs.⁷¹

These common extreme right-wing beliefs of peril and threat directly correspond with target selection. The far-right terrorist attack by an Australian man, murdering 51 Muslims at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019, was a “watershed moment” in the trajectory of far-right extremism.⁷² Prior to 2019, academic research on far-right extremism was rare in security studies, and largely seen as a niche interest of labour historians.⁷³ After March 2019, a number of studies focused on extreme right wing ideologies, and organisational formation, and violent strategies and targeting.⁷⁴

While the far right in Australia has remained relatively organisationally weak, particularly following the disbandment of two leading neo-Nazi groups in early 2026, the threat of what ASIO describes as “ideologically motivated, nationalist and racist violent extremism” (NVRE) remains high.

While the far right in Australia has remained relatively organisationally weak, particularly following the disbandment of two leading neo-Nazi groups in early 2026, the threat of what ASIO describes as “ideologically motivated, nationalist and racist violent extremism” (NVRE) remains high.

These threats manifest in multiple ways. On the one hand, individuals who subscribe to far-right beliefs may plan and carry out acts of lone-actor violence, such as the attempted bomb attack on the Invasion Day rally in Perth on 26 January 2026. On the other hand, these threats also manifest through increasing incidents of violent hate crimes committed by individuals who may not be formally affiliated with extremist groups but are motivated by white nationalist and often anti-Semitic ideologies. These acts disproportionately target Muslims, Jewish communities, LGBTQI+ individuals and other minority groups. Research consistently demonstrates that targeted violence emerges from a complex interplay of personal, political and social factors.⁷⁵

New organisations have, and continue, to emerge from the white nationalist, supremacist, and neo-Nazi milieus. Over 30 such new groups have emerged since 2019, with expanded aesthetics (such as “Active Clubs”) and more complex ideologies, such as those who adhere to subsections of involuntary celibate gender ideology, technofascist views, and Nihilist Violent Extremist (NVE) beliefs.⁷⁶

70. Ibid, p. 19.

71. Ibid.

72. Hutchinson, S. et al. (2022) Australia’s far-right. Macquarie University. Available at: https://research-management.mq.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/227906422/Publisher_version.pdf (Accessed: 21 May 2026), p. 4.

73. Examples of early work include Moore, Andrew. *The Right Road? A History of Right-Wing Politics in Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1995; and Henderson, Peter Charles. “*A History of the Australian Extreme Right since 1950.*” PhD, University of Western Sydney, 2002.

74. Champion, K. “Australian Right Wing Extremist Ideology: Narratives of Nemesis and Nostalgia.” *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 14, no. 3 (2019): 208-26; Hardy, Keiran. “Countering Right-Wing Extremism: Lessons from Germany and Norway.” *Journal of policing, intelligence and counter terrorism* 14, no. 3 (2019): 262-79; Harris-Hogan, Shandon. “Is Far-Right Violence Actually Increasing in Australia? Tracking Far-Right Terrorism and Violence in Australia between 1990–2020.” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 17, no. 2 (2023): 1-29. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27255590>.

75. Ellis, B.H. et al. (2024) ‘Comparing violent extremism and terrorism to other forms of targeted violence’, *MJ Journal*, 285, June 2024.

76. Champion, K. (2026 Forthcoming). *The Australian Extreme Right: Myth, ideology, and continuity*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Currently, contemporary right-wing extremism is overwhelmingly organised, amplified and normalised through online platforms.

Importantly, while the rise of ISIS drew attention to the use of digital platforms in mobilisation, right-wing extremists were one of the earliest adopters of online networks as early as 1983 for leverage to both communicate and mobilise across borders.⁷⁷ Currently, contemporary right-wing extremism is overwhelmingly organised, amplified and normalised through online platforms.⁷⁸ This dynamic was reflected recently, such as in the attack on the San Diego Islamic Centre in May 2026. The alleged perpetrators, aged 17 and 18, had established their connection online and were exposed to a range of extremist content. Their views reflected a convergence of grievances, including racial hostility, anti-Muslim hatred, alongside personal factors including mental health challenges and rejection by women.⁷⁹ This case highlights the limitations of a traditional ideology-based classification framework. Rather than adhering to a single, coherent ideology, the individuals drew from a broad and inconsistent set of beliefs, underscoring the increasingly hybrid and personalised nature of contemporary radicalisation pathways.

Beyond the threats and risks of violence, white supremacist, racist, anti-Semitic or otherwise dehumanising narratives are widely shared and promoted, both online and offline, by individuals from the far-right milieu. These individuals may or may not be directly associated with far-right extremist groups, but their narratives cause serious harm to the safety and wellbeing of the targeted communities, intercommunity relations and social cohesion. While hate speech online does not always correspond directly to hate crime and violence offline, the harm it may cause in Australian communities is still significant.⁸⁰ Online and dehumanising narratives can embolden violent actors, isolate and alienate targeted (and especially visible) religious and ethnic communities, suppress the public participation of those communities and degrade Australia's liberal-democratic values. This, in addition to the amplification of misinformation, can lead to democratic backsliding.⁸¹

1.5.2 Far-left extremism

Far-left extremism in Australia is the subject of substantially less academic and policy attention than far-right extremism, and a common public understanding of what the far-left looks like in Australia is lacking. This asymmetry has, on occasion, been used to suggest an equivalence between far-right and far-left threats that the published evidence does not support. The threat picture must be reported accurately, including where the evidence is asymmetric. While far-left extremism has a diminish footprint in Australia, acts of extreme left-wing terrorism and violence persist in comparable European contexts in current day.⁸²

77. Khalil, L. Submission to the Legal Constitutional Affairs References Committee of the Senate, *Inquiry into right wing extremist movements in Australia*, April 2024, Available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/RWExtremists23/Submissions (Accessed 21 May 2026).

78. Parliament of New South Wales (Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety) (2026) *Measures to combat right-wing extremism in New South Wales: final report*, April. Available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/tp/files/193254/Final%20Report%20-%20Measures%20to%20combat%20right-wing%20extremism%20in%20NSW.pdf> (Accessed: 16 May 2026), p.88.

79. *ABC News* (2026) 'FBI says San Diego Mosque shooters met online and left writings expressing hate', 20 May. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-05-20/san-diego-mosque-shooters-met-online-writings-expressing-hate/106699536> (Accessed: 21 May 2026).

80. For information on online/offline harms, please see: Simi, Pete, and Steven Windisch. "The Culture of Violent Talk: An Interpretive Approach." Special Issue: The Global Rise of the Extreme Right. *Social Sciences* 9, no. 120 (2020). <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/9/7/120>.

81. Carothers, T. *Understanding and Responding to Global Democratic Backsliding*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2022.

82. For information on this, please see: Europol EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Reports (EU TE-SAT). <https://www.europol.europa.eu/publications-events/main-reports/tesat-report>.

Far-left extremism receives its intellectual foundations from the “soft” left and “hard” left party families, spanning socialism, anarchism, and Marxism (plus its derivatives such as orthodox communism).⁸³ It has been argued that these left wing ideas and theories, were later highjacked by a wave of left wing terrorists in the 1960’s and 1970’s, thus evolving and adapting the teachings of Lenin, Marcuse, and others.⁸⁴ The manifestos of historic left wing terrorists demonstrate a thematic focus on capitalism and the “capitalist classes”, government and politicians, corporation and businesses, law enforcement, and military representatives and agreements (including NATO).⁸⁵

Contemporary far-left extremism is generally motivated by an opposition to capitalism, imperialism or colonialism, adherence to pro-socialist or pro-communist beliefs and anti-fascist rhetoric.⁸⁶

Other scholars highlight their rejection of globalisation, autonomism and American hegemony.⁸⁷

It is generally guided by support for decentralised political and social systems, and an opposition to government authority influenced by a belief that such authority is a tool for oppression.⁸⁸

Far-left extremism is discussed much less than other forms of violent extremism in Australia. The topic has surfaced occasionally in political or public debates, but a common understanding of what the far-left looks like is lacking. Drawing on several definitions, Peucker et al. (2023) found that the “common denominator of the far-left is their pursuit of a radical version of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist egalitarianism”, ideologically rooted in Marxism, (revolutionary) socialism or anarchism.

