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Australasian Institute of Policing



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THE ENEMY WITHIN

OVERT ATTACK ON JEWS-COVERT ATTACK ON SOCIAL COHESION



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Future Expansion into the Building Industry

Eastern Guruma is exploring the expansion into the building services industry. Leveraging its strong and reliable reputation; the aim is to extend our expertise into residential & construction maintenance including the refurbishment of houses and related projects in the Pilbara and Kimberly regions. Recognised as the 'one stop shop' for all maintenance and building services, Eastern Guruma will provide electrical, HVAC, plumbing, instrumentation and building services as it expands its platform into construction.

Celebrating 20 Years of Success

Eastern Guruma recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Held at Frasers, Kings Park - it was the perfect venue for such a milestone occasion. Staff and VIP guests honoured the co-owners' and directors', Tania Stevens and Samantha Connors and all their accomplishments.



All were incredibly proud of the journey and achievements over the past two decades. The milestone marked two decades of growth and achievements since its inception in 2004. The celebration highlighted significant milestones, including the rapid expansion from 2009 through to 2023 which saw Eastern Guruma receive prestigious awards such as the Business News 2023 RISE Business Award and the Rio Tinto 2023 Local Engagement Award. The 20-year celebration was a chance for all to celebrate and a testament to Eastern Guruma's vision, dedication and hard work.

Fleet Acquisitions

The company has recently invested in significant capital expenditures to its fleet, including the purchase of a CAPEX D9 100T float Liebherr Dozer, Excavator, Digger, and over 40 light vehicles. The acquisition of the Cat D9 Dozer comes with customizable blade options, efficient boosters, integrated components, advanced technology and cost-effective performance this empowers the team to deliver results that exceed client expectations. With this powerful tool at their disposal, the team is ready to achieve new heights in the industry. The dedication and expertise of the Eastern Guruma team have played a pivotal role in facilitating the purchase of new equipment on Site for our team.



Kangi Camp Landscaping & Maintenance Contract Renewal

Additionally, Eastern Guruma's landscaping and maintenance contract with Fortescue Solomon's Kangi Camp has been renewed for another five years. The contract ensures continued collaboration and service excellence whilst working towards a carbon neutral supply of plant & equipment by transitioning from diesel to electric. Eastern Guruma's ongoing growth and success is a testament to its commitment to community development, industry excellence, and the empowerment of Indigenous people.



New Business Premises

Eastern Guruma has been fortunate enough to acquire its own business premises in Perth. Located on the corner of Bulwer Street and Fitzgerald Street, Perth settlement was in July. The new premises has undergone a recent extensive refurbishment upgrade and includes open plan seating, 15 offices, five meeting rooms and one boardroom.

Commitment to Indigenous Employment

Eastern Guruma is proud to announce we have more than 30% of our 300 staff employed as First Nations People working full time in the mining industry. This is an outstanding result of focus and dedication from our HR and Indigenous Employment, Engagement and Development teams. Great efforts from the road shows, screening of candidates and assisting those who need a hand to get through the process. The milestone reflects the company's dedication to providing employment opportunities for First Nations People.





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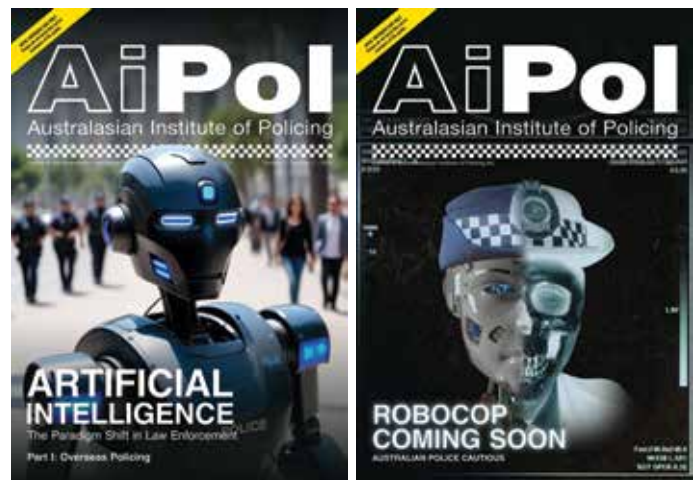
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Editorial

DR AMANDA DAVIES

Editor, Senior Researcher at the Charles Sturt University



Ultimately, strengthening social cohesion is not just about healing after tragedy—it is a proactive investment in Australia’s social fabric, helping to ensure that all citizens feel valued, protected, and connected.

Welcome to the March 2026 issue, unfortunately, dedicated to a global issue brought to our doorstep on **14 December 2025** at Sydney’s iconic **Bondi Beach**—a symbol of multicultural enjoyment and community life—which became the scene of a devastating terrorist attack that killed at least 15 people and injured dozens more during a **Hanukkah celebration**, an event intended to bring joy and connection to Australia’s Jewish community. Authorities quickly classified the attack as a **terrorist act with antisemitic motives**, the deadliest in modern Australian history and an alarmingly rare strike on a nation long spared such violence.

The profound impact of this incident rippled far beyond Sydney’s eastern suburbs, forcing Australians to confront not only the immediate realities of violent extremism but also the deeper social fractures that can allow such hatred to fester. Rather than a one-off tragedy, analysts and community leaders have stressed that the **roots of hatred—antisemitism, racism, and exclusion—are embedded in social currents that require long-term attention and healing.**

The establishment of a **Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion**, which followed the event, includes terms of reference covering how antisemitism and other ideologically motivated extremism have taken hold in parts of Australian society. Reports indicate the Commission’s mandate includes improving guidance and training for law enforcement, border agencies, and communities to tackle the drivers of hatred and making recommendations to strengthen national unity.

This focus on social cohesion reflects a broader understanding that effective counterterrorism goes beyond security operations and legislation—it must also reinforce the **interconnectedness of communities**, promote **mutual respect**, and reduce the social divides that extremists exploit. Social

cohesion efforts can foster **trust between groups**, enhance dialogue among diverse communities, and build resilient, inclusive institutions that protect all Australians regardless of faith or background. The response to the Bondi attack has already seen public displays of unity and grief; a **national day of mourning**, commemorations across states, and calls from leaders for unity and compassion demonstrate the collective desire to reaffirm shared values of peace and mutual respect.

Ultimately, strengthening social cohesion is not just about healing after tragedy—it is a **proactive investment in Australia’s social fabric**, helping to ensure that all citizens feel valued, protected, and connected. It is a challenge that goes hand-in-hand with policing, education, and public policy, but one that is essential if the nation is to stand together against extremism and uphold the democratic values that define it.

As we go to press, the major writings in association with the Bondi terrorist attack are drawn from the media reports; it is anticipated that there will be a building body of studies exploring and deconstructing the terrorist attack and offering strategies for a way forward to cement our nation’s cohesion. These studies may be available before the Royal Commission’s findings, and if so, we will endeavour to bring examples of insightful and valuable information to the AiPOL readership community. As a starting point, the article by McSwiney et al. (2024) focuses on the challenges violent extremism poses to the functioning of the public sphere—a critical aspect often overlooked in discussions surrounding violent extremism. It proposes a novel framework of democratic resilience to examine and improve the public sphere responses to violent extremism. It will be of interest if the Royal Commission also engages with prior studies from across the globe that seek to address building community cohesion to counter terrorism.

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President's Foreword



JONATHAN HUNT-SHARMAN

President, Committee of management,
Australasian Institute of Policing

On 14 December 2025, Australia suffered its deadliest terrorist attack at Bondi Beach during “Chanukah by the Sea,” a Jewish community celebration attended by around 1,000 people.

Fifteen civilians were killed and dozens injured, including children and first responders. The attack was a hate-driven act of Islamist extremism. Both attackers were shot by police, one fatally. The report honours the victims, the Jewish community, and the bravery of police, paramedics, surf lifesavers and civilians, with particular recognition of NSW Police officers injured or involved in stopping the attack.

While shocking, the attack was not unexpected. Since 2014, ASIO and law enforcement have disrupted 21 major terrorist plots, including 5 in 2024. Australia has experienced 16 terrorist attacks since 2014, 13 linked to Islamic violent extremism.

In response, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced a Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion on 8 January 2026. Its scope includes examining antisemitism and its drivers, reviewing the Bondi attack, strengthening law enforcement responses, and improving social cohesion. Shortly after, the government introduced the Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026. However, before parliamentary scrutiny concluded, the government abandoned proposed racial vilification provisions that would have lowered the threshold from inciting violence to inciting hatred. Despite strong support from security agencies, this decision curtailed meaningful recommendations on vilification laws.

The legislation ultimately passed with bipartisan support and introduced stronger powers, including banning hate groups, harsher penalties for extremist religious leaders (especially those targeting minors), expanded visa-cancellation powers, and tougher penalties for hate crimes. While welcomed, AiPol warns the absence of a racial vilification offence may weaken enforcement and invite legal challenges.

A National Day of Mourning on 22 January 2026 highlighted the broader threat to social cohesion. NSW Premier Chris Minns emphasised that words lead to actions and that democracy, safety and equality are non-negotiable Australian values.

AiPol argues that antisemitism and extremism in Australia are part of a broader, organised campaign involving Islamist extremists, far-right neo-Nazis, and elements of the far left. Since 7 October 2023, protests featuring extremist symbols and rhetoric have normalised hatred, escalating into arson attacks, assaults, and ultimately the Bondi massacre. AiPol believes these movements are well-funded, coordinated, and sometimes supported by foreign actors, including Iran, with the aim of destabilising democracy and social cohesion.

Two overt extremist groups are identified: Hizb ut-Tahrir, a pan-Islamist organisation rejecting democracy and

promoting caliphate ideology, and the neo-Nazi National Socialist Network. Both recruit disaffected young men, operate legally under current thresholds, and exploit online platforms. While ideologically opposed, both undermine liberal democracy and multiculturalism.

A third, more covert influence is the revolutionary far left, particularly Socialist Alternative. AiPol raises concern that far-left activists may be manipulating pro-Palestinian protests through groups such as the Palestine Action Group, blurring legitimate protest with extremist rhetoric. Socialist Alternative rejects capitalism and parliamentary democracy, favouring mass movements and disruption, and has significant influence in militant unions, universities and protests.

AiPol concludes that Australia faces a multi-layered extremist threat exploiting free speech, protest movements and social divisions. The failure to confront these forces earlier contributed to the Bondi tragedy. AiPol will submit to the Royal Commission, arguing for stronger Commonwealth laws, including a racial vilification offence, to address hatred before it escalates into violence. Without decisive national action, Australia risks further erosion of social cohesion and democratic stability.

As Premier Minns stated, those who reject Australia's democratic values and equality have no place in the country.



JONATHAN HUNT-SHARMAN

President, Committee of management,
Australasian Institute of Policing

The Enemies Within: A far more sinister scenario

Since the despicable terrorist atrocities at Bondi Beach that claimed 15 lives and left dozens badly injured, we have learnt a lot about the breakdown in social cohesion, antisemitism and islamic extremism in Australia, but there is a far more sinister scenario playing out.

There are frightening enemies that are strongly established with the aim of destabilising our social cohesion, democratic system and rule of law. These organised groups take advantage of weaknesses in our social fabric to undermine our social cohesion.

We know that there has been an erosion of tolerance and a growing acceptance of foreign hatreds within our Australian community. However, we don't know how and why anti-Semitic ideology escalated so quickly from protest to violence and then to a terror attack at Bondi Beach. It reminds us of the famous comment by US Secretary of Defence Don Rumsfeld:

“There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know”.

On 7 October, 2023, less than five hours after Hamas terrorists had crossed into Israel to rape, slaughter and kidnap men, women and children, the **Palestine Action Group** Sydney had already chosen a date, venue and time for its first pro-Hamas rally and was already promoting it online.

On 9 October, 2023, less than 48 hours later, the ugly hatred burst from the shadows onto the steps of the Australian Opera House, an iconic symbol of Australia, as a mob of protestors chanted about hunting and killing jews.

Every subsequent protest in Australian streets that would include Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Islamist flags and photos of terrorist leaders normalised extremism. This escalated into a horrifying chain of events including firebombing of synagogues, pre-schools, private residences,

graffiti, assaults, attempted murder and ultimately mass murder at Bondi!

AiPol believes that the protests and escalating violence in Australia, and indeed in other the western democratic countries, after 7 October 23, has been organised, well-funded and strategically co-ordinated.

The enemies within our Australian borders involve a number of extremist groups working separately in a multi-layered ideological anti democracy operation.

AiPol believes that the enemies within have orchestrated timed protests, systematic incitement, infiltration and influence within academic institutions, certain trade unions and utilising online forums and AI algorithms to incite violent activity.

There has been a well-funded, highly organised and deliberate campaign to marginalise the Australian

jewish community and encourage anti-semitic discrimination and hatred. Anti-western democracy actors, including the Iranian government, have also sowed fear and division with paid acts of vandalism and arson.

Sadly, a refusal by authorities to confront extremism as it continued to grow, has ultimately led to Australia's worst terrorist attack. This is not to criticise police and our security agencies who have successfully stopped or disrupted numerous planned terrorist attacks in Australia. The criticism lies with the failure to address the underlying threat from extremist organisations 'hell bent' on destroying our social cohesion.

AiPol is concerned that the attack on Jewish Australians is only one successful operation. The wider strategy is to create civil disobedience by marginalising and polarising our Australian society with the ultimate aim of bringing down our democratic structure, social cohesion and our rule of law. This may sound far fetched and no doubt some will argue that this is not possible. However Democracy is very fragile. You have to protect Democracy. As soon as you stop being responsible for it and upholding it, and allow it to be undermined by subversive forces, it will weaken.

There appears to be no singular, monolithic antisemitism festering in Australia but rather multiple extremist groups, supported by foreign actors, manipulating Australians.

The two most outwardly and unashamedly antisemitic groups are the Islamist extremists, such as the **Hizb ut-Tahrir** and the far-right neo-Nazis like the **National Socialist Network**. They are similar in that they are both backed by international actors, exist on the fringes of society and are actively engaged in recruiting for their cause. Both largely target disaffected young men and both use online spaces to spread their hateful ideologies as well as connect with, and import ideas from, like-minded groups/branches located overseas.

The fanatical Islamist have demonstrated a greater capacity for deadly violence this century, particularly against Jews. The Bondi terror attack was but the latest antisemitic atrocity carried out by fanatical Islamists. Of course, it was the Islamist terror group Hamas' massacre of 1200 mostly

civilians in Israel that triggered the current spike in antisemitic rhetoric and violence. The fanatic Neo-Nazis have been less effective, but their hatred of Jews should not be underestimated. They have used the White Australia protests to cause social division.

So what are the known knowns about Hizb ut-Tahrir and the National Socialist Network?

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Australia)

Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) — literally "Party of Liberation" — is an international pan-Islamist political organisation founded in 1953 in East Jerusalem by scholar Taqiuddin al-Nabhani. Its core aim globally is to establish a caliphate — a unified Islamic state governed by Sharia (Islamic law).

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Australia) has a presence largely centred in Sydney. Its public spokespeople have included figures like Wassim Doureih, and Sydney-based leadership has been visible at protests and public events.

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Australia) Ideology

- Advocates pan-Islamism (political Islam and unity of Muslim lands under a caliphate);
- Rejects secular democracy, liberalism, nationalism, and Western political systems;
- Opposes what it sees as Western colonial influence and defends conservative interpretations of Islam.

There have also been media reports linking individuals who attend the group's events to other extremist incidents, though **Hizb ut-Tahrir** itself does not advocate violence as an organisation, and retains that it rejects violence.

Unlike some countries (e.g., the UK, Germany, and Indonesia), **Hizb ut-Tahrir** is not banned as a terrorist organisation in Australia. It operates legally because Australian law requires stronger evidence of violent or terrorist activity before proscribing a group.