Far-left extremism is discussed much less than other forms of violent extremism.

Far-left groups are often actively involved in public protest activities, addressing issues such as climate justice and First Nations recognition, to opposing the rise of far-right extremism. In recent years, far-left groups have joined pro-Palestine calls for peace, recognition and human rights for Palestine, often linked to criticism of Israel’s military and government actions. While these protests address issues that are seen as being aligned with radical or far-left anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist agendas and attract many people from the progressive left (including radical left such as revolutionary socialists), classifying these protests as left wing or even radical left appears inaccurate and simplistic given the diversity of people with a range of grievances attending these protests. In the United States, for the first time in 30 years in 2025, left-wing terrorist attacks outnumbered attacks from the far-right.⁸⁹ Further evidence demonstrates that left-wing violence has risen in the past 10 years, notably since President Trump’s rise in politics, while overall it still remains low in comparison to other forms of extremism.⁹⁰

83. Adams, I. *Political Ideology Today*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993. “Anarchism.” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/anarchism/>; “Socialism.” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/socialism/>.

84. Rapoport, D.C. “The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism.” In *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*, edited by Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Lude. Georgetown University Press: Washington, D.C., 2004.

85. Campion, K. “Militants, Pirates, or Extremists? Frameworks for Conceptualising Left-Wing Extremism in Australia.” *The Palgrave Handbook of Left-Wing Extremism*, 219-39: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

86. Byman, D. and McCabe, R. (2025) Left-wing terrorism and political violence in the United States: what the data tells us. Centre for Strategic and International Studies, September. Available at: https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2025-09/250925_Byman_Left_Wing.pdf (Accessed: 18 May 2026), p. 1.

87. Jungkunz, S. (2019) ‘Towards a measurement of extreme left-wing attitudes’, *German Politics*, 28(1), pp. 101–122.

88. Ibid, p. 2.

89. Ibid, 1.

90. Ibid, 1.

1.6 The role of digital environments in amplifying hate

The increasing centrality of digital environments is fundamental to how the shift from contemporary radicalisation to violent extremism takes place. Online spaces can function as the primary infrastructure through which extremist ideologies are disseminated, reinforced and normalised, expanding the reach of online extremists and potentially accelerating pathways to radicalisation across diverse contexts. Digital environments have impacted on both the speed and structure of radicalisation.⁹¹ Traditionally radicalisation unfolded over extended periods, now it can occur in a span of hours or days, largely propelled by short form online propaganda, algorithms and exploitation of developmental vulnerabilities, especially among young people.⁹² Studies show that this uptake is linked with alienation and social isolation, in addition to adverse childhood experiences. One study suggests that some 87% of radicalised minors having a history of neglect or psychological abuse, and 77% experiencing abandonment.⁹³ Another study identifies that this occurs across the spectrum of extremist ideologies.⁹⁴ In short, vulnerable young people are specifically susceptible to being exposed to violent extremist ideologies online.

Critically, the harms produced in these environments are not confined to a single ideology or community. Rather, they operate across interconnected ecosystems that target multiple groups simultaneously, including Muslim and Jewish communities. This reinforces the need to move beyond siloed approaches and instead adopt coordinated, cross-community responses that reflect the shared and relational nature of both radicalisation processes and their impacts.

Digital environments have impacted on both the speed and structure of radicalisation.

While the rise of ISIS drew attention to the way in which digital platforms have been used to mobilise support, since 1983 right-wing extremists have been the earliest adopters of online platforms for communication and international mobilisation efforts.⁹⁵ Contemporary right-wing extremism is now predominately entirely organised, amplified and normalised through online platforms.⁹⁶ Within this context, online spaces function as key conduits for extremism, enabling the widespread dissemination of attitudes, narratives and beliefs, including primarily among young people.⁹⁷ In particular, individuals who are socially isolated or otherwise vulnerable to radicalisation may be drawn to online communities that provide a sense of belonging and connection. Overtime, increased exposure to these environments can facilitate engagement with extremist narratives and content, potentially contributing to the radicalisation process.⁹⁸ Tackling the online space requires a whole-of-government approach, in consultation with online platforms, the eSafety Commissioner and supported by public education campaigns.

91. Vision of Humanity (2026) '*How youth and online networks are reshaping contemporary terrorism*', 18 March. Available at: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/how-youth-and-online-networks-are-reshaping-contemporary-terrorism/> (Accessed: 14 May 2026).

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Logan, M.K., Windisch, S., and Simi, P. 'Adverse Childhood Experiences (Ace), Adolescent Misconduct, and Violent Extremism: A Comparison of Former Left-Wing and Right-Wing Extremists.' *Terrorism and Political Violence* (2022): 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2022.2098725>. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2022.2098725>.

95. Khalil, L. (2024) *Submission to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee of the Senate: inquiry into right-wing extremist movements in Australia*, April 2024, Available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/RWExtremists23/Submissions (Accessed 21 May 2026).

96. Parliament of New South Wales (Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety) (2026) *Measures to combat right-wing extremism in New South Wales: final report*, April. Available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/tp/files/193254/Final%20Report%20-%20Measures%20to%20combat%20right-wing%20extremism%20in%20NSW.pdf> (Accessed: 16 May 2026), p.88.

97. Champion, K. (2024) 'Right-wing extremism in Australia: current threats and trends in a diverse and diffuse threatscape', *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 16(3), pp. 1-6. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48778660> (Accessed: 21 May 2026).

98. Parliament of New South Wales (Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety) (2026) *Measures to combat right-wing extremism in New South Wales: final report*, April. Available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/tp/files/193254/Final%20Report%20-%20Measures%20to%20combat%20right-wing%20extremism%20in%20NSW.pdf> (Accessed: 16 May 2026), p.88.

1.7 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Shift the current framework to focus on the underlying risks and drivers of modern extremism

Reform and adapt Australia's counter-terrorism landscape, including legislative and policy frameworks to respond to the developing understanding of modern extremism, its risks and drivers. Recognise that radicalisation is a dynamic and non-linear process comprised of social, psychological and environmental factors rather than a singular ideological driver. This should also be reflected in risk assessment tools, early intervention models and prevention strategies, to address the complex reality of contemporary extremism and the proliferation of online environments.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Reform Australia's legislative framework

Australia's definition of a 'terrorist act' under section 100.1 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995* should be amended to reduce the reliance on ideological, political or religious motivation as a central criterion to the offence in response to the drivers of modern extremism.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

Enhance support mechanisms over traditional securitised responses

It is recommended that early intervention frameworks prioritise vulnerability, behavioural escalation and environmental risk factors, including social isolation, mental health, exposure to harmful content online. Responses to at-risk individuals should prioritise safeguarding and support mechanisms rather than primarily defaulting to securitised or criminal justice pathways.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Address the use and role of online environments in facilitating pathways to radicalisation

The role that online and digital platforms play in facilitating radicalisation should be formally examined as a central component to contemporary extremism. This should involve a whole-of-society approach, including the regulation of algorithms, disruption of online extremist ecosystems, investment in prevention including public education around critical thinking and misinformation that address the way individuals engage with and are influenced by online content.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Adopt a whole-of-society, whole-of-government approach to all forms of extremism

The Australian Government should adopt, within 12 months of the Royal Commission's final report, a whole-of-society and whole-of-government framework for the management of all forms of violent extremism, replacing the legacy single-community Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) architecture with an ecosystem-level framework consistent with the contemporary evidence base.



RECOMMENDATION 6:

Adopt an ideology-agnostic framework

The Australian Government should adopt, by Cabinet decision and where appropriate by amendment to subordinate legislation and policy documents, the principle that extremism is to be classified and addressed by reference to the capacity to mobilise harm, incite violence and erode social cohesion, rather than by ideological label. The recommendation made by the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor in its current Defining Terrorism review, to the extent the Monitor recommends modernisation along these lines, should be prescribed in legislation.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Depoliticise the response to extremism

The Australian Government should adopt a Cabinet protocol for the management of extremism response that reduces the politicisation of operational decisions, in particular the speed and consistency of terrorism designation across incidents.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Set up an independent review of CVE programs

The Commonwealth Counter-Terrorism Coordinator should commission, within twelve months of the Royal Commission's final report, an independent review of Australia's countering violent extremism programs against the published international evidence base on effectiveness, with consultation including both Special Envoys, the Race Discrimination Commissioner, peak Jewish and Muslim community bodies, and the Australian academic community.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Invest in agnostic-process radicalisation research

The Australian Research Council (ARC), in consultation with the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Department of Home Affairs, should establish a dedicated multi-year research program on radicalisation processes consistent with the agnostic-process framework set out in the peer-reviewed literature, with capacity-building support for Australian academic institutions and integration with policy and operational practice.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Strengthen AHRC National Anti-Racism Framework

The Australian Government should provide recurring funding to the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) for the strengthening and full implementation of the National Anti-Racism Framework, including its application to the structural conditions identified in this section.

Section 2:

Social Cohesion



2.1 Social cohesion in a diverse democracy

In the Royal Commission’s opening hearing, Senior Counsel Assisting Richard Lancaster referred to social cohesion as ‘the national consensus in support of democracy, freedom and the rule of law’.⁹⁹ While there is no determinative definition of ‘social cohesion’, there are specific markers of “good society” which includes:

- high levels of trust in government and each other
- the ability to change one’s position in society either economically or socially through improved health and education,
- economic equality; and
- participation in democratic and community processes.¹⁰⁰

In academic research, social cohesion has rarely, if ever, been defined by or seriously concerned with conformity or same-ness in the opinions, attitudes and ethnic, cultural and religious make-up of modern societies. For more than one hundred years of academic understanding, diversity has been at the heart of the social and economic functioning of modern societies where cohesion emerges from the presence of strong emotional, practical and material bonds and the absence of overt conflict across diversity.¹⁰¹ In modern definitions and understandings, social cohesion is a product of the trust and belonging we have in each other and the actions and behaviours that flow from that.¹⁰²

... true social cohesion resides not in conformity but in the recognition that beneath our differences lies a common humanity and common bonds.

The needs of a vibrant and resilient democracy, in any case, demand that social cohesion accommodate social, demographic and political diversity in societies such as Australia. If social cohesion is to be a useful and constructive policy goal. In a democratic, diverse and cohesive society, true social cohesion resides not in conformity but in the recognition that beneath our differences lies a common humanity and common bonds.¹⁰³ As New Zealand’s Royal Commission

99. Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion (2026) *Transcript of proceedings: opening hearing, 24 February*, Available at: <https://asc.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2026-02/Transcript%20Opening%20Hearing%20%E2%88%92%20Sydney%2C%2024%20February%202026.pdf> (Accessed: 21 May 2026), p. 10.

100. Hardy, K. and Wickes, R. (2026) ‘We can’t coerce our way to social cohesion. Here’s what else governments should be doing’, *The Conversation*, 13 March. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/we-cant-coerce-our-way-to-social-cohesion-heres-what-else-governments-should-be-doing-277734> (Accessed: 12 May 2026).

101. Fonseca, X., Lukosch, S. and Brazier, F. (2019), ‘Social cohesion revisited: a new definition and how to characterize it’, *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 231–253.

102. Chan, J., To, H.-P. and Chan, E. (2006), ‘Reconsidering social cohesion: developing a definition and analytical framework for empirical research’, *Social Indicators Research*, vol. 75, pp. 273–302.

103. O’Donnell, J., Guan, Q. and Prentice, T. (2024) *Mapping Social Cohesion 2024*. Scanlon Foundation Research Institute. Available at: <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2024/>.

into the Christchurch massacre stated, “it is not possible or desirable to expect everyone in society to think and behave in the same way. That sort of uniformity is not what we mean when we talk about social cohesion...instead we see social cohesion as enabling everyone to belong, participate and have confidence in public institutions”.¹⁰⁴

This is best understood and measured as a sense of respect, empathy and belonging, identification and a sense in which people can live, interact and contribute to their communities and fight for their chosen causes without fear and without receiving or directing bigotry, hatred or unjust discrimination from or towards others. To that extent, advocating for the safety and wellbeing of Jewish Australians while respecting the same for Palestinian, Arab and Muslim Australians (and their supporters) is an expression of our common humanity and social cohesion – not in opposition.

To that extent, advocating for the safety and wellbeing of Jewish Australians while respecting the same for Palestinian, Arab and Muslim Australians (and their supporters) is an expression of our common humanity and social cohesion – not in opposition.

Social cohesion is a national security issue.¹⁰⁵ A polarised environment can give rise to increased instances of hate speech, which in turn can create a permissive environment for violent attacks on members of particular groups, including Jewish, Arab, Palestinian and Muslim communities. This means “identifying policies that foster social cohesion is ... crucial, not least because political and social polarisation is currently rising in many countries worldwide”.¹⁰⁶ As noted above, social cohesion has both “vertical” and “horizontal” dimensions, meaning it must be fostered at both community and government levels. A series of community consultations and surveys undertaken across 2025 and 2026 by the ANU National Security College, indicated respondents viewed ‘peaceful and safe communities’ as their foremost national security priority.¹⁰⁷ Results also indicated that participants believed Australia benefits from “relatively strong social cohesion by international standards and that this is worth protecting”.¹⁰⁸ Importantly, national security is the means used by the state to keep its citizens safe, rather than an end in itself. This means national security should not unnecessarily burden human security, human rights or social cohesion. Notably, there is no universally accepted or common definition of national security, either in Australian law or under international law.¹⁰⁹ At its core, however, national security is best understood as the right and obligation of the nation state to protect its existence and its citizens.¹¹⁰

104. Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain (2020) *Ko tō tātou kāinga tēnei: report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019*, 26 November. Available at: https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/20148/ko-to-tatou-kainga-tenei-volume-1-v2.pdf (Accessed: 5 May 2026), p.665.

105. Burgess, M. (2025) ‘Director-General’s annual threat assessment 2025’, 19 February, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. Available at: <https://www.oni.gov.au/news/asio-annual-threat-assessment-2025> (Accessed: 11 May 2026).

106. Burch, F., Loewe, M., Malerba, D. and Leininger, J. (2022) ‘Disentangling the relationship between social protection and social cohesion: introduction to the special issue’, *The European Journal of Development Research*, 34, pp. 1195–1197.

107. Australian National University National Security College (2026) No worries? Voices from across Australia: Australian attitudes to national security, risk and resilience (Community consultations survey and focus group research report, March), p. 42.

108. *Ibid.*, 12.

109. Ireland-Piper, D. (2024) ‘What is national security law’, in Ireland-Piper, D. (ed.) *National security law in Australia*. Sydney: Federation Press, pp. 1–3.

110. *Ibid.* Notably, though the term “social cohesion” is used for functionality in this submission, there is contestation as to whether social cohesion is the most correct or useful term. See, for e.g. ‘The Politics of Migration, Refugees and National Security’, *The National Security Podcast* (Australian National University National Security College, 17 October 2024) <https://nsc.anu.edu.au/podcast/politics-migration-refugees-and-national-security>; Danielle Ireland-Piper, guest speaker at Thomas Emerson, ‘Free Speech Forum: Balancing Protection with Expression’ (YouTube, 31 March 2026). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3auCfYym74&feature=youtu.be>.