Australia's security agencies (notably ASIO) have warned about **Hizb ut-Tahrir's** rhetoric, especially around issues like Israel/Palestine and anti-Western narratives, suggesting such messaging could "drive permission for violence" by others — even if the group itself does not directly engage in violent acts. Its ideology challenges democracy and liberal values.

National Socialist Network (NSN)

As mentioned earlier, the **National Socialist Network (NSN)** is a neo-Nazi movement. It is an extremist organisation that adopted ideology, symbols and rhetoric of Nazism (the far-right totalitarian ideology associated with Adolf Hitler). It is Australia's most prominent neo-Nazi group formed around 2020, led by Thomas Sewell and Jacob Hersant. It also conducts protests across Australian cities including Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane.

The NSN has used public demonstrations, online propaganda, and protests (including anti-immigration rallies) as recruitment and publicity platforms.

The NSN has engaged in behaviour widely condemned as hate speech and extremist, such as displaying Nazi-linked symbols and chants at events.

Just prior to the enactment of the Hate Speech legislation in January 2026, NSN and its associated protest groups, the "European Australian Movement" and "White Australia", announced that they would disband to avoid legal action under the new legislation.

The Known Unknown

There is a third group that exists that is far more covert but is also a great threat to social cohesion. The fanatical far left, such as the **Socialist Alternative**.

The known unknown is whether the **Socialist Alternative** is controlling or at least manipulating the **Palestine Action Group (PAG)** and its Sydney protests.

The vast majority of pro-Palestine protesters are rightly horrified at the deplorable situation in Gaza, including the death of tens of thousands of innocent women and children. There is nothing antisemitic about opposing the horrors of that war. However, the fanatical **Socialist Alternative**, appear to be manipulating those protests to their advantage.

What is largely unreported in the news is that the anti-Israel marches are being organised by far left-wing activists in conjunction with radical Islamic activists.

In Sydney, the anti-Israel Protests are being led by Joshua Lees, a Marxist.

Lees is a key organiser and spokesperson for the **Palestine Action Group (PAG)**, the core body behind ongoing protests in Sydney. PAG organises weekly rallies and large

marches, including the controversial October 2023 Sydney Opera House Protest involving offending chants.

In August 2025 Lees is reported as being responsible for convincing 90,000 Australians to march over the Sydney Harbour Bridge, a show of force credited with shifting Australian government policy in favour of the Palestinians.

In October 2025 Lees planned a second protest at the Sydney Opera House which was blocked by a Court Order.

In 2025 Lees took legal action in the NSW Supreme Court to successfully challenge restricting protests near places of worship.

On Australia Day 2026 Lees is reported as organising anti Australia Day protests in Sydney.

Lees writes for Red Flag- a publication produced by **Socialist Alternative**, a socialist/Trotskyist group -For the last 20 years, Lees has been publicly involved, (or associated) with campaigns relating to Civil rights, Climate Change, Anti-racism, Black Lives Matter protests, Invasion Day protests, and the Occupy Sydney in 2011 protest.

Socialist Alternative

The **Socialist Alternative** is an international revolutionary Marxist organisation active in Australia. It works through influencing the union movement, university student groups, protests and publications like Red Flag.

The **Socialist Alternative** describes itself as:

- Marxist;
- Anti-capitalist;
- Revolutionary socialist (not reformist)

Key beliefs include:

- Capitalism is inherently exploitative and must be overthrown, not reformed;
- Change comes primarily through mass movements and class struggle, not parliamentary politics;
- Strong opposition to:
 - Imperialism and western military alliances
 - Racism, colonialism and policing structures
 - Zionism (strongly pro-Palestinian)
- They are critical of:
 - Labor, the Greens and social democratic politics, which they see as ultimately defending capitalism.

EXTREMISM COMES FROM MULTIPLE FRONTS – FAR-RIGHT, ISLAMIST AND FAR-LEFT.

Socialist Alternative is

heavily involved in:

- Pro-Palestine activism;
- Anti-war movements;
- Union disputes and strikes;
- Student activism on university campuses;
- Climate protests such as Climate Extinction Protests;
- Anti racism protests such as Invasion Day, Black Lives Matter etc;
- Identity based struggles;
- Opposition to anti-protest laws

Socialist Alternative is known for:

- University campus presence, recruiting students, hosting talks, lectures and reading groups;
- Street Protests including Palestine solidarity rallies, anti western military alliance protests, anti-police and anti-border control protests;
- Aggressive protest tactics including confrontations with police;
- Strong rhetoric that escalates tensions at demonstrations.

Socialist Alternative is legally operating in Australia. It is not banned and is protected under freedom of speech and freedom of association laws however they manipulate community issues into socialist recruitment strategies, not withstanding the negative impact on broader Australian social cohesion.

It is important to understand the distinction between Socialism and Revolutionary Socialism.

Socialism:

- Wants an economy run for social needs, not profit;
- Supports public or collective ownership of key industries;
- Reformist through elections and political influence.

Revolutionary Socialism:

- Argues capitalism can not be fixed;
- Believes real change comes through mass movements, workers' strikes, uprisings and systemic rupture;
- Elections are not the main path to power as real power comes from strikes, protests, student movements and workplace organising.

As mentioned earlier, the Australian Parliament has passed new hate-group laws designed to make it easier to designate organisations like **Hizb ut-Tahrir** and the neo-Nazi **National Socialist Network** as prohibited where their conduct is deemed to promote hatred or undermine social cohesion.

Hizb ut-Tahrir's website and media presence were taken down suddenly after the recent legislation passed, as was the **National Socialist Network**, possibly in anticipation of designation. Both groups have publicly vowed to challenge the laws in court, calling them tyrannical and denying that their organisations promote violence.

Australian neo-Nazis **National Socialist Network** and far left organisation **Socialist Alternative** and the extremist organisation **Hizb ut-Tahrir** share a rejection of liberal democratic legitimacy, but for radically different reasons, all attacking Australia's social cohesion within each of their ideologies hostile to the Australian state. Their common thread is that they strongly object to our social cohesion and multiculturalism that is based on democracy, freedom, respect and equality.

Of course there are other extremist organisations in Australia, but there is a clear message for our politicians and our policing and national security leaders - these extremist organisations have no place in our Australian society - they do not support our rule of law, our democratic system or our collective social values.

Federal, State and Territory Governments must through effective legislation neutralise specific hate based groups that threaten our social cohesion, the safety of Australian jews and have as their goal the ultimate aim of destroying our multicultural democratic Australia. As Premier Minns said:

“We have to be confident to say that Australia is just not the country for you!”



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ASIO

Mike Burgess ASIO 2025

November 19, 2025

MIKE BURGESS AM

Director-General of Security

Our social fabric is fraying – fraying in ways we have never experienced before.

This is not an accident.

I will explore how security threats are damaging our cohesion, and how our damaged cohesion is amplifying security threats.

I'll start with the international dynamics.

International Nexus

ASIO is sometimes called Australia's domestic spy agency. This is not accurate. Our mission is to protect Australians from security threats wherever they are – at home and abroad.

We have offices in multiple countries and working relationships with literally hundreds of intelligence and security agencies – some you would expect, some you would find more surprising.

Our officers routinely conduct operations offshore to defend Australia's interests.

A recent example involved a foreign intelligence service that keeps ASIO very busy, despite claiming it does not spy on Australia.

One of its teams tried to cultivate and recruit several Australians, and believed it had convinced them to betray their country.

Reflecting ASIO's success in making Australia an unwelcome environment for espionage, the foreign intelligence service arranged for an Australian to travel by plane and then boat to a third country for a face-to-face meeting.

The spies wanted to hand over a list of their intelligence requirements – the people and things they wanted spied on.

Inside information on Australia's economy, critical minerals and AUKUS were high on the list.

Little did they know ASIO was tracking and manipulating their entire activity.

We worked with a partner in the third country to deliver an unwelcome surprise.

When the intelligence officers arrived at the location, they were not met by their target, they were met by an ASIO officer. The conversation was brief but pointed.

- We told them Australians were off limits.
- We warned them we would disrupt their operations whenever and wherever we chose.
- And we sent our regards to the head of their service.

Spies are meant to report any interaction with counterparts from another country. I'm pleased to note these intelligence officers followed the rules and owned up to their superiors that their cover and their operation were blown!

An international perspective is more important than ever because, in a hyper-connected world, almost every domestic security threat involves an overseas nexus.

Australia is an island, but we are not isolated.

The tyranny of distance does not make tyranny distant.

Putin's invasion of Ukraine prompted a more aggressive and reckless Russian intelligence apparatus to target Ukraine's supporters around the world, including Australia.

Russia has always been a significant espionage threat – Ben Chifley founded ASIO to counter it – but the ongoing war with Ukraine added urgency to its intelligence gathering.

Last year, two Russian-born Australian citizens were arrested and charged with an espionage-related offence.

Russia's brazen acts of sabotage in Europe demonstrated its willingness to use a wider range of tools and tactics to coerce, intimidate and damage perceived adversaries, and we should not assume Australia is immune.

Nor can we blithely hope the parts of its intelligence apparatus that specialise in sowing division and spreading disinformation will ignore us.

I'll return to this form of Russian foreign interference soon.

The conflict in the Middle East also reshaped Australia's security environment from afar.

While the conflict did not directly inspire terrorism here, it prompted protest, exacerbated tension, undermined social cohesion and elevated intolerance.

This, in turn, made acts of politically motivated violence more likely.

Even if the ceasefire holds, we expect ongoing tests for our social cohesion.

Inflammatory rhetoric and provocative, disruptive actions have been normalised, and I fear the normalisation of violence and hatred against one community created a permissive environment for similar behaviours in other communities.

Great power competition in our region is contributing to multiple territorial disputes including in the South China Sea, Kashmir, the Taiwan Strait and the Korean peninsula, while also driving a relentless hunger for strategic advantage and an insatiable appetite for inside information.

This is why, based on what ASIO is seeing, more Australians are being targeted for espionage and foreign interference than ever before.

At the same time, all three of these international drivers are being accelerated by rapid advances in technology.



“AUSTRALIA HAS NEVER FACED SO MANY DIFFERENT THREATS – AT SCALE – AT ONCE.”

In terms of social cohesion, the internet is the greatest incubator of grievance narratives and conspiracy theories.

It's an echo chamber for disaffection, mis-information and reinforcement.

While the internet incubates, social media accelerates.

If you engage with hard-line but non-violent religious content on one of the most popular platforms, its algorithms will serve up more and more extreme material until, after just a few clicks, you can be watching grotesque ISIS propaganda.

And while the internet incubates and social media accelerates, artificial intelligence exacerbates.

You will not be surprised to know I am deeply concerned about the potential for AI to take online radicalisation and disinformation to entirely new levels.

The result of these compounding dynamics is a domestic security environment with an unprecedented number

of challenges, and an unprecedented cumulative level of potential harm.

Australia has never faced so many different threats... at scale... at once.

These dynamics are putting unprecedented strain on our social fabric – the fabric Frank Lowy helped weave and preserve.

Fractured community cohesion is not one of the specific matters ASIO is empowered to investigate and assess, but it is directly linked to our three most pressing security concerns: espionage, foreign interference and politically motivated violence.

It aggravates them, and as I will explain tonight, they aggravate it.

Social Cohesion

Of course, there have been other periods of social dislocation in Australia, starting with the most significant: the impact of European settlement on First Nations peoples.

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Memories Are Eternal

In the 1960s, 70s and 80s, for example, conflicts far away reached into this country with deadly intent.

There were 16 bomb attacks against Yugoslav interests, the Ananda Marga attacks on representatives and symbols of the Indian government, bombings of the Sydney Israeli Consulate and the Hakoah club and the bombing of the Turkish Consulate in Melbourne.

But what we are seeing today is on a different scale, with different dynamics.

Grievance is growing. Intolerance is rising.

Inflammatory rhetoric and behaviour is being normalised.

Anti-authority beliefs are spreading.

There are multiple, cascading and intersecting threats to our social cohesion, fuelled by three distinct but connected cohorts:

- the aggrieved,
- the opportunistic, and
- the cunning.

The aggrieved are the individuals who tear at our social fabric.

The opportunistic are the organised groups that take advantage of weaknesses in our social fabric.

The cunning are the nation states that play a longer, more calculated game to divide and distract us.

Let's start with the aggrieved.

The Aggrieved

Political differences, political debates and political protests are essential parts of a healthy democracy.

Unfortunately, here and overseas, levels of personal grievance and frustration are growing.

Rightly or wrongly some Australians feel dispossessed, disaffected, disenfranchised. There are spikes in polarisation and intolerance.

Many of the foundations that have underpinned Australia's security, prosperity and democracy are being tested:

- Social cohesion is eroding,
- Trust in institutions is declining, and
- Even truth itself is being undermined by conspiracy, mis- and disinformation.

Similar trends are playing out across the Western world.

Angry, alienated individuals are embracing anti-authority ideologies and conspiracy theories; engaging in uncivil debate and unpeaceful protest.



Some are combining multiple beliefs to create new hybrid ideologies.

It is important to understand there is significant diversity in this cohort; suggesting all the aggrieved are 'sovereign citizens', for example, is neither accurate nor helpful.

While sovereign citizens consider the government illegitimate and therefore without authority, other aggrieved activists believe the opposite – the government possesses too much authority.

Many of the aggrieved do not necessarily espouse violent views, but may still see violence as a legitimate way to effect political or societal change.

The trend increased during COVID, gained further momentum after the terrorist attacks on Israel, and accelerated during Israel's military response.

These dynamics raised the temperature of the security environment, made acts of violence more likely, and continue to undermine social cohesion.

The Opportunistic

Next, the opportunistic.

Extremist organisations – whether religiously or ideologically motivated – are adaptive and patient.

They are skilled at exploiting gaps or fissures in social cohesion; at harnessing and harvesting grievances.

The way nationalist and racist violent extremists attempted to leverage the so-called March for Australia rallies is a case in point.

The biggest neo-Nazi group, the National Socialist Network – or White Australia as it is rebranding itself – identified the demonstrations as a vehicle to raise its profile.

It strategically and opportunistically exploited the organisers' complaints about immigration and the cost of living.

This is a key part of the Network's broader strategy to 'mainstream' and expand its movement by focussing on issues with broader appeal.

Modern neo-Nazis crave attention and publicity. It gives them credibility and helps with recruitment.

They see journalists as "useful idiots" in this regard, and they celebrate even the most critical coverage because it inevitably leads to a surge in membership applications.

After one recent story, members joked about thanking the media for the "free promotion".

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At the same time, though, its ideology and its provocative, offensive and high-profile actions are antithetical to social cohesion.

At its core, the National Socialist Network is anti-immigrant, anti-Indigenous, anti-gay, anti-Jew, anti-Islam and anti-everything that does not fit its white Anglo-centric world view.

Its version of social cohesion is monochrome and mono-cultural.

Even if the organisation does not engage in terrorism, I remain deeply concerned by its hateful, divisive rhetoric and increasingly violent propaganda, and the growing likelihood these things will prompt spontaneous violence, particularly in response to perceived provocation.

While nationalist and racist violent extremists make up the significant majority of our investigations into ideologically motivated extremism, events in the Middle East triggered a troubling increase in anarchist and revolutionary extremism, which is also straining cohesion.

Since October 2023, we've seen more provocative protests and a notable uptick in intentionally disruptive and damaging tactics by anti-Israel activists, including multiple acts of arson, vandalism and violent protest against defence companies accused of supplying weapon components.

These groups – for want of a better word – are not as centrally controlled, uniformly motivated or as disciplined as the National Socialist Network, but they contain individuals who are increasingly willing to embrace or threaten violence to achieve their goals.

Directly or indirectly, their actions can marginalise, stigmatise and frighten sections of the community.

The group involved in at least one incident produced a video threatening “consequences” for the employees of the business.

“Every worker in this supply chain is complicit,” the video stated. “We will decide your fate as you have decided the fate of millions... We have been closely watching you. We have your addresses. Stop arming “israel” or else...”

Ideologically motivated groups are not the only opportunists threatening community cohesion.

While an entity such as Hizb ut Tahrir is religiously motivated, its provocative

behaviour, offensive rhetoric and insidious strategy are very similar to the tactics of the National Socialist Network.

The organisation's condemnation of Israel and Jews attracts media attention and aids recruitment, but it deliberately stops short of promoting onshore acts of politically motivated violence.

Hizb ut Tahrir wants to test and stretch the boundaries of legality without breaking them.

As with the neo-Nazis, this does not make its behaviour acceptable.

I fear its anti-Israel rhetoric is fuelling and normalising wider anti-Semitic narratives.

While I do not want to overstate the threat from opportunists such as the three I've highlighted – let alone give them free publicity – they are further examples of the multi-directional and multi-dimensional challenge for Australia's community fabric.

The Cunning

This brings me to the final cohort, the cunning. Of the three, the cunning is the most concerning.

Aggrieved individuals clawing at our social fabric is one thing. Extremist groups opportunistically undermining it is another.

But cunning nation states deliberately trying to set the fabric alight and fan the flames is something else again in terms of threat.

Regimes are operating in a security ‘grey zone’... using non-traditional tools to interfere in decision-making, promote discord, amplify distrust and spread false narratives in Western democracies.

This is a newer and more disturbing dynamic, and why I say the threats facing our social cohesion are unprecedented.

Authoritarian regimes demonstrate a chilling willingness to exploit fault lines in countries they consider hostile.

In January this year, Frank Lowy posed a question that I noted with great interest:

Could – and I'll quote Frank directly – “dark forces financed by international hatred” be behind Australia's spate of anti-Semitic incidents?

In August, the Prime Minister revealed our assessment that Iran directed at least two of the attacks on Jewish interests.

The Iranian regime used a complex web of cut-outs to hide its involvement.

While the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the IRGC, provided instructions on the entities to target and its preferred methodology – arson – it is unlikely the individuals at the end of the chain – those literally lighting the fires – knew about the IRGC's involvement.

It is important to understand that Iran did not single Australia out; the summer of anti-Semitism was part of its global effort to ferment hatred of the Jewish community and fan the flames of division.

This activity is perhaps the most egregious example of a nation state trying to unpick our social fabric, but not the only example.

In our region, ASIO is tracking the spread of a particular strain of extremist propaganda. While the material purports to be from a transnational terrorist group, ASIO and our international partners suspect it is fake, and is actually being created and disseminated by a hostile nation state.

The propaganda glorifies violent extremism and advocates attacks on specific targets, presumably to encourage violence, alarm communities, incite sectarianism and destabilise regional governments.

In Europe, Russian cyber operatives connected to intelligence services have inflamed community tensions by spreading false news and promoting violent narratives, particularly on the topic of immigration.

Australia is not immune.

Russian operatives are covertly stoking and amplifying division here, too, although with far less success.

We recently uncovered links between pro-Russian influencers in Australia and an offshore media organisation that almost certainly receives direction from Russian intelligence.

The Australians publish and push extreme online narratives justifying the invasion of Ukraine and condemning Australia's support for Kiev.

Deliberately hiding their connection to Moscow – and the likely instruction from Moscow – the propagandists try to hijack debates. They use social media to spread polarising commentary on anti-immigration protests and pro-Palestinian marches.

ASIO's investigation is ongoing.

We will ask our partners to determine if any laws are being broken, because this behaviour is unacceptable.



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These state-sanctioned trolls are more than propaganda puppets; they want to turn hot-button issues into burning issues, tipping disagreement into division and division into violence.

Fortunately, Australia is resistant and resilient, and their efforts are achieving limited traction – although this doesn't excuse their behaviour.

My greatest concern with these authoritarian tactics is that regimes are increasingly reckless, seemingly unconcerned that arson could claim innocent lives or fake terrorist propaganda could inspire an actual attack or online vitriol could prompt violent protest.

The step from a reckless act to a high-harm act is a small one.

Given the degrading trajectory of our security environment and the growing willingness of regimes to conduct high-harm operations, ASIO assesses there is a realistic possibility a foreign government will attempt to assassinate a perceived dissident in Australia. This threat is real.

We believe there are at least three nations willing and capable of conducting lethal targeting here. It is entirely possible the regimes would try to hide their involvement by hiring criminal cut outs, as Iran did when directing its arson attacks.

Please note I said, "attempt to assassinate."

ASIO and our law enforcement partners are acutely alive to this threat and are working around the clock, using all our powers, to protect Australia and Australians.

Our Response

In the security environment I've laid out this evening, national security truly is national security – everybody's business.

ASIO and law enforcement are part of the solution, but not the full solution.

You cannot spy your way to greater cohesion or arrest your way to fewer grievances.

It requires a whole of community, whole of society response.

I mean that literally.

Every one of us has a role to play protecting our social cohesion.

Our words matter, our decisions matter, our actions matter.

In an age with unprecedented avenues for communication, I fear we are losing our ability to converse.

Or at least losing the ability to converse with civility, debate with respect, disagree with restraint.



To have an exchange of ideas rather than an exchange of diatribes or slogans or rhetorical blows.

To be right without being righteous.

To compromise.

Yes, the aggrieved, the opportunistic and the cunning are ripping our social fabric. But in most cases, they are exploiting and amplifying existing discord.

Anti-Semitism existed in Australia before Iran directed its arson attacks. And while Iran is responsible for at least two of the incidents, it is not responsible for every incident.

Yes, social media algorithms are accelerating extremism and radicalisation, but the algorithms do not operate in isolation.

People choose to create the content; people choose to engage with the content and people choose to act on the content.

I worry we risk creating real world 'aggro-rhythms' where grievance, intolerance, polarisation and rhetoric feed on themselves...

Inflaming grievance, intolerance, polarisation and rhetoric, increasing the potential for violence.

Sociologists will be better placed to ponder what's driving these dynamics than a spy chief; my concern is... a more vulnerable, fractured and intolerant society means a less predictable and increasingly volatile security environment.

Conclusion

Despite the scale of these challenges, Australia is better placed than many other Western democracies to meet them.

Our Parliaments are sovereign, our communities are resilient, our economy is growing. These attributes, along with others such as compulsory voting and a social safety net, are critical stabilisers and insulators.

While the threats and challenges facing us are significant, they are not insurmountable.

Even the most cunning foreign intelligence service is not invincible.

A national terrorism threat level of PROBABLE does not mean inevitable.

We should not be defeatist or insecure about our security.

We can and should have confidence in our ability to respond.

Every one of the plots I described tonight was stopped, disrupted or pieced together by ASIO and our partners.

We do not need to be security alarmed, but we do need to be security aware – security sensible – and consider the consequences of our words and actions. Your business might not be in national security but that doesn't mean national security is not your business.



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Antisemitism in Australia

Findings of research commissioned by Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism



November, 2025

AUSTRALIA'S SPECIAL ENVOY TO COMBAT ANTISEMITISM

www.aseca.gov.au

Antisemitism erodes and is contrary to values that define Australia: fairness, freedom and mutual respect. It is a hatred that manifests in harmful words, and can lead to violent deeds, undermining the basic right to live free of discrimination and hate, and attacking the very foundations of a thriving democracy. As such, it poses a threat not just to Jewish Australians, but to our entire nation.

Background and purpose

In the context of rising concerns regarding antisemitism in Australia, particularly following the events of 7 October 2023, Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism (ASECA) commissioned a two-part research program to understand prevalent sentiments towards the Australian Jewish community among the Australian population generally.

Part A of the research program employed a quantitative online survey with a nationally representative sample of 2,185 non-Jewish Australians aged 18+. The survey was designed to gauge community attitudes and sentiment towards the Australian Jewish community and the extent of antisemitism in Australia.

Following a preliminary review of the responses in Part A, Part B involved a qualitative exploration of

attitudes among young Australians aged 16–34, and students in particular, drawing out their views and lived experiences in relation to the Australian Jewish community.

A finding from Part A indicated that the 18–34 age group and student sub-cohort exhibited lower positive sentiment and willingness for social closeness with Jewish Australians compared with other age groups; and that they perceived the Jewish community as less aligned with their values and as having a coloniser identity.

These findings informed the design and sampling for Part B, which posited that the attitudes of 18–34s, and students in particular, are influenced by a perceived parallel and broader socio-political narrative concerning colonialism. Resultantly, Part B was designed as a qualitative study using a focus group method.

Part A: Quantitative online survey

Purpose and objectives

The objectives of the study were:

- Measure willingness for social closeness, and capture current perceptions, behavioural impacts and emotional responses
 - Quantify the overall level of social closeness and the sentiments and emotional responses of the Australian population towards the Jewish community compared with the other reference groups in this study.
 - Gather insights into the current perceptions, experiences, and beliefs held across the Australian population regarding the Jewish community, compared with the reference communities in this study.
 - Understand the specific emotions each cultural group evokes among Australians.
- Measure prevalence and intensity of antisemitic attitudes among non-Jewish Australians, and gather insight into how knowledgeable Australians are about the Jewish community

- Quantify the overall level of support or antipathy among the Australian population towards the Jewish community, broader Australia's ability to recognise antisemitism and whether it discriminates antisemitism from political or humanitarian activism.
- Understand whether antisemitism is viewed as an issue or not.
- Determine the level of Generalised Antisemitism, Judeophobic Antisemitism and Antizionist Antisemitism within the Australian population.

Measuring antisemitic attitudes

The research takes as its starting point the Generalised Antisemitism Scale. This is a widely respected scale for measuring antisemitic attitudes and for comparing findings of different surveys about antisemitic attitudes. The Generalised Antisemitism Scale brings together two subscales: the Judeophobic Antisemitism Subscale and the Antizionist Antisemitism Subscale.

These both test attitudes that would be regarded as antisemitic according to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition.

Key findings

Community sentiment

Overall, the emotional and attitudinal sentiment toward the Jewish community is positive, with this being consistent across most age groups and states. Among the 35–54 and 55–74 age groups, the Jewish community elicits generally positive emotions—such as surprise, happiness, love, pride, and contentment.

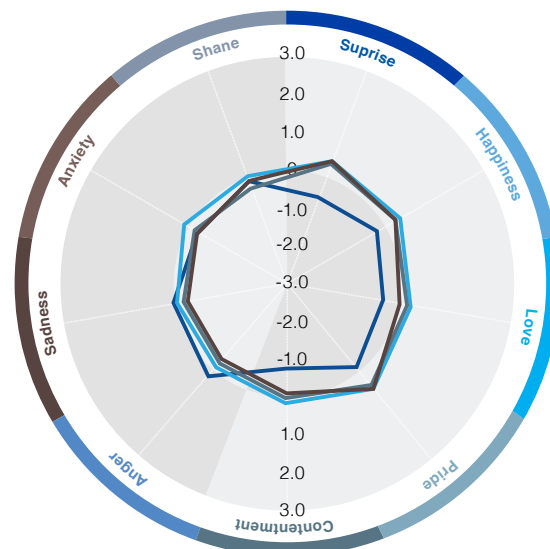
However, younger Australians stand out as an exception. Of all age groups, 18–35-year-olds express the positive emotional responses among older age groups. most negative emotional responses towards the Jewish community.

Jewish x AGE

Emotions response: Jewish community

Effect sizing was conducted to determine the substantive significance (effect) of the mean differences between the age groups. A blue marker indicates that the improvement in the other age group result was substantial from the 18 to 34 result. This instance was for the 75+ cohort.

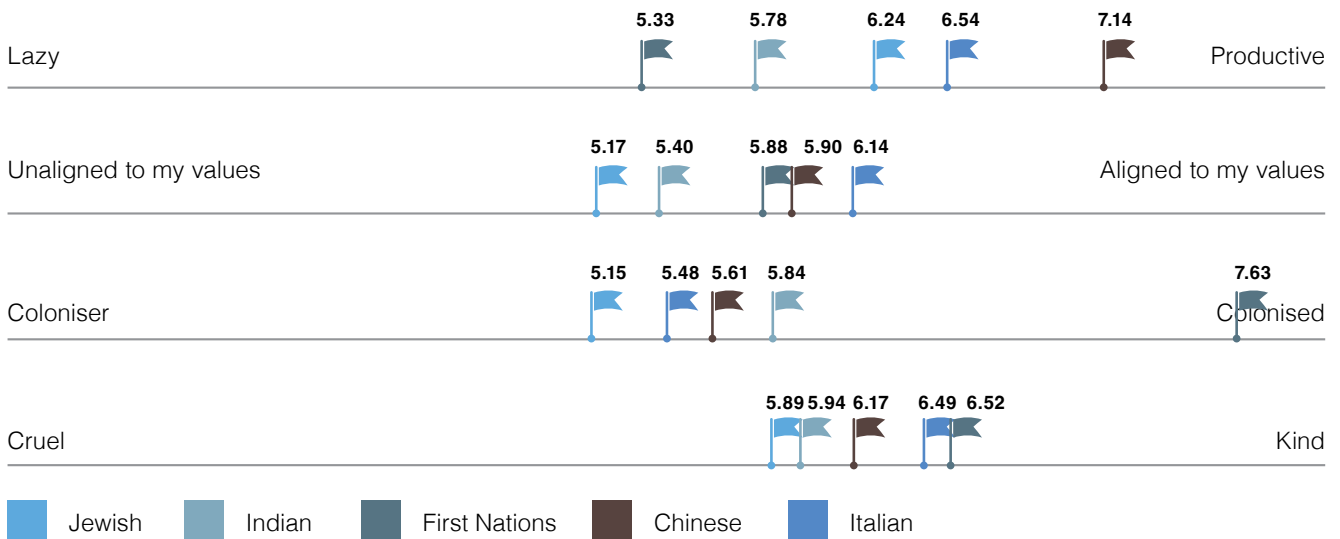
The 18-35 cohort records lower warmth, comfort, and trust, and higher associations of the Jewish community with cruelty, colonialism, and being “unaligned with my values.” When asked about five multicultural communities, 18–35s rated the Jewish community least favourably overall.



- 18 to 34 (n=912)
- 35 to 54 (n=630)
- 55 to 74 (n=534)
- 75+ (n=109)

Among students, the Jewish community was perceived as the most colonising of all the communities; correspondingly they were seen as least aligned to the cohort's values.

How strongly you associate the following communities with:



Note: Effect sizing was conducted to determine the substantive significance (effect) of the mean differences between the Jewish community and other community groups. Blue indicates that the improvement in the other community group result was substantial, and red indicates a substantial decrease.

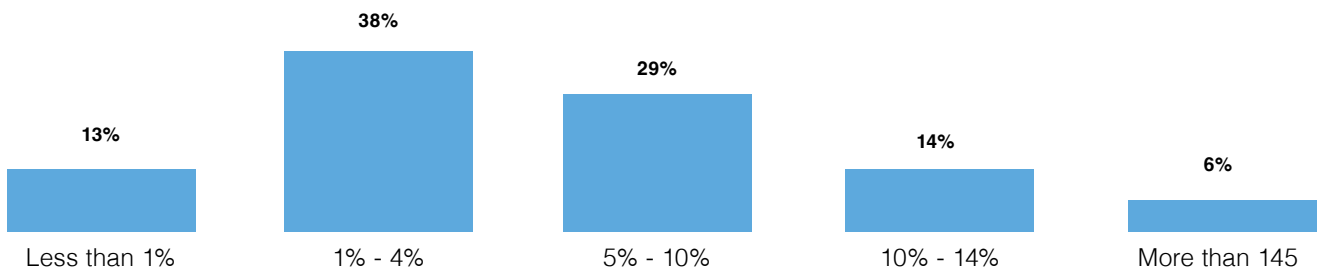
Limited knowledge about the Jewish community

Most Australians have very limited knowledge about the Jewish community.

Australians had a sense of the Jewish community's size and recognised it was a small subset of the overall population. This was consistent across age cohorts including students.