2.2 Rushed and over prescribed legislative frameworks fracture social cohesion

Over the past two years, across both state and federal jurisdictions, Australia has enacted a rapid series of legislative measures across several key areas. These developments have at times been rushed, lacked proper consultation and scrutiny, enacted without proper review and sunset clauses and have provided protections against some forms of hate, yet have ignored others. In parallel, in the counter-terrorism space, since 9/11, there have been over 100 pieces of legislation passed.¹¹¹ Examples include the following:

- expansion of the compulsory questioning regime of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
- restrictions on protest, including in respect of conduct in proximity to places of worship and to specific institutions
- the banning or restriction of specific phrases and symbols, with offences for their use in particular settings
- amendments to hate speech legislation at federal and state levels
- further designations of organisations as terrorist organisations or as prohibited hate groups
- amendments to migration legislation affecting visa cancellation and security character assessment.

In parallel, in the counter-terrorism space, since 9/11, there have been over 100 pieces of legislation passed.

Research demonstrates that legal frameworks have both an enforcement and expressive value in protecting social cohesion.¹¹² Laws help to define how relationships work between communities and government institutions and where the boundaries of acceptable behaviour are. Legislative frameworks should only be enacted after meaningful consultation, and, at a bare minimum, in good faith conformity with the “implied freedom of political communication” protected by the *Australian Constitution*. Legislation that does not do so further inflames community tensions and distrust of government.

Evidence also suggests that inconsistent treatment between communities can undermine trust in institutions, and between communities, which in turn damages social cohesion.¹¹³ This means inconsistencies in legal frameworks, inconsistent application and unclear communication of laws can undermine the very social cohesion to be protected. For example, the conflation of religion with ideology in terrorism legal frameworks and the use of terms such as “Islamic terrorism” has had a disproportionate impact on Australian Muslims.¹¹⁴

111. Barns, G. (2026) ‘Antisemitism inquiry interim report: we don’t need more terror laws – we need gun reform’, *Pearls and Irritations*, 3 May. Available at: <https://johnmenadue.com/post/2026/05/antisemitism-inquiry-interim-report-we-dont-need-more-terror-laws-we-need-gun-reform/> (Accessed: 12 May 2026).

112. Sir Peter Gluckman, Paul Spoonley, Anne Bardsley, Richie Poulton, Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, Hema Sridhar and Dawnelle Clyne, ‘Addressing the challenges to social cohesion’, University of Auckland 2023, 3; Aftab Malik, (Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia), *Submission to the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor (INSLM) on Defining terrorism: Review of the definition of a ‘terrorist act’ in section 100.1 of the Criminal Code Act 1995*, 28 October 2025.

113. See, also, Toby Phillips and others, ‘Variation in Policy Response to Covid-19 Across Australian States and Territories’ *BSG Working Paper Series* (17 June 2022) <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/publications/variation-policy-response-covid-19-across-australian-states-and-territories>; Bill Browne, ‘State Revival: The Role of the States in Australia’s Covid-19 Response and Beyond’ *Australia Institute* (July 2021) <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/new-analysis-the-critical-role-of-the-states-in-covid-19-and-beyond/>.

114. Akbarzadeh, S. (2016) ‘The Muslim question in Australia: Islamophobia and Muslim alienation’, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 36(3), p. 323.

This means inconsistencies in legal frameworks, inconsistent application and unclear communication of laws can undermine the very social cohesion to be protected.

By way of further example, when legislation that embeds undefined concepts of “hate” and/or excessively restricts protest is rushed through federal and state parliaments, it causes confusion, uncertainty, and division in the community.¹¹⁵ This has the potential to increase resentment of Jewish and Muslim communities among the broader public. Instead, policies of inclusion need to be prioritised, not least because “intercommunal inequalities” are a source of social tension.¹¹⁶

It may be useful to consider appointing an independent Commissioner on Social Cohesion with a role in “statutory explanation” to make clear the scope, remit and coherence of laws regulating hate speech and to advise government on relevant legislation, rather than ad hoc appointments for particular issues. Social cohesion literacy programs should also become a keystone of induction programs on national security for all parliamentarians. The way government representative and community organisations communicate legislative initiatives impacts social cohesion.¹¹⁷ These initiatives may assist in building trust, which is important because trust enhances social cohesion (with distrust having the opposite effect).¹¹⁸ Trust becomes particularly important in a complex information environment. The role can be similar to the eSafety Commissioner, an independent appointed expert on social cohesion and democracy.

Notably, since October 7, 2025, legislative measures relating to protest rights, political expression and hate speech were expedited across Australian jurisdictions, frequently under tight timeframes and with limited transparency and insufficient consultation, despite substantial long-term consequences and impacts.¹¹⁹ Some of these measures have subsequently been challenged successfully in court. Legislation that is anti-democratic in nature, whether actual or perceived as such, enacted as a political measure without proper scrutiny are not healthy markers of democracy.

2.3 The Procedural Justice Nexus

Legislative responses to identity-based hate require proper time to ensure they are consultative, precise, transparent, justified, and consistently applied. Where a measure adheres to these standards, even strict measures will retain the essence of fairness and command compliance.¹²⁰ Where these standards are not met, particularly where political pressure produces reactive legislation passed at speed, the long-term cost is fragmentation, perceived hierarchy of communities, and reduced trust in the institutions whose effectiveness in tackling identity-based hate the Commission has been asked to consider. This is a matter that the Commission’s final report can address directly.

115. Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (2026) ‘AFIC raises serious concerns over WA government’s proposed protest and hate speech laws’, 17 February. Available at: <https://afic.com.au/2026/02/afic-raises-serious-concerns-over-wa-governments-proposed-protest-and-hate-speech-laws/> (Accessed: 14 May 2026).

116. Gaffikin, F. and Morrissey, M. (2011) ‘Community cohesion and social inclusion: unravelling a complex relationship’, *Urban Studies*, 48(6), p. 1089.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

118. Gluckman, P. et al. (2023) *Addressing the challenges to social cohesion* (Discussion paper, University of Auckland), p. 4.

119. Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (2026) ‘AFIC raises serious concerns over WA government’s proposed protest and hate speech laws’, 17 February. Available at: <https://afic.com.au/2026/02/afic-raises-serious-concerns-over-wa-governments-proposed-protest-and-hate-speech-laws/> (Accessed: 14 May 2026).

120. Silke, M. and Harley, W. ‘General and specific perceptions of procedural justice: Factors associated with perceptions of police and court responses to domestic and family violence’, *Journal of Criminology*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2020.

Procedural justice theory establishes that compliance with law, and cooperation with authorities, depends substantially on whether the law and its administration are perceived as fair, consistent and applied without favour.¹²¹ The consequence is that uneven application, including the perception, accurate or not, that the legal architecture targets some forms of identity-based conduct while accommodating others, produces measurable declines in compliance, cooperation and social cohesion. The communities most exposed to this dynamic retreat into siloed in-groups; trust in government neutrality declines; public debate is diminished; and polarisation increases. For example, the passage of the *Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Act 2026* (Cth) included increased penalties for hate-based offences and the provision of a new framework to prohibit hatred of a target group distinguished by “race, or national or ethnic origin” which would have resulted in protections for only some members of the community and not others. This disproportionate response and exclusion directly undermine social cohesion.¹²²

The consequence is that uneven application, including the perception, accurate or not, that the legal architecture targets some forms of identity-based conduct while accommodating others, produces measurable declines in compliance, cooperation and social cohesion.

The intersection of vilification laws and counter-terrorism laws is an area in which this dynamic operates most acutely. Where the same conduct can be characterised under either framework, or where the choice of framework is observed by communities to track the identity of the actor, the procedural-justice cost compounds. The Christchurch Royal Commission’s analysis of the New Zealand preattack legislative architecture identified equivalent concerns.¹²³ This Commission’s final report has the opportunity to identify the procedural-justice principles that must govern the development and operation of identity-based-hate legislation across Australian jurisdictions.

2.4 The regulatory framework for identity-based hate online

Australia’s regulatory architecture for online platforms and media operates as a patchwork of frameworks of varying age, scope and enforcement capacity. The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth), the Communications and Media Authority framework, and several elements of the relevant Codes of Practice were developed when the digital information environment was substantially different from its current state. The *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth) and the Office of the eSafety Commissioner have produced gains, but the post-October-2023 information environment has produced volumes and forms of identity-based hate content that exceed the existing framework’s reach. The patchwork of regulations and frameworks is ill-equipped to manage the impacts and challenges the internet is bringing to societies, institutions, democracy and to people.¹²⁴

121. See, e.g. Tom R Tyler, *Why People Obey the Law* (Princeton University Press, 2nd ed, 2006); Tyler, “Procedural Justice, Legitimacy, and the Effective Rule of Law” (*Crime and Justice*, Vol 30, 2003, pp 283-357); Lorraine Mazerolle, Sarah Bennett, Jacqueline Davis, Elise Sargeant and Matthew Manning, “Procedural justice and police legitimacy: a systematic review of the research evidence” (*Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 9, 2013, pp 245-274).

122. Australian National Imams Council (2026) Submission to the Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, 18 May. Available at: <https://anic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/ANIC-Submission-to-the-Royal-Commission-into-Antisemitism-and-Social-Cohesion-1.pdf> (Accessed: 21 May 2026), p. 2.

123. See Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019 (2020) *Kō tō tātou kāinga tēnei: report*, vols 1 and 9, New Zealand Government. Available at: <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz> (Accessed: 7 May 2026), p. 8.

124. Khalil, L. (2023) *Digital threats to democracy dialogue: summary report*, Lowy Institute, 1 June. Available at: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/digital-threats-democracy-dialogue-summary-report> (Accessed: 7 May 2026).

The pace of online platform development, of algorithmic content curation, and of cross-platform information transmission has outstripped the pace of regulatory development. The resulting framework, on the published evidence, is ill-equipped to manage the documented role of online platforms in the contemporary identity-based-hate ecosystem set out at Section 1.3 of this submission. The European Union’s *Digital Services Act* and the United Kingdom’s *Online Safety Act 2023* provide useful comparators for the modernisation Australia requires.¹²⁵ One way in which this can be managed is by addressing dehumanising content through civil penalties under the *Online Safety Act* and *Broadcasting Services Act*, alongside public education, while safeguarding essential elements including freedom of expression including criticism of governments, militaries and political ideologies.¹²⁶

The pace of online platform development, of algorithmic content curation, and of cross-platform information transmission has outstripped the pace of regulatory development.

2.5 Social cohesion is increasingly being perceived as an umbrella for compliance and silence

Social cohesion as a concept has had a long and troubled history in politics and the media around the world. It has been argued that it has been used to veil assimilationist policies and the securitisation of communities, particularly Muslim communities. It has also been perceived as rhetorical cover for discouraging dissent. Sceptics of the term social cohesion, have argued that it has been used by politicians and leaders to justify campaigns, where conformity or silence are rewarded and cultural differences were cast as a threat.¹²⁷ This can be demonstrated from Muslim leaders expected to prove their loyalty by publicly denouncing extremism, to the linkage of cohesion and counterterrorism in 2017, or the “African gangs” panic in Victoria where cohesion was justified for rhetoric that was used against entire communities.¹²⁸ The idea of social cohesion, however, continues to be misunderstood on a wide scale, whether that be from politicians using the term to encourage compliance and silence differences in opinion, to the attribution of the term to imply assimilation.¹²⁹ Following the October 7 terror attack, invocations of “social cohesion” by government officials across the country have increasingly been interpreted by many people as a tool employed to silent pro-Palestinian advocacy and activism. This sentiment is succinctly expressed by the academic, Sara Cheikh Husain, who argues that Muslims “are now being asked to remain silent. This approach reflects a broader attempt to control Muslims’ political expression, particularly regarding the issues of Palestine, under the guise of protecting social harmony.”¹³⁰

125. Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council (2022) On a single market for digital services (Digital Services Act), 19 October; Online Safety Act 2023 (UK), c. 50.

126. Australian Muslim Advocacy Network (n.d.) ‘Reforming the definition of a terrorist act’. Available at: <https://www.aman.net.au/what-we-do/reforming-the-definition-of-a-terrorist-act/> (Accessed: 20 May 2026).

127. Elkadi, S. (2025) ‘Social cohesion: the velvet glove for assimilation’, *Pearls and Irritations*, 28 September. Available at: <https://johnmenadue.com/post/2025/09/social-cohesion-the-velvet-glove-for-assimilation/> (Accessed: 18 May 2026).

128. Ibid.

129. Ibid, p. 682.

130. Husain, S.C. (2025) *The politics of anti-Islamophobia in Australia: the case of Muslim community organisations*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 319–320.

2.6 Global Affairs and Domestic Cohesion

Australians are connected to all sides of current conflicts in the world through their migrant and ancestral diversity and their engagement in the world around them. Almost one-in-three (32 per cent) Australians were born overseas, including in each of the 193 member nations of the United Nations and Palestine.¹³¹ A further 22 per cent of people have one or more overseas born parents.¹³² We are further bound to the world by common ideals, cultures, faiths and again a common sense of humanity. It is not then realistic to imagine that Australia and its social cohesion can be isolated from the wider world, that global conflicts, violence and tension need not impact cohesion in Australia.

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Global events since 2023 are impacting social cohesion. While this has been marked by horrific acts of anti-Semitism and ill-feeling towards Israel and Jewish people, the same is true for Islamophobia and in respect of Muslim Australians, including as documented in my report, *A National Response to Islamophobia*.¹³³

This has been coupled by an increase in negative feelings generally towards Muslims since the 7 October 7 terror attack. According to the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute's *Mapping Social Cohesion* survey, the proportion of respondents who express a negative attitude towards Muslims increased from 27 per cent in July 2023 to 35 per cent in July 2025.¹³⁴ While negative attitudes towards Jewish people also became more common, they did so from a substantially lower base, increasing from 9 per cent to 15 per cent over the same period. In this way, current conflicts are fueling anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, though particularly in the context of Islamophobia, they are exacerbating what is already an entrenched and longstanding problem in Australia.

The damage to social cohesion is indicated by the experience of discrimination and bigotry and the impact that is likely having on people's social and emotional connections and wellbeing. On the Mapping Social Cohesion study, analysis by the Australian National University suggests that in 2025, approximately two-in-five adults (38 per cent) from Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh faiths collectively experienced discrimination on the basis on their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion just in the prior 12 months, in addition to approximately 30 per cent of Christians from Asian and African backgrounds. While this study is not able to break down these figures for specific faith groups, they back up the reported instances of racism, hatred, violence and discrimination faced by Muslim and Jewish Australians in recent times.

131. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2026. Australia's population by country of birth. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/australias-population-country-birth>.

132. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2022. *2021 Census – counting persons, place of usual residence* [Census TableBuilder], accessed 4 May 2026. <https://tablebuilder.abs.gov.au>.

133. Malik, A., *A National Response to Islamophobia: A Strategic Framework for Inclusion, Safety and Prosperity* (Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, (2025) <https://www.oseci.gov.au/news/article/report-national-response-islamophobia>).

134. O'Donnell, J., Falkiner, A. and Szachna, K., *Mapping Social Cohesion 2025: Social Connections Through Troubled Times* (Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, 2025) <https://scanloninstitute.org.au/mapping-social-cohesion-2025>.

The extent to which adverse experiences damage social cohesion is an active area of research but perhaps indicated by the strong associations between discrimination and victims' sense of social connection and wellbeing. On the Mapping Social Cohesion survey, the experience of discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion is strongly associated with a decline in a person's sense of belonging, happiness, trust in government and national pride. Alongside financial stress, this kind of discrimination is among the most important factors identified in the study that are weighing down overall social cohesion in Australia.