This sense of the Jewish community was borne out within the qualitative inquiry where participants self-assessed their familiarity with the Italian, Jewish, Indian, First Nations and Chinese communities. Participants' average self-assessment score for the Jewish community was 4.26, the lowest of all communities (The mean was 7.22, and the Italian community was the most familiar among participants, 6.5)

What proportion of the Australian population is Jewish? (Overall)



Sample Size: Overall n=2,185

While only 13% of Australians correctly identified that the Jewish community comprises less than 1% of the population, 20% believed it represents more than 10% of the total population.

When asked about the nature of Jewish identity, only 9% answered both questions correctly – recognising that being Jewish is identifying with an ethnic group and/or a religious group. Those who were better informed, recorded significantly lower antisemitism scores according to the Generalised Antisemitism Scale discussed below.

This suggests that increasing public understanding about Jewish life can reduce antisemitic attitudes.

Antisemitism in the Australian context

Australians generally have a sense of the Jewish community and broadly support the right of Jewish Australians to speak out against hate speech. However, antisemitism is not widely recognised as a major national issue, and only a minority view it as a serious concern, even on university campuses.

Overall, antisemitism among Australians is average (according to the Generalised Antisemitism Scale), with antizionist antisemitism slightly higher than Judeophobic antisemitism. The 18–34 age group, and students in particular, again show higher scores on both subscales.

When asked whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, 'Israel treats the Palestinians like the Nazis treated the Jews', the combined agree responses were as follows for different age groups:

Age	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-90
Strongly agree + agree	45%	42%	36%	25%	30%	30%	27%

The responses of students to the same statement were as follows:

	Full time student	Full time student - Male	Full time student - Female
1 Strongly disagree	5%	8	4%
2	10%	12	9%
1+2	15%	20%	13%**
3	23%	24%	23%
4	22%	17%	26%
5 Strongly agree	28%	32%	25%
4+5	50%	49%	49%
Prefer not to answer	12%	6%	14%**
N	284	115	163

This suggests that antizionist antisemitism is strongest among the youngest cohort and weakens in the older cohorts.

Findings related to the Generalised Antisemitism Scale

When attitudes according to the Judeophobic Antisemitism Subscale and the Antizionist Antisemitism Subscale are compared, a statistically significant difference shows that anti-Israel sentiment is stronger than anti-Jewish sentiment, though there is overlap between the two.

	Judeophobic	Antizionist	Variance
Male	2.52	2.60	0.08
Female	2.24	2.62	0.38**
Age			
18-24	2.55	3.04	0.49**
25-34	2.47	2.92	0.45**
35-44	2.50	2.75	0.25
45-54	2.37	2.52	0.15
Education			
Non-Graduate	2.33	2.53	0.20
Graduate	2.44	2.71	0.27
Student	2.57	3.07	0.50**
Religion			
Christian	2.26	2.39	0.13
Islam (n33)	3.31	3.79	0.48**
Hindu (n42)	2.50	2.71	0.21

The data also reveal that:

- Graduates have significantly higher antisemitism scores across the board than non-graduates, and students record the highest scores across all scales of any group in the population.
- Christians record relatively low antisemitism scores, whereas those identifying as Muslim record higher scores.
- Those without religion exhibit higher antisemitism scores across all scales, suggesting that lack of religious affiliation may correlate with weaker familiarity or empathy toward Jewish identity.

This pattern reinforces the role of education and information in reducing antisemitic attitudes: respondents who were better informed about the Jewish population and the nature of Jewish identity recorded significantly lower antisemitism scores.

Part B: Qualitative focus groups

The qualitative component (Part B) found that young Australians often blur distinctions between Jewish identity, Zionism, and the Israeli government, relying heavily on social media for information and frequently interpreting events through a settler-colonial framework.

The focus groups included people under the age of 34 and had a special focus on students. Key findings are as follows.

The Jewish-Israel identity nexus: a limited understanding

Across all 13 focus groups, discussions about Jewish people and antisemitism consistently led to references to Israel and the current conflict.

Participants revealed that these topics are deeply interconnected in their thinking. However, a crucial and consistent distinction emerged: participants did not perceive Jewish individuals as collectively responsible for the actions of the Israeli government. Rather, the participants frame Israel itself as the source of contention, not the Jewish people as a group.

The association between Jewish people and Israel stemmed largely from general awareness—via education (religious, history), media, and cultural references—that Israel is a Jewish-majority state with religious and historical significance for Judaism.

Role of social media as main source of news

Reliance on social media rather than mainstream media was clearly the case, especially for participants aged 16–18 – contributing to shallow performative engagement.

Most students were suspicious of the mainstream media, seeing it as supporting one side or the other and taking a binary approach being either pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian. They believed that social media provided a broader perspective.

However, the superficiality of social media helps to reinforce stereotypes about Jews, which are shaped from an early age. Many did acknowledge that there were problems of social media promoting antisemitism. They referred to mini clips from South Park portraying Jewish characters in a degrading fashion and also referred to Tik Tok as perpetuating antisemitism.

Entrenched views and generational openness

Most participants—regardless of whether they expressed empathy, antipathy, or indifference toward antisemitism or Israel—were generally resistant to changing their views.

These perspectives were deeply rooted in prior learning and life experience, shaped by a combination of formal education, social and traditional media exposure, and personal networks including family and friends. Participants' current positions tended to align closely with their broader value systems, reinforcing a sense of certainty and stability in their beliefs.

However, an important generational distinction emerged: high school students demonstrated a noticeably greater openness to learning. Compared to older participants, they showed more curiosity and receptiveness to expanding their understanding of Jewish people, Judaism, Israel, and the current Middle East conflict.

Enduring stereotypes and the normalisation of cultural tropes

Across all demographic groups, participants expressed a range of longstanding stereotypes about Jewish people.

These primarily centred on associations with wealth, business acumen, and professional success.

These perceptions were frequently couched in positive terms or as compliments and were often framed as the result of Jewish cultural attributes such as discipline, work ethic, and a cultural emphasis on achievement. While the tone of these stereotypes was not hostile, they nonetheless reflect a pattern of essentialising Jewish identity and othering Jewish individuals which can make space for or contribute to broader prejudicial narratives.

A belief also emerged that Jewish individuals have disproportionate influence in the media, a perception that was accepted with little challenge and frequently repeated as common knowledge. This reliance on stereotypes reduces the sense of complexity and contributes to antisemitic attitudes. At the same time, they do see Jews as being loyal to Australia, a positive attribute, so that the concept of Jewish loyalty did not emerge in the focus group interviews.

Gendered patterns in attitudes and expression

Clear gender-based differences emerged across the focus groups, particularly among high school participants.

In the high school cohorts, male students were more frequently embedded in peer environments where casual racist and antisemitic humour was normalised, including dialogue or behaviours targeting Jewish individuals. In such cases, these expressions were described as social humour and banter. Across age cohorts, male participants were more likely than females to spontaneously reference enduring stereotypes when discussing Jewish people.

These associations appeared more top-of-mind among men. In contrast, female participants - across all age cohorts - consistently demonstrated greater empathy and emotional sensitivity toward all sides including both Jewish individuals in Australia and the Palestinian community involved in the conflict. They were notably less likely to express or endorse racist or antisemitic humour, and less inclined to rely on stereotypical portrayals of Jewish people.

Significant knowledge gaps and misunderstandings of Zionism and settler colonialism

The data revealed that many participants expressed disinterest



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and indifference about the conflict, resulting in both knowledge gaps and misinformation.

Participants often presented over simplified analogies, such as comparing the Israel-Palestinian conflict with Australia's colonial history leading to reductive compassion to avoid a deeper engagement with the topic. Thus, many participants expressed support for Jewish communities while also criticising the actions of the Israeli state.

They differentiated between Judaism, as a religion, and Zionism, as a political movement which they associated with colonialism and so could be condemned. There was a trend among participants towards polarisation, justifying antisemitism based on an anti-Israel = anti-colonisation rhetoric. These participants see Israel as the oppressor in the conflict, ignoring the actions and ideology of Hamas.

They associate Zionism as a settler colonial movement with dispossession as their main framework. Overall, a basic but fragmented interest was displayed with participants often relying on oversimplified analogies and fragmented information. This illustrated that participants lacked knowledge, even though they claimed that they had the knowledge. This confidence may be due to their reliance on social media as their main source of information.

Navigating complexity: understanding the connections between Zionism and Judaism

The topic of antisemitism—particularly as it intersects with views on Israel and the Israel–Palestine conflict—is highly nuanced and contextually sensitive.

Most participants expressed a lack of understanding of the importance of the historical links of Jews to the 'Land of Israel' and the connections between Judaism, Jewish identity and Zionism for most Jewish Australians. Only a few expressed a more nuanced understanding of the Jewish connection to the land, with reference to Ancient Israel.

Overall, there was a lack of understanding of the integral nature of this connection to the Land of Israel in Jewish traditional religious beliefs, Jewish ritual, contemporary Jewish identity and the strong family connections of Australian Jews to Israel.

Key findings from the research project as a whole
General sentiment towards the Australian Jewish community

The research showed that, overall, Australians hold a positive sentiment towards the Jewish community, with the community rated second only to Italians in terms of willingness to share social closeness. Positive sentiment included perceptions of productivity and high levels of education, with these being widely acknowledged, albeit accompanied by views of the Australian Jewish community as somewhat insular.

The community's economic success, strong intra-community ties, and visibility in banking, business, and professional domains were highlighted. Vocational stereotypes usually positive but sometimes judgmental, were persistent and, in most cases, went unchallenged; however, open hostility towards the Australian Jewish community was rare.

Antisemitism and political activism

The research found that Australians can broadly identify classic antisemitism, but most do not perceive it as a major social problem. The quantitative findings indicated a difference in attitudes among students, with a slightly higher tendency towards negative sentiment related to anti-Zionist antisemitism compared to the broader population.

Qualitative findings provided further context for this, reinforcing that the 18–34 Gen Pop and student cohorts tended to differentiate between what they view as legitimate activism—for instance, criticism of the Israeli government's current actions or criticism of Zionism—and antisemitism, firmly believing that the former does not equate with antisemitism, and that such protest is justified.

This was particularly evident amongst those who expressed strongly held beliefs regarding the State of Israel, the current actions of the Israeli government, and Zionism. Their attitudes were shaped by the actions of the Israeli government, which they consistently noted were disproportionate responses or, in some cases, colonial narratives. In either case, these individuals experience a values misalignment, which underpins the strength of their beliefs. Despite this, some students described a 'thin line' between anti-Zionist activism and antisemitism, highlighting how easily anti-Zionist activism can tip into antisemitism.

The research confirmed that Australians consistently draw a distinction between the Australian Jewish community and the actions of the Israeli government. The large majority do not hold local Jewish communities collectively responsible for Israel's policies, despite many linking Jewish identity with Israel.

Durable stereotypes and knowledge gaps

The research revealed enduring stereotypes around Jewish wealth, business success, influence and media power. Mostly, these appeared benign and those centred on wealth or business success were often framed as complimentary but remain damaging for their ability to other the Australian Jewish community, particularly within a context of knowledge gaps and a lack of familiarity with the community.

Participants of all ages—especially young adults with no direct connection to members of the Australian Jewish community—displayed some knowledge gaps about the complexity of antisemitism and in understanding what constitutes Jewish identity, with confusion around the role of religion, ethnicity, culture, and politics within this.

Social and traditional media played a key role in shaping perceptions. And openness to learning was highest among high school students (aged 16–18), who displayed greater curiosity and lower baseline knowledge.

Disengagement and media influence

In some cases, research participants reported disengagement and emotional distance from issues involving the Australian Jewish community or the current Israel–Palestine conflict, unless directly affected. Additionally, there was a sentiment of discomfort or reluctance to participate in debate, with concerns that under informed views might lead to misinterpretation or unintended offence.

While quantitative measures showed Australians were comfortable with media reporting on antisemitism, the qualitative inquiry revealed widespread scepticism towards traditional media and a high reliance on social media among younger cohorts.

Overarching conclusions and recommendations

The research affirms that antisemitism in Australia is not monolithic but complex, influenced by ignorance, misinformation, and ideological narratives.



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- Younger Australians (18–35) display lower positive sentiment and higher antisemitism scores than other age groups.
- Knowledge gaps are widespread, with only a small proportion of Australians able to accurately describe the Jewish population or identity.
- Education, familiarity, and accurate information demonstrably reduce antisemitic attitudes.
- Tailored, age-specific interventions are needed: curiosity-based education for high school students, and critical-thinking and discourse frameworks for university cohorts.
- Addressing 'soft' antisemitism, including stereotypes, coded language, and casual prejudice, remains essential.

A complex, nuanced landscape

The research affirms that antisemitism in Australia is not monolithic but multifaceted, shaped by media, social context, and individual experience. While outright hostility is rare, 'softer' forms of prejudice persist.

Tailored, age-specific approaches

There is a need for tailored interventions that are audience specific. High school students require basic, curiosity-driven education.

“YOUNGER AUSTRALIANS RECORD HIGHER ANTISEMITISM SCORES, BUT EDUCATION AND FAMILIARITY REDUCE PREJUDICE.”

University and adult cohorts need frameworks that facilitate dialogue, critical thinking, and resilience against polarisation.

Addressing subtle antisemitism

Attention is needed to tackle pervasive stereotypes, coded language, and the normalisation of casual prejudice. This includes challenging the essentialising and othering effects of positive stereotypes, as well as clarifying the boundaries between political activism and hate speech.

Media and information literacy

There is a dual challenge of distrust in traditional media and the influence of social media and popular culture. Interventions that navigate complex narratives and recognise misinformation are required.

Bridging the knowledge gap

There is a critical need for social education that contextualises Jewish history, identity, and diversity, dismantling

uniform representations and fostering empathy, to make Jewish identity more accessible and break down barriers of indifference and perceptions of insularity.

Promoting balanced discourse and policy

Australians separate criticism of the Israeli government from antisemitism, with many holding strong opinions, especially those who are critical of the Israeli government's recent actions. Because these views are often firmly held, it is important that interventions support activism and protest that respect the dignity, safety, and peaceful expression of all communities.

Overall, the data underscore that antisemitism in Australia is often rooted in ignorance rather than hostility, and that increasing Australians' understanding of Jewish history, identity, and community life can measurably reduce prejudice.



Jewish groups warned police about ‘hate preachers’ multiple times before Bondi massacre

January 2, 2026

MICHAEL MCGOWAN

www.theaustralian.com.au

Australian Jewish groups repeatedly warned federal and state law enforcement agencies about radical Islamic hate preachers before last month’s Bondi massacre, but saw little action despite examples of clerics calling jihad the –“solution” to the conflict in the Middle East, and describing Jews as “evil” and “cursed”.

This masthead can also reveal the Minns government was warned by antisemitism envoy Jillian Segal in February that its changes to racial incitement laws were “utterly unworkable” because they were too focused on the “likely effect” of conduct rather than the conduct itself.

Following the alleged terror attack, in which two gunmen killed 15 people at a Jewish celebration in Bondi, politicians and law enforcement agencies have promised a crackdown on so-called “hate preachers”.

No arrests have been made but this week AFP Commissioner Krissy Barrett referred to a “flying squad of hate disruptors” who were focused on “high-harm, high-impact, politically motivated violence” and were examining a host of sermons which potentially incited hatred against the Jewish community.

But Jewish groups including the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the Jewish Board of Deputies have been raising concerns about rhetoric from some hardline preachers since the most recent outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East more than two years ago.

Along with radical cleric Wissam Haddad, this masthead has been told specific concerns were relayed to authorities about the extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, as well as some clerics linked to Salafist group ASWJ.

They include a sermon given by a cleric linked to Hizb ut-Tahrir, Brother Mohammed Trad. First reported by The Australian, in late 2023 he called for “Muslim armies” to be the “final solution” to the conflict in Gaza.