... the experience of discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion is strongly associated with a decline in a person's sense of belonging, happiness, trust in government and national pride.

The Bondi attack compels us to confront the connection between the security of the Australian Jewish community and the right to hold pro-Palestinian demonstrations.¹³⁵ The conflation of peaceful marches across Australia with anti-Semitism risks minimising the suffering experienced by Palestinians, while failing to acknowledge the moral and humanitarian concerns observed by the general Australian public, with upwards of 300,000 Australians protesting.¹³⁶ Ignoring the plight of Palestinians and the global shift in the inapplicability of international law is significant. Western nations including the US, Canada and Europe have long presented themselves as defenders of international law, human rights and civilian protection. The application of these principles requires consistency, where the moral framework continues to be disregarded for political means, the entire moral international order begins to collapse.

There needs to be both space for rejecting and countering hate while also denouncing war crimes. While politicians may reiterate that outside problems should not be brought into Australia, the fact of the matter is that we live in a global, hyper-connected society with many in Australia part of diaspora communities, with friends and family overseas. Instead, clear parameters around the protection of institutions such as international law, free speech and freedom of protest should be upheld while denouncing anti-Semitism. As reiterated by Justice Stewart, "political criticism of Israel, however inflammatory or adversarial is not by its nature criticism of Jews in general or based on Jewish racial or ethnic identity."¹³⁷

There needs to be both space for rejecting and countering hate while also denouncing war crimes.

135. Malik, A. (2026) 'How can the healing begin? Islamophobia, antisemitism and social cohesion after Bondi', *ABC Religion & Ethics*, 8 March 2026. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/aftab-malik-islamophobia-antisemitism-social-cohesion-bondi/106430394> (Accessed: 21 May 2026).

136. Beazley, J. (2025) 'We know the Sydney Harbour Bridge protest against the killing in Gaza was huge—but just how big was it?', *The Guardian*, 5 August. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/aug/05/we-know-the-sydney-harbour-bridge-march-against-the-killing-in-gaza-was-huge-but-just-how-big-was-it> (Accessed: 21 May 2026).

137. *Wertheim v Haddad* [2025] FCA 720.

2.7 Terminology, Media and Political Narratives

Communities are not only the targets of incidents, for example vandalism, assault or vilification, they are also impacted by the public framing of incidents, the speed and certainty of attributions. Perceived inconsistency in framing fuels distrust in law enforcement and the belief in unequal protection. Inconsistent application of moral outrage and language needs to be addressed — whether the victims be First Nations Australians, minority communities, Muslims or Jews. Human rights principles are not dependent on the identity of the victim; they must be applied consistently and fairly to all. Disproportionate responses fuel a sense of competition for victimhood. In Australia, discussions around social cohesion are largely shaped by three key actors, politicians, the national security establishment and the mainstream media.¹³⁸ Together, they play a central role in determining when and how social cohesion is perceived to be at risk.¹³⁹ Sociologist Andrew Jakubowicz highlights this dynamic, noting that social cohesion is often framed in subjective terms, “If people are creating problems for me, there’s an issue with social cohesion. If the minorities are making me feel uncomfortable, then there’s a problem with social cohesion. If the government/establishment are making the minorities community uncomfortable, it is their problem.”¹⁴⁰ Dominant institutions rarely acknowledge how their own actions and narratives can and do undermine social cohesion.

“If people are creating problems for me, there’s an issue with social cohesion. If the minorities are making me feel uncomfortable, then there’s a problem with social cohesion. If the government/establishment are making the minorities community uncomfortable, it is their problem.”

ANDREW JAKUBOWICZ

138. Wanning, S, ‘Everybody is responsible for social cohesion, from politicians to teenagers on the street’, *UTS: Australian Centre on China in the World (ACRI) Perspectives*, 24 June 2025, <https://www.uts.edu.au/news/2025/06/everybody-is-responsible-for-social-cohesion-from-politicians-to-teenagers-on-the-street>.

139. Ibid.

140. Ibid.



2.8 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Appoint a Commissioner for Social Cohesion

In line with a shift away from the political narrative around social cohesion, the Australian Government should appoint within 12 months an independent Commissioner for Social Cohesion to appropriately manage social cohesion, including the enactment of public education campaigns and research into strengthening social cohesion. The Commissioner should also engage and enact on strengthening democratic initiatives including the development of speech guidelines for political leaders, intercultural diversity within communities, create spaces for listening and reflection, enhance media literacy education for the public and develop strategies to address information pollution.

RECOMMENDATION 12:

Adopt a nationally consistent classification of identity-based hate offending

The Australian Bureau of Statistics, in consultation with the Australian Institute of Criminology, the Australian Human Rights Commission and state and territory police agencies, should develop, within 18 months of the Royal Commission’s final report, nationally consistent classification of identity-based hate elements of recorded crime, with cross-jurisdictional reporting and integration with the National Hate-Incident Dashboard.

RECOMMENDATION 13:

Make national frontline officer training mandatory

The Australian Federal Police, the Australian Border Force and state and territory police forces should adopt, within eighteen months of the Royal Commission’s final report, nationally consistent training on anti-racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia conduct, on a two-year refresh cycle.

RECOMMENDATION 14:

Publish a national protest policing protocol

The Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee should develop and publish, within 18 months of the Royal Commission’s final report, a nationally consistent protocol for the policing of protest in periods of sustained community tension, with independent review of contested incidents and integration with the frontline training architecture.

RECOMMENDATION 15:

Enact human rights protections at a national level equally, for all

The Australian Government should recalibrate its human rights protections at a systemic level, for all individuals, by enacting an enshrined Bill of Rights. This would reposition Australia equally with other western democratic nations, as it remains the only country without enshrined rights. This would allow all communities to feel a sense of fairness, and a public education campaign could provide for greater education around human rights at a national level.

RECOMMENDATION 16:

Review of recent legislative measures

The Australian Government should refer the suite of legislative measures enacted in 2024–2026 to the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security for review against the procedural-justice principles, with public reporting within 24 months.

RECOMMENDATION 17:

Modernise the regulatory framework for identity-based hate online

The Department of Communications, in consultation with the eSafety Commissioner, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, both Special Envoys and the Race Discrimination Commissioner, should bring forward, within 18 months of the Royal Commission’s final report, a modernised regulatory framework for identity-based hate content online, drawing on the European Union Digital Services Act and the United Kingdom Online Safety Act 2023 as comparators, with quarterly transparency reporting by the eSafety Commissioner on take-down rates for anti-Semitic, Islamophobic and other identity-based hate content.



Section 3:

Conclusion: Allyship as a way forward

The Royal Commission's task is challenging. This submission has endeavoured to demonstrate, with the support of the peer-reviewed evidence and the institutional record, that progress is possible without further fracturing social cohesion. The Bondi terror attack may be a critical juncture for Australia. Whether it becomes the moment from which a durable federal cohesion architecture emerges, or the moment from which a deeper polarisation calcifies and metastasises, depends substantially on the recommendations of this Commission and on the manner of their implementation.

I invite the Commission to rest its final report on three foundational propositions, each grounded in the evidence base of this submission.

- i. ***Social cohesion does not mean compliance:*** In a diverse democracy, cohesion is the structural condition in which difference is sustained without fracture. It is not a state of uniform agreement, and not a state of silence in the face of injustice. Demands for cohesion that operate as demands for compliance produce the opposite of their intended effect.
- ii. ***Australian democratic freedoms must be protected:*** Free speech, the right to peaceful protest, and the freedom to practice religion are the structural conditions in which cohesion is sustained. Where these freedoms are constrained beyond what is necessary to address documented harm, the cohesion cost compounds.
- iii. ***Identity-based hate must be addressed without community dehumanisation:*** Where the conduct of individuals is treated as the conduct of communities, and where the response of institutions treats communities as collective security categories, the cohesion outcomes documented in two decades of Australian peer-reviewed scholarship follow. The Commission's recommendations on anti-Semitism will be more effective where they are designed and communicated in terms that address conduct, not identity. The recommendations of this submission are drafted accordingly.



Appendix:

The Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism Landscape since 9/11 in Australia

This Appendix sets out a chronology and analysis of Australia’s counterterrorism and countering violent extremism architecture since 11 September 2001, and the documented impact of that architecture on Australian Muslim communities and social cohesion. The conditions of hyper-securitisation produced in Australian Muslim communities by 25 years of single-community CVE focus have created the broader environment in which all forms of identity-based hate, including anti-Semitism, have escalated.

Hyper-legislation: The Scale of Australia’s Counterterrorism Response

In the 20 years to 11 September 2021, the Australian Parliament has enacted 92 substantive counter-terrorism laws, a tally subsequently extended by further legislation through to 2025, exceeding the 100 pieces of legislation noted in the Commission’s Interim Report. This count makes Australia the most prolific counterterrorism legislator in the Commonwealth; more than the United Kingdom, more than Canada, and more than the United States.¹⁴¹ Academic observers have described the Australian response as ‘hyper-legislation.’¹⁴²

Two features of this body of legislation are relevant to the Commission’s work:

- i. **The accelerated pace of new legislation:** between 11 September 2001 and the defeat of the Howard government in November 2007, a new counterterrorism law was enacted on average every 6.7 weeks.¹⁴³ The first package of five Bills enacted in March 2002, which created many of the core elements of the present framework, passed the House of Representatives in two days. Successive law enactments through the second decade of post-9/11 lawmaking continued the pattern of expedited passage with limited debate.
- ii. **The expanding scope:** The laws extend beyond the criminal-procedural reach customary in criminal justice systems. They include the questioning and detention powers conferred on the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation; control orders; preventative detention orders; the regime for declaring terrorist organisations; the regime for proscribing and listing individuals; offences criminalising preparatory conduct and advocacy; foreign-fighter offences; mandatory data retention; expanded surveillance powers; secrecy offences; and the regime allowing indefinite continuing detention beyond sentence of high-risk terrorist offenders.¹⁴⁴ Many of these powers, as Drs Rebecca Ananian-Welsh and Keiran Hardy have documented, would not be lawful in countries with constitutional human-rights protections.¹⁴⁵

141. Williams, G. “A Decade of Australian Anti-Terror Laws” (*Melbourne University Law Review*, Vol 35, Issue 3, 2011, pp 1136-1176); Keiran Hardy and George Williams, “Two Decades of Australian Counterterrorism Laws” (*Melbourne University Law Review*, Vol 46, Issue 1, 2022, pp 34-117).

142. Roach, K. *The 9/11 Effect: Comparative Counter-Terrorism* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), Chapter 7 on Australia.

143. Williams, above n 141, at p.1141.

144. Hardy and Williams, pp 50-65 (legislative scope analysis).

145. Ananian-Welsh, R. and Williams, G. “The Normalisation and Spread of Anti-Terror Laws in Australia” (*Melbourne University Law Review*, Vol 38(2), 2014); see also Andrew Lynch, Nicola McGarrity and George Williams, *Inside Australia’s Anti-Terrorism Laws and Trials* (NewSouth Publishing, 2015).

A chronology of key milestones

The following table summarises key legislative landmarks in Australia over the last 25 years.¹⁴⁶

Table 1: Chronology of key counterterrorism legislation and reviews in Australia

Period	Key legislation and reviews	Documented effects on Muslim community engagement
2001–2003	Security Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Act 2002 (Cth); five-Bill package March 2002 inserting Part 5.3 of the Criminal Code; Maritime Transport Security Act 2003 (Cth); listing regime established. ¹⁴⁷	Initial period of consultation absent; community sense of being addressed as a security category established. Disproportionate scrutiny for Muslim communities.
2004–2007	Anti-Terrorism Act [No 1] 2005 (Cth); Anti-Terrorism Act (No 2) 2005 (Cth); control orders; preventative detention orders; sedition offences; National Security Information (Criminal Proceedings) Act 2004 (Cth).	AHRC <i>Isma’</i> Report (2004) documents rising prejudice; ¹⁴⁸ SLRC Report and PJCIS Report (2006) express “serious concern” about community perception. ¹⁴⁹ Emphasised growing isolation of Muslim community.
2008–2014	Increasingly frequent ASIO amendment and data retention legislation; Australian CVE national framework established 2009 under Rudd government.	Conflation of social cohesion with counterterrorism noted; community engagement framed through CVE lens.
2014–2018	Foreign-fighter offence package; declared-areas offences; citizenship-revocation regime; post-sentence detention scheme; control-order regime expanded to children as young as 14; further laws enacted.	Hyper-securitisation documented as structural condition of Australian Muslims, rising Islamophobia and additional public scrutiny towards Muslims in Australia.
2018–2021	Espionage and foreign interference legislation; data access powers; expanded ASIO compulsory questioning regime; further surveillance powers; 92 substantive laws total by September 2021.	Continued peer-reviewed scholarship documenting the structural distrust of state institutions in Muslim communities.

146. For a full list of acronyms and abbreviations in the table please see page 36.

147. *Security Legislation Amendment (Terrorism) Act 2002* (Cth); *Maritime Transport Security Act 2003* (Cth); *Anti-Terrorism Act [No 1] 2005* (Cth); *Anti-Terrorism Act (No 2) 2005* (Cth); *National Security Information (Criminal Proceedings) Act 2004* (Cth). All Commonwealth Acts referenced in this Appendix are available via the Federal Register of Legislation at legislation.gov.au.

148. Australian Human Rights Commission, *Isma’ — Listen: National Consultations on Eliminating Prejudice against Arab and Muslim Australians* (2004). Available at humanrights.gov.au.

149. Security Legislation Review Committee, *Report* (Parliament of Australia, 2006); Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, *Review of Security and Counter-Terrorism Legislation* (Parliament of Australia, 2006). Both Committees expressed concern that counter-terrorism measures had contributed to “a rise in prejudicial feelings towards Arab and Muslim Australia” and to “a climate of suspicion”.

Period	Key legislation and reviews	Documented effects on Muslim community engagement
2022–2024	CounterTerrorism Legislation Amendment (Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures) Act 2023 (Cth); Criminal Code Amendment (Hate Crimes) Act 2025 (Cth) ¹⁵⁰ ; ASIO Director-General identifies “intersecting ideologies” as dominant threat picture (2025 Annual Threat Assessment). ¹⁵¹	Australia’s Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia appointed in September 2024; Australia’s Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism appointed in July 2024; ¹⁵² documented rise in Islamophobic incidents in the post-October-2023 period per my <i>National Response to Islamophobia</i> (September 2025). ¹⁵³
2025	Independent National Security Legislation Monitor’s Defining Terrorism review commences (Issues Paper, August 2025). ¹⁵⁴	The Defining Terrorism review provided the first formal opportunity in over two decades for Australian Muslim community organisations, religious authorities and my Office to engage directly with the statutory framework that has most shaped community-state relations since 11 September 2001; submissions received documented sustained community concern that the current definition’s continued linkage of terrorism with religious motive has, in operational practice framed Australian Muslims as a security category.

150. *Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures) Act 2023* (Cth), banning the public display of certain prohibited symbols including the Nazi salute. *Criminal Code Amendment (Hate Crimes) Act 2025* (Cth). Both Acts available at legislation.gov.au.

151. Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Director-General of Security Mike Burgess, Annual Threat Assessment 2025 (February 2025), identifying “intersecting ideologies,” anti-authority, conspiracy theories and nationalist-racist extremism, as dominating Australia’s security landscape. Available at asio.gov.au.