During the sermon, which was given at the Al Madina Dawah Centre in

Bankstown, run until recently by Haddad, Trad said the war in Gaza “has to be a spark for the Muslim community and the final solution”. Muslims, he said, should unite under a leader who “implements the sharia and sends Muslim armies to defend the lands of Islam”.

The Al Madina Centre, which Canterbury Council announced would be shut down last month, has long been linked to radical preachers.

In October 2023, after Hamas’ invasion of Israel, a cleric known only as “Brother Ismail” called Hamas “freedom fighters and warriors”, said jihad was the –“solution” and praised the flags of ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

“If the Australian government likes it or not, if the ASIO likes it or not, if they want to deport me from Australia or not, jihad is the solution for the Islamic nation,” he



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said. “There is no other way to defend Muslims and erase this humiliation from the Islamic nation, but fighting for the sake of Allah.”

That sermon prompted NSW Police to launch an investigation, but the probe was dropped after officers determined he had not breached any laws.

This masthead was unable to contact Trad. Others, such as, Sheik Ahmed Zoud, who in December 2023 gave a sermon at the Masjid As-Sunnah mosque in Lakemba in which he said Jews “loved to shed blood” and “ran like rats” from Hamas terrorists on October 7, apologised after legal threats from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

The Minns government has since strengthened hate speech legislation by establishing a new section of the Crimes Act called 93ZAA, which made it a crime to intentionally and publicly incite hatred towards another person, or group of people, on the grounds of race. The law includes an exemption for quoting religious texts.

The laws were criticised at the time, and went against advice from the NSW Law Reform Commission which had balked at new vilification

laws partly because, it argued, terms such as “hatred” were too imprecise. This masthead reported this week that they had only led to two charges since they took effect in August.

However, this masthead can also reveal that in a submission made while the new bill was being drafted Segal urged the government to change “incitement” to “promote” hatred to ensure the law “captures the form of conduct which parliament intends”.

“Whilst the term ‘incite’ has been used in s93Z of the act and in civil vilification provisions for some time, it is utterly unworkable because it fixes the threshold of liability on the likely effect of the conduct on the audience, rather than the conduct itself,” the submission from the envoy states.

In a statement, a spokeswoman for Attorney-General Michael Daley said the government had been “engaging” with the antisemitism envoy, and that the offence of inciting racial hatred would be subject to a review after 12 months.

“We have been very clear about the fact there is more work to do to prevent hate speech,” the spokeswoman said.

The issue of so-called hate preachers has come into focus since the Bondi shooting because of links between one of the alleged gunmen, Naveed Akram, and members of a Sydney ISIS terror cell which had been associated with preachers such as Haddad.

This masthead revealed last month that as far back as a decade ago senior members of Sydney’s Muslim community had urged police to take action against Haddad.

Ran Porat, an academic at Monash University who also works as a research associate for the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, said while law enforcement may have taken the threat of Islamic extremism seriously, it could be difficult for the legal system to grapple with the threat.

Some clerics, he said, spoke in “a sort of code”, with “certain sayings, or contexts” that were not immediately obvious to laypeople. He used the example of clerics referring to “the enemies of Islam”.

“They may not say ‘the Jews’, but those in the audience know they are speaking about Jews, or else mainstream Australians, or gay people,” he said.



December 3, 2025

JULIE NATHAN

Research Director, ECAJ

ECAJ Report on Anti-Jewish Incidents in Australia 2025

Banner of "JEWS HATE FEEDOM" at National Socialist Network (NSN) rally on steps of Victorian State Parliament, Melbourne, 20 Dec. 2024

Data on anti-Jewish incidents in Australia

The total number of reported antisemitic incidents in Australia has continued at unprecedentedly high levels for a second consecutive year. The overall total remains at about three times the total of any year prior to the worldwide wave of antisemitic incidents that followed the Hamas-led terrorist attacks in Israel on October 7, 2023. (See Chart 3 below). Although this year's total was somewhat less than the previous year's, which was an all-time record, there was actually an increase in the number of arson and vandalism attacks.

During the twelve-month period, from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025, there were **1,654 anti-Jewish incidents logged** by volunteer Community Security Groups (CSGs), official Jewish state roof bodies, and the ECAJ.

In the 10 years prior to October 2023 (Oct. 2014 – to Sep. 2023) the average annual number of anti-Jewish incidents was 342. In the two years since 7 October 2023, and the subsequent surge in antisemitism, there has been an average of 1,858 incidents per year.

In the previous 12-month period, ending 30 September 2024, a total of 2,062 incidents were logged.

The unprecedented number of arson and vandalism attacks and other serious acts of antisemitism during the year in review is evident from the following overview.

Overview of the Incidents

From early October 2024 to early February 2025, there were no fewer than eighteen major antisemitic incidents, including some of the most serious on record.

In October 2024, the shop of a kosher catering business in Bondi, Lewis's Continental Kitchen, was attacked by arsonists in the dead of night leaving the premises, shop fittings and stock completely gutted.

In November, a car was torched, others were sprayed with anti-Israel graffiti and buildings were vandalised in Woollahra, another Sydney suburb with a high concentration of Jewish residents.

Most shockingly, on 6 December 2024 the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne's south was firebombed and burned to the ground, an event that made headlines around the world and was immediately declared by police to be a terrorist attack.

January 2025 saw more cars in Sydney set on fire and daubed with

antisemitic slogans. Allawah and Newtown synagogues were defaced with antisemitic and anti-Israel graffiti. The former home of ECAJ co-CEO Alex Ryvchin in Dover Heights was vandalised, two cars were firebombed, including one with antisemitic graffiti, and two others were damaged.

A caravan containing explosives said to be capable of causing a "mass casualty event" with a 40-metre diameter blast and documents suggesting they may have been intended for use in an antisemitic attack on a synagogue were found in Dural in north-west Sydney. The incident was subsequently revealed to be a fabrication. Although it was only made to appear like a terrorism plot, the intent to create fear in the Jewish community was an essential part of that plot. Further arson and graffiti attacks at or near Jewish institutions in Sydney occurred in late January. An antisemitic egg throwing incident against a group of Jewish girls occurred in a street in Sydney's eastern suburbs on February 1.

In late August 2025 the Federal government and ASIO officially confirmed that a positive link had been established between the Iranian regime, acting through the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and the arson attacks

at Adass synagogue in Melbourne and Lewis's Continental Kitchen in Sydney, and most likely some of the other antisemitic attacks. In both cases the targets were selected because of their association with the Australian Jewish community. It is irrelevant whether or not the local criminals who were recruited to carry out these attacks knew where their orders were ultimately coming from. Australian Jews were targeted in order to further the political purposes of the Iranian regime. That regime clearly sees its war of annihilation against Israel as a war against the entire Jewish people, even if the regime's apologists in Australia and elsewhere are too obtuse or dishonest to acknowledge it.

Although the Federal government took strong and welcome action against the Iranian regime by expelling the Iranian ambassador in Australia and proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organisation, the threat to the Jewish community from foreign and local actors is ongoing.

On a smaller scale, yet still disturbing, was the marked increase in graffiti calling to kill Jews, as a direct imperative. In the past such death calls were in the form of "Death to the Jews" – expressing a sentiment rather than an act. The same theme has also occurred in hate emails, phone calls and other messages – calling for the mass deaths of Jews. The expression of such sentiments has become much more common, adding to the sense of social licence for acts of severe physical violence against Australian Jews.

The anti-Israel movement continued with its regular weekly protests, post 7 October 2023, through the CBDs of Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere, disrupting normal life and business for many Australians. For the Jewish community, the protests exhibited anti-Jewish racism predominantly in the forms of chants and placards, notably either calling for the end to Jewish national self-determination in Israel or making false analogies between Nazism and Zionism. It is the perpetrators of such discourse who cynically conflate ostensible "anti-Zionism" with antisemitism, not those who call them out. Although it might only be a few individuals who publicly express those views, it has been given a certain street credibility and legitimacy. When undermining the well-being of Jews, and their security, anti-Jewish racism will continue to worsen.



Synagogue, Sydney, 11 Jan. 2025

We are now at a stage where anti-Jewish racism has left the fringes of society and become part of the mainstream, where it is normalised and allowed to fester and spread, gaining ground at universities, in arts and culture spaces, in the health sector, in the workplace and elsewhere. In such an environment, Jews have legitimate concerns for their physical safety and future in Australia.

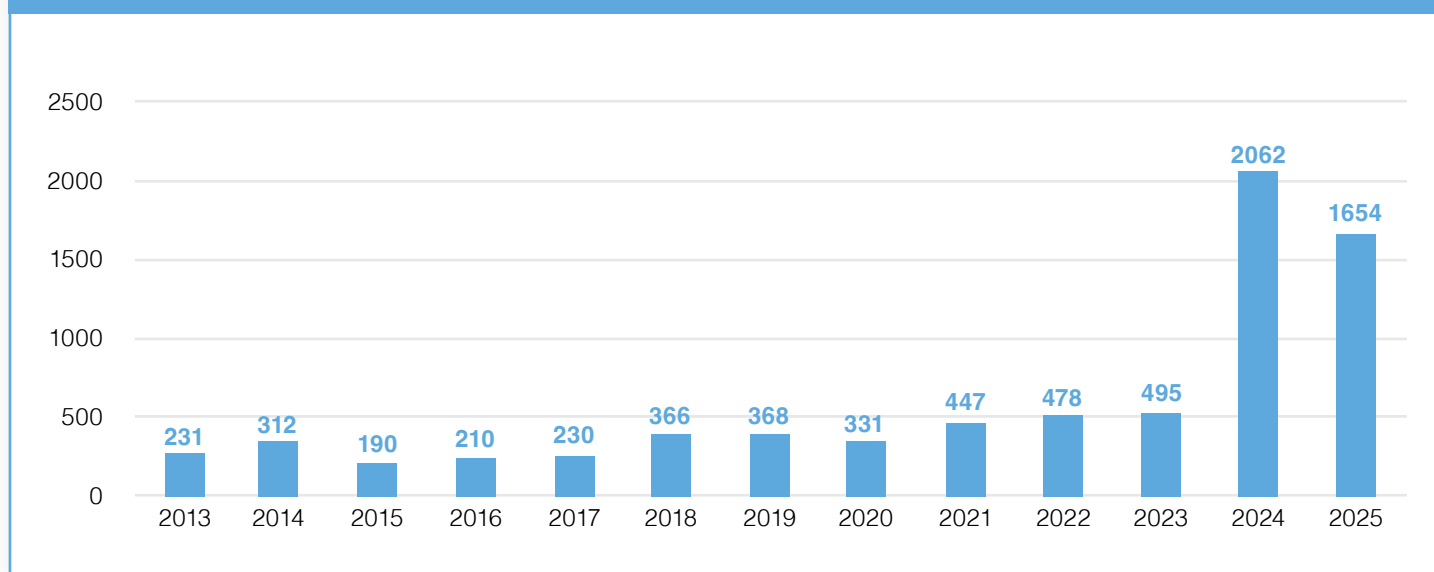
The political extremes are more active, more emboldened, and increasingly converging in one area - their common hatred of Jews/Zionists. The main neo-Nazi group, National Socialist Network, also using the name 'White Australia', are highly organised and motivated. They do not have much public support or much power or influence. However, they remain a major source of anti-Jewish hatred.

There is nothing new about antisemitism emanating from neo-Nazis, the anti-Israel Left or Islamists. What is new is the increasing ideological alignment between them and, at least in the case of Islamists and those on the hard Left, growing co-operation. The stock-in-trade of nativist, racist, nationalist far-Right politics is the conception of "the Jew" as the ultimate

and detested "other." This is different from, but compatible with, the Islamist conception of Jews (and of Christians as well) as infidels having inferior rights and status. Although the hard political Left traditionally had no doctrinal reason to reject Jewish identity or existence, it now distorts Zionism, the defining marker of modern Jewish identity, as colonialism, apartheid and genocide, and therefore as an unforgivable sin. The hard political Left, including the far fringes of the Jewish left, not only opposes the existence of a Jewish state in the historic homeland of the Jewish people, but also rejects the dual nature of Jewish identity, as both a people and a religion, and arrogates to itself the prerogative of redefining Jewish identity, and its corollary antisemitism, in a vain attempt to make these phenomena fit within its ideology. Thus has the hard Left betrayed its secular and Enlightenment origins to become the handmaid of medieval Islamism.

The anti-Israel's movement's insidious desire and activity, mainly through articles and lobbying, to undermine any initiative that will counter anti-Jewish hatred is a case in point. When Jewish organisations raise the issue of anti-Jewish racism, or produce reports or

Chart 3: Annual number of Anti-Jewish Incidents in Australia 2013-2025



hold events, their concerns are belittled and mocked, and even twisted to claim that it is all fabricated, that antisemitism doesn't exist (except perhaps on the extreme right), and that it is all part of the 'Zionist' arsenal to defend Israel. The trail of burnt and damaged synagogues, schools and other Jewish institutions and the damaged lives that have followed in their wake stand as a mute indictment of those who deny or seek to minimise the magnitude of the cancer of antisemitism in our midst.

ECAJ Report on Antisemitism in Australia

Each year, since 1990, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the peak elected national representative body of the Australian Jewish community, has published the Report on Antisemitism in Australia. In these reports, the ECAJ records antisemitism in two broad categories: **incidents** and **discourse**. The reports cover the 12-month period ending 30 September each year. This report - *ECAJ Report on Anti-Jewish Incidents in Australia 2025* – deals only with **incidents**.

Criteria for Inclusion in the Incidents Tally

Incidents are classified as antisemitic if they meet the definition of racist violence and the categories developed by the 1991 National Inquiry into racially motivated violence conducted by the then Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC):

Irene Moss and Ron Castan QC, *Racist Violence: Report of the National Inquiry into Racist Violence in Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991)

Unreported incidents

It is evident from previous studies that many anti-Jewish incidents go unreported, for a variety of reasons. The incidents counted in this Report are therefore only a proportion of the total number of incidents that have occurred during the year.

Categories of Incidents and Acts Covered

The ECAJ recognises six categories of anti-Jewish incidents. Of note, ECAJ does not include social media content as **incidents**. Rather this is categorised as antisemitic discourse, unless the comments are direct death threats or other threats of violence which need to be reported to police.

Assault: covers all acts under Australian law that constitute assault, and includes throwing items at people, spitting at/on people, causing injury from physical assault right through to grievous bodily harm, and murder.

Vandalism: covers malicious damage to property and destruction of property, including to motor vehicles, buildings, infrastructure, and other property.

Abuse: covers predominantly verbal abuse, harassment, intimidation, and bodily gestures such as the

Nazi salute, raising the middle finger, shooting gestures, directly targeting Jews or Jewish communal institutions. These incidents tend to occur in public places, such as on the street, outside Jewish community venues (eg synagogues, Jewish schools), at work or in educational settings.

Messages: covers messages conveying hatred, menace or violence directly and privately sent to specific targets that are identified as Jewish eg emails, material placed in selected letterboxes or posted material, telephone calls and texts to synagogues and other Jewish community venues, Jewish communal organisations, and Jewish individuals.

Graffiti: covers marking by drawing with pen, texta, paint etc, or etchings/engraving, of hate words and/or symbols on property, whether public or private. Some graffiti involves serious damage to property and may be categorised as vandalism eg when painted on a vehicle.

Posters: covers all literature/propaganda type material publicly displayed conveying hatred, menace or violence towards Jews, including banners, flags, flyers, leaflets, placards, posters, and stickers, plus images or text on clothing eg on t-shirts, bandannas, hats, and also public expressions, eg chants, speeches. This category may include stickers and posters on the street, banners and placards in street protests, and mass letter-boxing of leaflets in residential suburbs.

Sample of anti-Jewish incidents

The following is a short list of some of the anti-Jewish incidents, followed by some images of incidents, in Australia between 1 October 2024 and 30 September 2025.

Physical assault

- Verbal abuse of 16 religious Jewish boys, aged 17 and 18, by several people including a woman in a burqa who threw her ice-cream at them and called them “Baby Killers!”, and a group of about 20 youths who screamed at them “Hitler should have gassed you all” whilst doing the Nazi salute, while walking to the beach, St Kilda Melbourne (3 Oct. 2024 – Rosh Hashanah).
- Flaming projectile was thrown from a moving car toward rabbi pushing a baby in a pram and young boy riding his scooter, St Kilda East, Melbourne (27 Nov. 2024).
- Jewish doctor from Melbourne, with identifiably Jewish surname, checking into hotel, was harassed by female staff member who then grabbed his arm, scratching him and muttered, “You’re a fucking Jew”, Sydney (1 Feb. 2025).
- Man pushed a Jewish male off his bike by shoving his shoulder, while yelling “Fucking Jews”, “Free Palestine” and “You kikes” at the group of Jews near a synagogue, Melbourne (20 March 2025).
- Anti-Israel protester threw an item at a Jewish man as he attempted to enter the venue holding a Jewish religious event, while other protesters sought to intimidate him by coming within 15 cm of his face, shouting that he was a “baby killer” and he should be ashamed of himself and that all Zionists are terrorists, Wickham Hotel, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane (31 May 2025).
- Two teenage males made multiple threats at knifepoint to a 66-year-old Jewish man about his being Jewish, then physically assaulted him, near exit door on a train, CBD Sydney (22 Sep. 2025).

Vandalism

- Arson of Lewis’ Continental Kitchen, a Jewish-owned eatery, destroying the business, Bondi, Sydney (20 Oct. 2024).
- Vandalism with glass window smashed at an Israeli-Jewish owned cafe, Adelaide Street, Fremantle, WA (4 Nov. 2024).



Dalkeith, Perth, 2 Feb. 2025

- Arson, vandalism and graffiti – one car set alight, causing significant arson damage to a second vehicle parked nearby; graffiti of “Fuk Israel” and “PKK coming” on 10 vehicles and 3 buildings, including a block of units, Woollahra Fire Station & Chiswick restaurant, Woollahra, Sydney (21 Nov. 2024).
- Firebombing of Adass synagogue, completely destroying it, Ripponlea, Melbourne (6 Dec. 2024).
- Arson of vehicle, Toyota Corolla, graffiti of “Death 2 Israiel” on homes, “Kill Israiel” on a wall, Magney St, Woollahra, Sydney (11 Dec. 2024).
- Vandalism of car with graffiti of “FUCK THE JEWS” in black paint on driver’s side of white car, Henry St, Queens Park, Sydney (6 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of “Hitler on top Allah hu [Akbar]”, “Free Palestine”, “Fuck Israel Jew dogs”, “Jew Dogs” and a dozen Nazi swastikas, all in red and black paint, on brick walls of synagogue, Allawah, Sydney (10 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of 10 Nazi swastikas and the letter ‘Z’ on brick fence of synagogue, all in red paint, and attempt to set synagogue on fire, Newtown, Sydney (11 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti and firebombing of two vehicles, silver Mercedes graffitied with “FUCK JEWS”, Honda graffitied with “FUCK ISRAEL”, both set alight, and house doused with red paint, at former home of prominent Jewish leader, Dover Heights, Sydney (17 Jan. 2025).
- Vandalism via arson, with childcare centre set alight, and graffiti of “FUCK THE JEWS” on a wall at the centre, Maroubra, Sydney (21 Jan. 2025).
- Vandalism via graffiti of “Fuk JEWS” spray-painted on two black cars, See Lane, Kingsford, Sydney (2 Feb. 2025).
- Vandalism via smashed window of kosher café, Jesse’s Café, Rose Bay, Sydney (1 March 2025).
- Nazi swastika etched into the glass door at the front of a Jewish-owned shop, Bondi Junction, Sydney (24 June 2025).
- Arson when flammable liquid doused on synagogue door and set alight while 20 people, including children, were inside for a Shabbat meal, Friday evening, Melbourne (4 July 2025).
- Nazi swastika in pink spray painted onto white car, Freshwater, Sydney (21 July 2025).
- Pig leg thrown inside an identifiably Kosher and Jewish business, Waverley, Sydney (21 Aug. 2025).
- Male used a bottle to smash the window of synagogue, smashing the glass, Melbourne (10 Sep. 2025).
- Nazi swastikas carved into 3 gum trees in Veale Park, Adelaide Parklands, Adelaide (30 Sep. 2025).

Abuse, Harassment, Intimidation

- Occupants of vehicle driving past shouted “Heil Hitler” to people exiting synagogue, Perth (4 Oct. 2024).
- Targeting of Professor Steven Praver, Jewish academic and physics professor, and who wears a kippah, by about 20 anti-Israel protesters, most of whom were masked, some wearing keffiyahs, who broke into and occupied his office, started to damage his personal items and refused to leave for hours,

meanwhile Chanted “Stephen Praver, you can’t hide. You’re guilty of genocide,” did graffiti, put up posters and stickers in his office and refused to leave for hours until the police finally managed to convince them to leave (Praver leads a joint PhD program between the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Melbourne on how birds navigate), University of Melbourne (9 Oct. 2024).

- Person called a 13-year-old Jewish boy a “Jewish cunt”, Melbourne (10 Oct. 2024).
- An individual walking past the Synagogue, holding a paper bag, looked towards security personnel and said “There is a bomb in here” and left the paper bag outside of a residence adjacent to the Synagogue, Sydney (12 Oct. 2024).
- Male shouted “Fuck the Jews”, “Jew dogs” and “They kill people” towards people at the front of the Synagogue, Sydney (19 Oct. 2024).
- A Jewish resident has had regular disputes with their neighbour who has multiple Nazi tattoos, including a portrait of Hitler, Nazi flags and has said “you belong in the gas chamber” Perth (20 Oct. 2024).
- Occupant of vehicle yelled “Fuck Jews” and “Free Palestine” to people at synagogue, Melbourne (21 Oct. 2024).
- Verbal abuse of “I wish Hitler finished you all off” to a Jewish woman during a break after debate on a motion noting an Australian Hezbollah fighter killed by Israel in Lebanon, Bayside Council, Sydney (23 Oct. 2024).
- Greens supporter abused Jewish woman accusing her of “killing innocent babies”, polling booth, Surfers Paradise, Gold Coast, Queensland (26 Oct. 2024).
- Male came into Jewish owned shop told owner to shut it up, and called him a “Arrogant fucking Jew”, Surry Hills, Sydney (1 Nov. 2024).
- The occupants of a passing vehicle yelled “Heil Hitler” and performed a Nazi salute towards Jewish School, Sydney (2 Nov. 2024).
- Male walking into the front entrance of a Jewish owned business and shouted “Zio” several times towards the identifiably Jewish owner of the business, Caulfield, Melbourne (3 Nov 2024).

- Multiple eggs were smashed in front of a synagogue, Melbourne (6 March 2025).
- A male minor said “fucking Jew” to an identifiably Jewish minor wearing a kippah as he was exiting the shopping centre, Malvern, Melbourne (16 March 2025).
- Occupant of vehicle driving past yelled “free Palestine”, “fuck Jews” and “I’m going to kill you”, outside synagogue, Melbourne (17 March 2025).
- Verbal abuse by occupants of a passing vehicle who also did a Nazi salute to a group of identifiably Jewish people, in public area, Morley, Perth (21 March 2025).
- Death threat by protestor, Ihab Al Alazari, who yelled “In a free world, you have no hope. You have no hope. Every child in Palestine born (was) born to come and kill you. I’ll kill you, I’ll kill you” towards a counter-protest supporting Israel, at anti-Israel protest, Melbourne (23 March 2025).
- Male yelled that “the Pope died” and blamed it on “Jews” to a group of 10–12-year-old Jewish children, yelling “fuck the Jews, it’s all your fucking fault you fucking Jew cunt” Balaclava, Melbourne (22 April 2025).
- Male yelled “Jewish rats” and “fucking Jewish rats” to Jews at a checkout, Richmond, Melbourne (22 April 2025).
- Passenger of a vehicle shouted “Yahudi dogs” twice at identifiably Jewish people on street, St Kilda East, Melbourne (26 April 2025).
- Jewish voter verbally abused, called a “child murderer and genocidal terrorist” by man handing out how to vote leaflets for Labor, Port Kennedy, Perth (29 April 2025).
- During a junior football match at Princes Park, an opposing player against a Jewish AFL club commented “where did you hide your coins”, “dirty Jew” and “Jew cunt”, Carlton, Melbourne (18 May 2025).
- Passer-by shouted and made rude gesture, then shouted “BOOOM!” at congregant about to enter synagogue, Adelaide (20 June 2025).
- Driver of a vehicle yelled “Fuck you! You dirty Jews!” on Balaclava Road, St Kilda East, Melbourne (19 July 2025).
- High school students, aged 16-17, from Gladstone Park Secondary College, shouted “Free Palestine”, chanted “free, free, Palestine”, slurs of “dirty Jews”, ‘Free Hezbollah’, at Jewish primary school students, aged 10-11, from a Jewish school, all on school excursions, Melbourne Museum, Melbourne (24 July 2025).
- Driver of vehicle shouted Filthy Jew! while driving past synagogue, Perth (25 July 2025).
- Male yelled “Baby killer!” at an identifiably Jewish school teacher while walking to the Jewish school, Elsternwick, Melbourne (11 Aug. 2025).
- Driver of a passing vehicle shouted “Fucking Jew” at an identifiably Jewish person, as the person walked towards the synagogue gate, Perth (16 Aug. 2025).
- Male threatened an identifiably Jewish person with “I’m going to kill you and all the Jews”, St Kilda, Melbourne (20 Aug. 2025).
- Two male occupants yelled “Fuck the Jews” and “baby killers of Palestine” at identifiably Jewish school students, St Kilda East, Melbourne (12 Sep. 2025).
- Four male students approached an identifiably Jewish student inside a petrol station. Two of the males asked “which school” the Jewish student attended; after replying he was from the Jewish school, the two males replied “that’s a Jewish school, isn’t it” and threatened “we’re going to fucking bash you”, Malvern, Melbourne (18 Sep. 2025).

Messages

- Email from “Earl Butts” to Julie Nathan of ECAJ subject line of “WORLD JEWERY WILL END” and Message Body: “NEW WORLD COMING...” Sydney (3 Oct. 2024).
- Email from “zionistjewscunts” to ECAJ of “The best jews are dead jews. peter dutton wants to bend over naked and wants all you jews to fuck him in his rectum”, Sydney (7 Oct. 2024).
- Email from “Alexander Kurov” to ECAJ of “Leave Australia you filthy criminals before we force you out.. genocidal lying parasites”, Sydney (11 Oct. 2024).

- Email from “Clementine Ford” of “Fuck you trying to pink wash your genocide. The state of Israel and all its allies are evil and will be remembered as such. Fuck the Jews!” to a Jewish organisation, Melbourne (17 Oct. 2024).
- Email via website exit survey response of “The best jews are dead jews. October 7 2023 wasn’t a terrorist attack by Hamas. It was retaliation for the Atrocities committed by those jew cunts in 1948 when they jew cunts went to Palestine and named it israel. If there was a military conflict between the baby killing coward idf cunts with another nation equally trained and armed all those jew cunts would be dead. No jews is the best news for the world” to ECAJ, Sydney (5 Dec. 2024).
- Email from “gas the jews” via ECAJ website of “If you behave yourself you don’t have to worry.” Sydney (11 Dec. 2024).
- Man threatened violence against a Jewish nursing home, posting on X “Let’s go to the (aged care) home in [suburb] and bash some Holocaust survivors!” Sydney (19 Dec. 2024).
- Email to Jewish MP of “Jews Are .4% Of The Australian Population. They Get 1 Billion A Year From The Australian Taxpayer To Protect Them. The Best Jew Is A Dead Jew. Australians Have The Right To Hate Those Jew Pigs Who Support The Genocide In Gaza”, Caulfield, Melbourne (27 Dec. 2024).
- Phone call to Jewish owned business, shouting “You fucking Jews! Why do you hate Palestinians?”, Melbourne (6 Jan. 2025).
- Emails from “Ronny Jemerigar” to OHPI of “Hundreds of years apart, same demonic creatures. Humanity is awakening. Jews are not victims. They are perpetrators of evil.” Melbourne (14 Jan. 2025).
- Email via Instagram messenger from “Wil (Walid) Karroum” to a rabbi composed of “I hope your entire family is slaughtered like you wish for Palestine. Long live Hitler. He wasn’t wrong about you scum!” Sydney (17 Jan. 2025).
- Direct message from “MarcPecco” to Alex Ryvchin, co-CEO ECAJ, of “Kill yourself you ugly disgenic jew the world is waking up...” via Twitter/X, Sydney (18 Jan. 2025).



Kensington, Sydney, 2 Feb. 2025

- Direct message from “Lyn Grant” to Alex Ryvchin on Facebook of “Typical Jew Thieves liars murderers” Sydney (6 Feb. 2025).
- Postal mail sent to Jewish organisation which said “all JEWS GO TO HELL!” St Kilda, Melbourne (10 Feb. 2025).
- Email titled “gaza” reading “you murdering nazi bastards deserve to hang the same as the criminals at nuremburg you are a disgrace to humanity and have no place in any civilised country”, to Jewish organisation, Melbourne (18 March 2025).
- Voicemail from a male who stated “do you understand 80 years ago Nazis bloody hunted and kill you as a people but now you’re the hunters and killers. You must be proud of that. Congratulations”, to Jewish organisation, Melbourne (19 April 2025).
- Email from “Christopher Mckenzie” with Subject of “we’re going to get you jews” composed of “We have an army of 75000 white men ready to destroy you, its a promise not a threat”, to OHPI, Melbourne (17 May 2025).
- Direct message from “Lic Tello” of “All Jews at Bondi should be blown up [3 emojis] I’ll drop one at Dover Heights soon” Sydney (22 May 2025).
- Voicemail from a male who said: “Hi my name’s Mr Shlomo Shekelstein, I was just wondering if I could acquire some goyim blood. Preferably of a younger inkling or a fatling. Anyways, get back to me when you can thank you.” to synagogue, Melbourne (16 June 2025).
- Email from “Luke McKee” to Julie Nathan at ECAJ, subject “Why the #ecajewry false flag antisemitism attacks started. Motive” and email composed of “The goyim know what you did last summer” and forwarded emails to others composed of “This is the secret behind the caravan hoax. ...” Sydney (8 July 2025).
- Phone caller stated “Hitler didn’t kill enough fucking Jews”, to synagogue, Melbourne (17 July 2025).
- Four emails from a user who signed up to their bulletin: “Stop playing the victim. Stupid jew.”, “If you don’t like it here, fuck off somewhere else. Lying jew”, “Australia hates you lying fucks” and “Deport and sanction the problem, the stupid jew. Stop trying to manipulate the government.” to ECAJ, Sydney (24 July 2025).
- Phone call from a male “You Jews are responsible for all the bad things in the world” and “Adolf Hitler should be reborn again and kill all the Jews”; the same male rang again a few minutes later and stated that “all Jews should be killed” and that “Jews are oppressing Palestinians”, to Jewish organisation, Melbourne (24 July 2025).
- Email via website submission to ECAJ of “Get the fuck out of Australia you baby raping jew cunts. The best jews are dead jews. The jews don’t like people to know how they treated the German people in Germany before the Chancellor Adolf Hitler took power. That land belongs to the Palestinians not jews. Nakba” Sydney (26 Aug. 2025).