152. I was appointed by the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, as the Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia on 30 September 2024 (serving a three-year term which commenced 14 October 2024). The Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism in Australia, Ms Jillian Segal AO, was appointed on 9 July 2024. Both appointments by media release of the Prime Minister.

153. Malik, A, *A National Response to Islamophobia: A Strategic Framework for Inclusion, Safety and Prosperity* (Office of Australia’s Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia, 2025, 12 September 2025), the published evidence base for the documented rise in Islamophobic incidents in Australia in the post-October-2023 period.

154. Independent National Security Legislation Monitor, *Defining Terrorism: Issues Paper: Review of the definition of a ‘terrorist act’ in section 100.1 of the Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) (August 2025). Available at inslm.gov.au.

Period	Key legislation and reviews	Documented effects on Muslim community engagement
2026 (post-Bondi)	Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Act 2026 (Cth) and Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Firearms and Customs Laws) Act 2026 (Cth), both enacted 20 January 2026 after Parliament recalled for two-day special sitting; introduces new offences for “hate preachers”, expanded prohibited symbols, “Prohibited Hate Groups” listing framework, expanded visa cancellation powers, sentencing aggravation; National Gun Buyback Scheme. ¹⁵⁵ Queensland legislation criminalising specific phrases including “From the river to the sea” with two-year maximum penalty. Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion established 9 January 2026; Interim Report tabled 30 April 2026. ¹⁵⁶	PJCIS public consultation window of fewer than three days on the 144-page Bill. Two-year statutory review period built into the legislation. ¹⁵⁷ Two activists arrested and charged under Queensland legislation for chanting the prohibited phrase. ¹⁵⁸ The 2026 legislative response is the most recent iteration of the post-9/11 pattern documented.

Twenty-five years of legislative architecture produces a cumulative institutional outcome. The empirical record on Australian Muslim community trust in state institutions, documented in my 2025 report and corroborated by the Mapping Social Cohesion 2025 longitudinal data, shows substantial deterioration.¹⁵⁹

The deterioration is structural.

The deterioration is structural. It is not the consequence of any single legislative decision. It is the accumulated weight of:

- i. an institutional posture that has, across two decades, framed an entire community as a security category
- ii. a pattern of legislative response that has consistently been enacted at speed and without adequate community consultation
- iii. an asymmetry in which counterterrorism enforcement has been pursued vigorously while complementary anti-discrimination protection has not been legislated; and
- iv. an operational record in which community engagement with state machinery has been observed to produce costs that exceed the benefits.

155. *Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Criminal and Migration Laws) Act 2026 (Cth)*; *Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism (Firearms and Customs Laws) Act 2026 (Cth)*. Both enacted 20 January 2026 following recall of the Australian Parliament for a special two-day sitting. See Prime Minister, *Parliament to be recalled for national security legislation*, media release, January 2026, pm.gov.au. The criminal legislation passed the House of Representatives 116-7 and the Senate 38-22. See Christine Chen, “Australia passes tougher laws on guns, hate crimes after Bondi shooting” (Reuters, 20 January 2026); Associated Press, “Australia’s Parliament passes anti-hate speech and gun laws proposed after Sydney attack” (20 January 2026).

156. Letters Patent of 9 January 2026 establishing the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion; Royal Commission *Interim R.*

157. Two-year statutory review period built into the 2026 Acts.

158. Queensland legislation criminalising specific phrases including “From the river to the sea” and “Globalise the Intifada”, with maximum two-year imprisonment penalty. Two activists were arrested and charged in early 2026 under the legislation. See Tarek Bazzi and Sirine Demachkie, “Australia’s post-Bondi crackdown accused of targeting pro-Palestinian voices” (*Al Jazeera*, 27 March 2026).

159. O’Donnell, J., Falkiner, A., and Szachna, K. *Mapping Social Cohesion 2025: Social connections through troubled times* (Scanlon Foundation Research Institute in partnership with the Australian National University, 2025): 35% of Australians now express negative attitudes towards Muslims, up from 27% in July 2023; 40% of people born in Africa or Asia report having experienced discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnic origin or religion in the prior 12 months; 67% of Australians regard racism as a fairly or very big problem.

The consequence for the institutional foundations of Australian counter-terrorism response is direct. The communities whose cooperation is most important to the effective operation of that response are the communities whose trust in the institutions delivering it has been documented in the academic literature as the most depleted. In over two decades since the inception of these frameworks, there has been no formal assessment of their social impact, especially their disproportionate effects on a minority community, raising critical questions around accountability, transparency and legal equality.¹⁶⁰ As the US-based political commentator, Mehdi Hasan, has stated: “we never define crimes by religion, except when it is a Muslim.”¹⁶¹ This is not a sustainable institutional foundation. It is the subject this paper invites the Royal Commission, in its final report, to engage.

**As the US-based political commentator, Mehdi Hasan, has stated:
“we never define crimes by religion, except when it is a Muslim.”**

Mainstreaming Islamophobia as a consequence of legislative architecture

Where legislative architecture is observed by communities to target a particular community, three secondary effects follow. First, public discourse, in media, in political rhetoric, in everyday social interaction, is shaped by the institutional cue that the targeted community is the subject of additional scrutiny and additional restriction. Second, the documented prejudice against the targeted community in the broader population rises measurably. Third, the licensing effect produced is not confined to the originally targeted community: where one form of identity-based hate is licensed by institutional posture, others follow.

160. Muslim Votes Matter (2025) *Submission to the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor (INSLM) review of the definition of a “terrorist act” under section 100.1 of the Criminal Code*, 14 October, p.20.

161. Zeteo (2026) *We never define crimes by religion – except when it’s a Muslim*. YouTube video, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/80ggrg8zOeA> (Accessed: 22 May 2026).



List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

The following acronyms and abbreviations are used throughout the submission.

Acronym	Expansion
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ACRI	Australia-China Relations Institute
AFIC	Australian Federation of Islamic Councils
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
ANIC	Australian National Imams Council
ANU	Australian National University
ANZCTC	Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee
AO	Officer of the Order of Australia
ARC	Australian Research Council
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
BSG	Blavatnik School of Government (University of Oxford)
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CRIS	Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DIE	Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (German Development Institute)
EU	European Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCA	Federal Court of Australia

Acronym	Expansion
GPO	General Post Office
HRH	His Royal Highness
INSLM	Independent National Security Legislation Monitor
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and other diverse sexualities and genders
LSJ	Law Society Journal
MP	Member of Parliament
NIJ	National Institute of Justice (United States)
NSW	New South Wales
NVRE	Nationalist and Racist Violent Extremism
OSECI	Office of Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Islamophobia
PJCIS	Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security
SLRC	Security Legislation Review Committee
UK	United Kingdom
UNSW	University of New South Wales
US	United States
UTS	University of Technology Sydney
WA	Western Australia



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OSECI's submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion emphasises that protecting Jewish Australians must occur without compromising human rights, freedom of speech and protest, while positioning social cohesion as both a democratic and national security imperative.

It examines the drivers of identity-based hate in Australia and proposes a comprehensive framework to strengthen social cohesion while safeguarding democratic freedoms. Benefitting from contributions from leading experts across social cohesion and extremism, the submission is grounded in robust evidence and multidisciplinary research.

It identifies shared structural drivers behind rising anti-Semitism and other forms of hate, including polarisation, digital amplification, and legislative responses that lack consistency and procedural fairness. The submission calls for a fundamental shift toward an ideology-agnostic, risk-based approach that addresses the underlying factors of extremism. Fundamentally, it signals to the Commission that within the context of a hyper-securitised counter-terrorism landscape, we must move beyond the post-9/11 framework to one that examines all forms of extremism and their multifaceted drivers.

Seventeen recommendations are proposed to the Royal Commission, including reform of counter-terrorism laws, strengthened anti-racism institutions, improved regulation of online harms, and the establishment of a national architecture for social cohesion.



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