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- Text message read “So would you like to purchase the gas chambers you were interested in?” to Jewish community leader, Melbourne (29 Aug. 2025).
- Email from “Ash Farahani” to ECAJ of “Filthy worthless Zionists” and “You should all be burnt alive for supporting genocide!” Sydney (16 Sep. 2025).
- Graffiti on two \$50 notes of Nazi swastika and “FUCK JEWS” withdrawn from ATM at a service station, near synagogue, Bondi, Sydney (12 Dec. 2024).
- Graffiti of “ZIONISTS ARE NAZIS” and “Free Gaza” on Lime bike, Rose Bay, Sydney (16 Dec. 2024).
- Etching of “KILL the DIRTY JEWS” and a rune-like symbol into newly poured concrete on footpath, near Caulfield Park, Melbourne (19 Dec. 2024).
- Graffiti of “GAS THE JEWS” twice and a Nazi swastika on a mural on a brick wall at a road, Railway Parade, Sydenham, Sydney (5 & 12 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of “Oct 7 was cool” on pole, Maroubra, Sydney (7 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of “Fuck all Jews” on an advertisement, Byron Bay, NSW (9 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of “Fuck Jews Dogz” on front yard wall of house, Queens Park, Sydney (11 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of “Yahud baby killers” on a wall, Moonee Ponds, Melbourne (17 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of “FUCK ALL JEWS”, “FUCK ISRAEL FAGGOTS”, “FUCK ISRAEL”, “FUCK ISRAEL”, “FUCK ISRAEL”, “STOP GENOCIDE”, “FUCK YOUR ISRAEL” in tunnel in children’s playground, Byron Bay, regional NSW (19 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of “JEWS ARE REAL TERRORISTS”, “JEW DOGS”, “FUCK JEWS”, “FUCK THE JEWS”, “YOU KILLERS MURDERERS DOG” on wall at Jewish school, Sydney (30 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of “YOU FUCKING JEWS DOGS KILLERS” on the concrete fence of a house next door to Jewish school, Sydney (30 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of “FUCK U JEWS DOG” and a Nazi swastika in the carpark, graffiti on wall, graffiti of “DOG” on glass entrance doors, “JEWS” and Nazi swastika along walkway, in several areas at Westfield Shopping Centre, Eastgardens, Sydney (30 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of large blue Jewish Stars of David, six on concrete wall of large residence of prominent Jewish family, Middle Park, Melbourne (31 Jan. 2025).
- Graffiti of “Jews = COVID” and a Nazi swastika on a blue brick wall in laneway behind Green Meadows Park, East St Kilda, Melbourne (1 Feb. 2025).
- Graffiti of “FUCK JEWS” and a Nazi swastika on concrete fence of residence, Viking Rd, Dalkeith, Perth (2 Feb. 2025).
- Graffiti of “Death 2 Israel. Death 2 USA. Death 2 Steven Prawyer (sic)” on map on sign, entrance to University of Melbourne, Melbourne (11 Feb. 2025).
- Graffiti of “Nazi Israel”. Evil Eavl Israel” in red on a stage wall at Barclay Square, Red Cliffs, Mildura, regional Victoria (15 Feb. 2025).
- Graffiti of “GAS THE JEWS” and a Nazi swastika on aluminium fence at Gottlieb’s, a building supplies store in Malvern East, Melbourne (16 Feb. 2025).
- Graffiti of “Fuck the Jews” twice and “Burn all Jews” Plenty Road, Preston, Melbourne (7 March 2025).
- Graffiti of “Israel is Evil!” on wall of Jewish kosher bakery, ‘Baker in the Rye’, Carlisle Street, Balaclava, Melbourne (8 March 2025).
- Graffiti of Nazi swastika “vs” Star of David, on concrete path, corner of Casuarina Ave and Aldinga Beach Road, Aldinga Beach, outer Adelaide (11 March 2025).
- Graffiti of “Israel the new Nazis” on utility box, St Kilda East, Melbourne (12 March 2025).
- Graffiti of “FUCK JEW” on both sides of real estate sign out front of property, Heathridge, Perth (8 April 2025).
- Graffiti of “Intifada”, Star of David with “Fuck Israel”, “From the River to the sea” and other words, all in red, on walls of culvert at bridge, Hall St, Lyneham, Canberra (11 April 2025).
- Graffiti of face of Andrew Wallace MP, on his election corflute, of hat worn by ultra-orthodox Jews and with Jewish sidecurls and beard, Sunshine Coast, Queensland (20 April 2025).
- Graffiti via stencil of “HITLER HITLER HITLER” and image of Hitler plus several numbers, East Caulfield, Melbourne (30 April 2025).
- Graffiti of “KILL ALL JEWS” and Nazi swastika and caricature image of a Jew, on bridge retaining wall, Robina, Gold Coast, Queensland (27 May 2025).

Graffiti

- Graffiti of “KILL A JEW” written in spray paint on wall of pedestrian tunnel under Homebush Bay Drive near Jean Wailes Avenue, Rhodes, Sydney (2 Oct. 2024).
- Graffiti of large red inverted triangles on the front windows at Avner’s, a Jewish-owned bakery, and handwritten note of “Be careful” slipped under door, Surry Hills, Sydney (13 Oct. 2024).
- Graffiti of multiple Nazi swastikas on trees, driveways, gutters, by a 15-year-old boy who yelled “Heil Hitler”, other graffiti of GAS THE JEWS”, “Heil Hitler”, “NAZIFY AUSTRALIA”, “1488”, “666” and other graffiti done with mulberries which stain, Gymea, Sydney (22 Oct. 2024).
- Graffiti of “Kill all Jews” and “Jew’s pice (sic) of shit”, Byron Bay, NSW (30 Oct. 2024).
- Graffiti of “Zionism = Nazi” burned into the grass, Mill Park, Melbourne (30 Oct. 2024).
- Graffiti of “A good Israeli is a dead one” and “Adolf Hitler” with a swastika underneath, Rozelle, Sydney (6 Nov. 2024).
- Graffiti of “ADOLPH was Right!” on large electrical box, Geelong, regional Victoria (9 Nov. 2024).
- Graffiti of “Never Forget Jews Came For Our Children With Satanic Poison Vax! Death Penalty For Covid Fraud!” on a bathroom door, Altona, Melbourne (9 Nov. 2024).
- Nazi swastika drawn in dirt on signage of Jewish-owned business, Maroubra, Sydney (16 Nov. 2024).
- Graffiti of “Free Gaza” and “Jews Kill Babies” on the front gate, door, brick wall and car of rabbi’s wife, at synagogue, Melbourne (27 Nov. 2024).
- Graffiti of “You! Yes – You. Westfield = Jews. All banks owned by Jews. Hitler was Right!” on wall of a construction site, Arncliffe, Sydney (11 Dec. 2024).

- Graffiti of "GAS THE JEWS" on an anti-Israel poster at bus stop, Darlinghurst Road, Potts Point, Sydney (20 June 2025).
 - Graffiti of "Free Palestine" twice and "Iran is da Bomb" (inside a mushroom cloud) on walls of synagogue, Melbourne (22 June 2025).
 - Graffiti of "Kill the Jews" on skate park, Beechworth, regional Victoria (23 June 2025).
 - Graffiti of "Baby Killers" on synagogue, Melbourne (26 June 2025).
 - Graffiti of "Kill Jews" and a Nazi swastika spray painted in blue onto a utilities box, Aspendale, Melbourne (26 June 2025).
 - Graffiti stencil in blue of Nazi swastika inside Jewish Star of David and words "Gaza Kids Genocide" on timber boarding, Brunswick, Melbourne (18 July 2025).
 - Graffiti of "Curse the Jew" on a needle disposal bin and also on a sticker in a toilet block, Somerset, regional Tasmania (28 July 2025).
 - Graffiti of Nazi swastika in circle and "NAZI for Life. fuck the Jews and Blacks" in red on front of a toilet door of Caulfield-Chambers Oval, Coolool, regional Queensland (28 July 2025).
 - Graffiti of "Israel = Nazis", "FUCK ISRAEL!", "if you don't support Palestine you are disgusting", "Israel are terrorists", "zionists are scum", and "Palestine dead kids = over 100,000", Abbotsford, Melbourne (28 July 2025).
 - Graffiti of "Murder your local Zionist", "Globalise the Intifada", "Death to the IDF", "It is not anti-semitic to protest genocide" and "Zionists are Nazis", at railway pedestrian tunnel at Ashfield Station, Ashfield, Sydney (29 July 2025).
 - Graffiti of "War Crimes" with a Star of David as the 'a' in 'war' (the 4th attack in 5 weeks) on Synagogue, Melbourne (31 July 2025).
 - Graffiti of "Burn the Jews" by student in the boys' bathroom, state high school, Sydney (Aug. 2025).
 - Graffiti of "Death to Israel. Fuck !!! the IDF" and "Heil Hitler" inside a heart shape, on a poster advertising an event at the Jewish Museum, St Kilda, Melbourne (20 Sep. 2025).
 - Graffiti of "Jew scum", "fuck Israel", Nazi swastikas, and drawings of a Jewish caricature on pillars under bridge, Gisborne, regional Victoria (30 Sep. 2025).
- Posters, placards, stickers etc**
- Placard of "STOP NAZI ISRAEL" with Nazi swastika instead of Jewish Star of David on Israeli flag, at anti-Israel protest, Hyde Park, Sydney (6 Oct. 2024).
 - Placard of Israeli flag with an inverted red triangle over the Star of David, and "Fuck Israel" on it, at anti-Israel protest, Hyde Park, Sydney (6 Oct. 2024).
 - Placard of "Hitler's / Netanyahu's Final Solution in your face..." at anti-Israel protest Sydney (6 Oct. 2024).
 - Chants of "There is only one solution, intifada revolution", at anti-Israel protest Melbourne (6 Oct. 2024).
 - Placard of "THE IRONY OF BECOMING WHAT YOU ONCE HATED" with a Nazi swastika inside Jewish Star of David, at anti-Israel protest, Melbourne (6 Oct. 2024).
 - Shirt with "From the river to sea Palestine will be free" worn by Nasser Mashni, APAN president at anti-Israel protest, Melbourne (6 Oct. 2024).
 - Sheikh Wesam Cherkawi described the 7th of October (date in 2023 of the Hamas-led massacre in Israel) as an "act of resistance", adding "this is the beginning of the end of Zionism", at Hizb ut-Tahrir organised rally outside Lakemba Mosque, Lakemba, Sydney (7 Oct. 2024).
 - Sticker of "The Earth without Israel" CBD, Sydney (7 Oct. 2024).
 - Girl, aged 7-10yo, shouted "Say it loud, say it clear, we don't want no Zionists here" into microphone at anti-Israel protest, Hyde Park, Sydney (20 Oct. 2024).
 - Leaflets by neo-Nazis in residential letterboxes, Corowa, regional NSW (25 Oct. 2024).
 - Sticker of "Israel is a Genociding Holocaust Pedophilic Rapist Sex Trafficking Organ & Land Stealing Child Murdering Terrorist Apartheid Ethno-State that outshames the mother fucking NAZIS & you western cucks bend the knee for it all", on back of seat pocket, Virgin flight, Gold Coast, Queensland (28 Oct. 2024).
 - Man wearing shirt with "FUCK ISRAEL FUCK ZIONISM" and large blue Star of David, Bondi Beach, Sydney (3 Nov. 2024).
 - Stickers of "Stop the Palestinian Holocaust" and "The same people that killed JESUS is exterminating innocent families in GAZA" on a ute VWZ.563 on tray sides and back, Adelaide (8 Nov. 2024).
 - Sticker yellow BDS on kosher bottle of wine, at Dan Murphys, Brighton, Melbourne (10 Nov. 2024).
 - Placard of "Israel – Enemy of Humanity [arrow] From Victim of Holocaust [arrow] to Perpetrator..." at anti-Israel protest, Sydney (10 Nov. 2024).
 - Placard of "Stop the Holocaust in Gaza" at anti-Israel protest, Sydney (10 Nov. 2024).
 - Neon sign of "Death to Jews" in red on front window of home (the male also had Nazi flag inside his home) Morningside, Brisbane (19 Nov - 11 Dec. 2024).
 - Chants of "Fuck off Zionists," "Fuck off Zionist scum," and "Fuck you, Zionist dogs." At anti-Israel protest, Deakin University, Melbourne (Nov. 2024).
 - Chants of "Khaybar, Khaybar Ya Yahud, Jaish Mohammed Sauf Ya'ud" ("Khaybar, Khaybar, oh Jews, the army of Mohammed will return." at rally celebrating downfall of Syrian dictator Bashie Al Assad, Chullora, Sydney (8 Dec. 2024).
 - Leaflet printed of "OCT. 7 do it again" in CBD Melbourne (10 Dec. 2024).
 - Banner of "JEWS HATE FREEDOM" at NSN rally; NSN members chanted "The Jews must go!", leader "Freedom for the white man!", members chanted "The Jews must go!", leader "Heil Victory!", chant "Heil Victory! Heil Victory!", leader "Freedom for the white man!", chant "The Jews must go!" repeated, as they were leaving, still doing chant of leader "Freedom for the white man!" members chant "The Jews must go!" NSN rally, steps of Victorian state parliament, Melbourne (20 Dec. 2024).
 - Chants of "All Zionists are Terrorists" at anti-Israel protest, CBD Melbourne (29 Dec. 2024).
 - Stickers yellow BDS placed on Obela dips, kosher food, at Coles, Yokine, Perth (10 Jan. 2025).

- Nazi leaflets by National Socialist Movement (NSM) of “Every Single Aspect of Mass Immigration is Jewish” letterboxed in Annerley and Moorooka, in Brisbane (26 Jan. 2025).
- Placards reading “Oct. 7th MADE IN ISRAEL NYC LON” on six placards and “EVIL” written on the back of the “ISRAEL” placard, tied to fence, at bus stop, Thirroul, Wollongong, regional NSW (29 Jan. 2025).
- Nazi posters of “ANZACS died for a White Australia. Jews, Chinks, Arabs & Blacks Fuck off” by National Socialist Network (NSN), on traffic poles, Milton, Brisbane (7 Feb. 2025).
- Poster of “Australia for the White Man” and two fasces by neo-Nazi group National Socialist Network at bus stop, Casuarina, Darwin (21 Feb. 2025).
- Jenny Leong, Greens state MP, draped in keffiyeh addressing protest outside NSW Parliament on footpath stated “... Long Live Palestine. Free free Palestine, from the river to the sea.” Sydney CBD (18 March 2025).
- T-shirt with printed words of “Bash Zionists”, “May God crush them”, “Support Armed resistance” and other slogans, at anti-Israel protest, Melbourne (23 March 2025).
- Placard of “1939-1945 Nazis attempt final solution of Jewish question; 2023 --> Israel attempting final solution of Palestinian question” at anti-Israel rally, Parkville, Melbourne (26 March 2025).
- Nazi leaflets authorised by Joel Davis of National Socialist Network (NSN) of “Our plan to give Jews everything they want” “Giving the Jews everything they want” with 4 points of “including putting “Israel First”, “Abolish Free Speech”, “Jail Anti-Semites” and “Give Jews Free Money” and fake Liberal Party logo letterboxed, across Caulfield, a suburb with large Jewish population, Melbourne (30 April 2025).
- Members of Nazi National Socialist Network (NSN) with 2 dressed up as ultra-orthodox Jews, holding large placard of “Giving the Jews everything they want” with fake Liberal logo harassing voters with myths about Jews and mocking the Liberals outside pre-polling at polling booth, Kew, Melbourne (30 April 2025).



Anti-Semitic graffiti on the side of a bridge near Robina Town Centre

- Sticker of “Boycott Divest Sanction. Free Palestine. Smash Colonial Apartheid Brick by brick, Wall by wall” on a traffic light pole, Northbridge, CBD Perth (15 May 2025).
- Placard equating Nazi swastika with Jewish Star of David, anti-Israel protest, Melbourne (18 May 2025).
- A woman member of the audience stood up and informed the 400 people present that they and the speakers were missing “the elephant in the room” namely the “tentacles” of Australia’s Jewish lobby, which she asserted controls our society, Sydney Writers Festival, Redfern, Sydney (23 May 2025).
- Sticker of caricature Jew, Shlomo version, with extra-large nose, and words of “Ahhhh..... The Air is Free!” on a wall, Torrensville, Adelaide (29 May 2025).
- Leaflets of “Every Single Aspect of Anti White Hate is Jewish” letterboxed in Sellicks Beach, outer Adelaide (11 June 2025).
- Stickers of “Israel’s ‘Final Solution” on poles, Braddon, Canberra (19 June 2025).
- Banner of “Zionism = Fascism” and placard of “Zionism is Racism. Zionism is Genocide” at protest targeting the NGV for receiving financial support from prominent Jewish philanthropists, John and Pauline Gandel, outside of the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), Melbourne (27 July 2025).
- Placard of “Never again meant never again! Ass holes. Zio’s are psycho’s” Sydney Harbour Bridge protest march, Sydney (3 Aug. 2025).
- Sign on vehicle of “Hate symbol” written above a Jewish Star of David, on vehicle, Morley, Perth (10 Aug. 2025).
- Sticker FPP titled “Permanent (sic) Victim” with a list of 9 items including “Brings up the Holocaust every 3 seconds ... Fakes anti-semitic hate crimes for sympathy...” on a street pole in Prahran, Melbourne (23 Aug. 2025).
- Banners of “There is No justice...” and “Zionist Israel = Nazi Germany...” at the tent of Elizabeth Watson-Brown, Greens MP for federal seat of Ryan in Brisbane, at anti-Israel protest in Queens Garden, CBD Brisbane (24 August 2025). When queried, Watson-Brown claimed they were unauthorised and were put up by others, and she later had them taken down.
- Placard of “Abolish Israel End Zionism” at anti-Israel rally, Brisbane (24 Aug. 2025).
- Placard of “History repeats Gaza Warsaw” at anti-Israel protest, Sydney (24 Aug. 2025).
- Protester, a university lecturer, said “A good Zionist is a dead one” in Hebrew at protest, Bondi Beach, Sydney (7 Sep. 2025).
- Stickers of “Dead Jew on a Stick” and “TERRORISTS” with the two letter ‘R’s replaced by Jewish Stars of David on rear car window of grey Holden Commodore wagon, Gwandalan, regional NSW (20 Sep. 2025).
- Placard of “Zionists your time is up Go to Hell” with burning Israeli flag in a burning coffin, anti-Israel protest, Sydney (21 Sep. 2025).



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ensuring we live safely and for
that I say thank you.

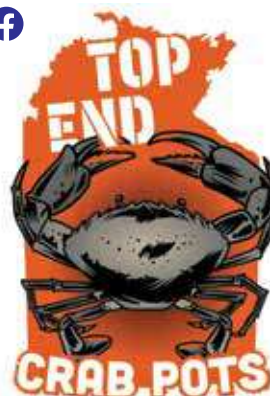
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Building Democratic Resilience: Protecting the Public Sphere From Violent Extremism

January 11, 2026

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the challenges violent extremism poses to the functioning of the public sphere—a critical aspect often overlooked in discussions surrounding violent extremism. It proposes a novel framework of democratic resilience to examine and improve the public sphere responses to violent extremism. Combining insights from the normative theory of deliberative democracy with the empirical study of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiatives in New South Wales (NSW), Australia, the paper lays out the concrete steps democracies can take to protect the public sphere from extremist threats and attacks. While the primary focus of analysis is NSW, the empirical insights have implications for other jurisdictions

and countries seeking to counter violent extremism without compromising democratic commitments and principles.

Introduction

Violent extremism is a serious challenge confronting contemporary societies. Globally, thousands of people are killed every year because of acts of violent extremism (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2022). While the loss of lives may be the most visible and measurable effect of violent extremism, it is not the only one. Other potential impacts include increased community tensions, psychological trauma, and repressive security and surveillance responses. Often overlooked however, is how violent extremism impacts the functioning of democracy in contemporary multicultural

societies. This happens mainly through the public sphere, a crucial component of any democracy that serves multiple essential functions.

The public sphere is the communicative space where social and political problems are identified and discussed, public opinion is formed, and collective identities are constructed, validated, or challenged. Extremists seek to undermine these democratic functions by sowing division and distrust. They seek to redraw the cultural, ethnic, and religious boundaries of the public sphere, and damage inclusive notions of collective identity (Della Porta et al., 2020). The success of violent extremists depends on their ability to disseminate divisive discourses within the public sphere, and polarise an ideally tolerant,

pluralistic society into an intolerant and exclusionist one. In this context, how democracies respond to extremist threats becomes crucial in determining the failure or success of violent extremism (Foley, 2018; Krause, 2018). Extremists are most likely to achieve their objectives in contexts where public spheres are fragile. Fragile public spheres are easily polarised, and do not have the discursive and institutional capacity to respond to shocks without losing their democratic character. Resilient public spheres, in contrast, can withstand the challenges posed by violent extremism, and maintain or even deepen their commitment to democratic norms in response.

But what exactly makes the public sphere more or less resilient in the face of violent extremism? What institutions, mechanisms, and practices are required for facilitating and maintaining democratic resilience? While resilience is a widely used phrase in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) discourse and policy (Grossman, 2021b), what resilience is and who is responsible for it remains contested (Holloway & Manwaring, 2023; Humbert & Joseph, 2019; Walklate et al., 2012). Resilience in CVE policy typically centers on the individual or communities as actors or sites of resilience in resisting extremist radicalisation. In this context, the aim of enhancing resilience is to make individuals or communities more resistant to extremist ideologies and narratives (Stephens & Sieckelink, 2020). How this resilience is to be built and maintained is often less clear, but policies tend to focus on strengthening social cohesion to better withstand the risk of polarisation and radicalisation (Grossman, 2023, 2021a; Stephens & Sieckelink, 2020).

In this paper, we introduce a novel perspective on defining and applying the concept of resilience within the context of CVE efforts. We advance the idea of *democratic* resilience by drawing on the theory of deliberative democracy and its practical implementation in the public sphere. Democratic resilience here refers to the ability of the public sphere to respond to extremist attacks and threats without losing its democratic capacity, understood in deliberative terms: reflective, competent, and inclusive. To illustrate the relevance of this idea in practice, we conducted an in-depth analysis of CVE initiatives in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW). This involved a qualitative analysis of

publicly available policy documentation, as well as 14 semi-structured expert interviews with stakeholders in government, academia, news media, and the community sector. Our analysis identifies seven key factors that scholars and policy makers should consider to establish and maintain democratic resilience against violent extremism.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we provide a brief theoretical background, outlining what we mean by violent extremism, the public sphere, and the relationship between them. Next, we outline our novel conceptualisation of *democratic* resilience, positioning it within the broader resilience literature, and examining its application in CVE and social cohesion policies in NSW. Based on these empirical insights, we then outline seven key factors that matter for the democratic resilience of the public sphere. The paper concludes with a discussion of the practical actions public sphere actors can take to promote democratic resilience, and future avenues for research.

The Public Sphere: An Overlooked Target of Violent Extremism

The acts of violent extremists, especially (but not exclusively) mass casualty events, aim not only to kill but also to destabilise democracy and its key institutions (Alexander, 2006). As we elaborate below, violent extremists seek to disrupt social networks, sow fear, and create and exacerbate polarisation through their violent acts. The public sphere is an often-overlooked target of these acts.

A healthy public sphere is central to the functioning of democracy, especially as understood in deliberative terms. Deliberative democracy is a normative theory of democratic legitimacy based on the idea that those affected by a collective decision have the right, capacity, and opportunity to participate in consequential deliberation in the making of those decisions (Dryzek, 2002). It is often described as a “talk-centric” rather than “vote-centric” approach to democracy (Chambers, 2003). However, listening and reflection matter just as much as expression (Ercan et al., 2019). Deliberation involves a process of mutual justification where participants offer reasons for their positions, listen to the views of others, and then reconsider their preferences based on information and

arguments they are exposed to during this process. Deliberation takes different forms, and occurs in various sites including deliberative forums, everyday conversations, and the public sphere (Ercan & Dryzek, 2015).

The public sphere is where citizens communicate and exchange opinions about issues of common concern as free and equal members of society, and so form public opinion. It is where social and political issues are identified, articulated, and furnished with possible solutions (Habermas, 1996). The health of the public sphere, Habermas (2008) argues, is so vital to democracy that we can measure the state of democracy “by taking the pulse of the life of its political public sphere.” Apart from potentially being home to deliberation, the public sphere is also a cultural and performative site where collective identities are constructed, validated, or challenged, through both verbal and non-verbal communication, symbols, and performances (Mendonça et al., 2022). A well-functioning public sphere facilitates the free flow of information and communication among citizens, mediates between state and society, and enables the formation of shared identities, alliances, solidarities, and connections across difference (Calhoun, 2002; Hendriks et al., 2020).

Violent extremist attacks can disrupt these democratic functions of the public sphere. Following Berger (2018), we understand extremism as “the belief that an in-group’s success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against an out-group,” including both violent and non (physically) violent acts (p. 44). It becomes violent extremism when violent action against an out-group becomes inseparable from in-group success or survival (Berger, 2018, p. 46). Such hostile acts work to damage the democratic public sphere by changing its terms of engagement, by “reordering society” and “rewriting the basis for belonging in that order” (Fuji, 2021, p. 19). Specifically, violent extremism damages the public sphere in three key ways.

First, it hinders the prospects for constructing an inclusive collective identity by sowing division and distrust. This can be targeted at those perceived as belonging to an out-group in an attempt to “push” or “pull” them out of the public sphere. The act of violence, and

the messages it communicates, is used to make those deemed Other feel unsafe and unwelcome, and so vacate the public sphere through reduced participation and visibility. In this sense, acts of far-right white supremacist terror like the 2019 Christchurch Massacre in Aotearoa New Zealand to smaller-scale acts of violence like the assault and harassment of members of minoritised groups, have a dual effect: first of causing violence against individual members of a target community, and second, sending a message to that community as a whole that it is unwelcome.

Second, violent extremism can distort the processes of deliberation and opinion formation in the public sphere. This is partly a product of the above effect, wherein any loss of identities, for example Muslims, from the public sphere reduces the range of positions included in deliberation. Violent extremism further distorts opinion formation by attempting to induce a securitised (over)reaction from government. Such a response, especially when couched in a polarised framing of “us” versus “them”, limits the prospects for nuanced discourse. The 2001 September 11 attacks in the United States exemplifies how responses to violent extremism can set the terms of the debate in the public sphere. In the aftermath, President George W. Bush (2001) declared that “either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” In this context, “even to pursue nuanced thought was deemed a performance of antipatriotism” (Berlant, 2005, p. 46). When the public sphere loses its capacity to host nuanced discussions, its democratic quality diminishes.

Third, violent extremism can further the spread of exclusionary and anti-democratic ideals. Violent acts can generate notoriety and interest in the perpetrator(s) and their motivations, and can also promote narratives that support the cause of violent extremists (Parker, 2019). For example, web traffic on the neo-Nazi website Stormfront doubled in the weeks following the 17 June, 2015 Charleston church shooting in the United States, where a white supremacist opened fire at a historic Black church (Fisher, 2015). Such views are antithetical to a democratic public sphere, based as they are on the violent marginalisation and elimination of those considered Other.



To summarise, when riven with fear and distrust, the public sphere loses its capacity to generate the inclusive deliberation on which democracy depends. It becomes a site where nuanced debate is undesirable or not possible, and where exclusionary ideals seek validation. In such a state, the public sphere is no longer able to adequately fulfil its democratic functions such as identifying social and political problems, and transmitting these problems to government and policy makers. It is therefore vital that efforts to address violent extremism are attentive to these dangers and their effect on the public sphere. Having said that, violent extremists cannot damage the public sphere alone. As already noted, how key actors in the public sphere—such as civil society, news media, and political leaders—respond to the challenges of violent extremism is key for determining their success or failure.

Our emphasis on the democratic vitality of the public sphere distinguishes our approach in key ways from some long-standing treatments of how to defend democracy against extremists. Almost all of these treatments address the question of how best to protect the state from being captured or overrun

by extremists. Of these strategies, *militant democracy* (Kirshner, 2014) would restrict the political rights of extremists through bans on organisation and expression. So, it is illegal in Germany to revive anything that resembles the Nazi Party, or to deny the Holocaust. *Defensive democracy* (Capoccia, 2005) would broaden the repertoire of engagement to include inducements to extremist parties to moderate their stance, and civic education. *Immunised democracy* (Pedahzur, 2018) rejects heavy-handed bans, focusing instead on long-term strengthening of the political culture of a society, which would include education, but also cultivation of moderating media. A *concentric circles* approach (Rummens & Abt, 2010) involves imposing restrictions or sanctions that become tougher as we move closer to centers of decision making: extremist individuals are free to say and do what they like (short of criminal acts), extremist organisations less so, parties still less (to the point of possibly being banned, or at least subject to principled non-cooperation by all democratic parties). What Malkopoulou and Norman (2018) call a *social* approach stresses promoting social cohesion through material equality

and social justice, to reduce the attraction of extremism to the disaffected.

For all their differences, these approaches conceptualise democracy in terms of a state at the core, and a public sphere as a periphery. In these terms, the state needs defending against threats originating in the public sphere. The public sphere is seen only as a potential source of trouble. In contrast, we put the public sphere at the center of democracy, not its periphery. Its fracturing (as sought by violent extremists) is itself a key intrinsic democratic loss that should not be seen only in terms of its consequences for the state. Conversely, we regard the critical vitality of the public sphere as the best front line defence against violent extremism.

To develop an empirically grounded understanding of democratic resilience in response to violent extremist threats to the democratic public sphere, we focus on CVE initiatives in NSW, which emphasise “community resilience.” We use this case as a springboard to identify factors that enable or hinder democratic resilience in the face of violent extremism, and so inform improved public sphere responses, offering pathways for recovery from its repercussions.

Research Design

Our research design combines normative insights from deliberative democracy with the empirical case of CVE efforts in the Australian state of the New South Wales (NSW). As the country’s most populous state, NSW is extremely diverse, with more than 275 different languages spoken and 144 religions practiced (NSW Government, 2020a). The state has experienced diverse forms of violent extremism, including major counter terrorism (CT) incidents such as the 2014 Lindt Café siege, during which a gunman held 18 people hostage in Sydney’s CBD. To date, the NSW Government has implemented a range of CVE, CT, and wider community engagement initiatives with the aim of improving societal resilience. The state’s proactive approach to addressing violent extremism, coupled with an emphasis on community-driven solutions, provides a rich case to explore the prospects for democratic resilience understood in deliberative terms.

Our empirical insights are based on 14 semi-structured expert interviews (Dexter, 2006) with stakeholders working on and around violent extremism and

CVE in the NSW Government, news media, community sector, and academia. Thus, insights were gathered from a range of key public sphere actors with different expertise and experience; from policy making to reporting to on the ground service delivery. Interviews centered on the views and experiences of these actors regarding the public sphere as a target of violent extremism, as well as existing CVE initiatives and their implications for the public sphere. Interview transcripts were thematically analyzed to identify factors conducive to the protection and promotion of a democratically resilient public sphere.

We supplemented the interviews with a document analysis of publicly available NSW Government CVE policy documentation as of December 2021. This includes program evaluations, parliamentary submissions, and other public-facing NSW Government documents relating to CVE collected from sources such as the NSW CVE Evaluation Tool’s program finder (<https://www.cveevaluation.nsw.gov.au/program-finder>). Qualitative analysis helps to reveal taken-for-granted assumptions and allows researchers to better understand the meaning various actors ascribe to their experiences (Ercan & Vromen, 2023). In our case, this involves unpacking the threat violent extremism poses to the public sphere, and the ways this threat can be countered from the perspective of the actors working in the CVE space in NSW.

Countering Violent Extremism in New South Wales: The Community Resilience Approach

The NSW Government’s Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program was launched in 2015. It aims to “ensure that violent extremists are disengaged from violent extremism, at-risk individuals are diverted from violent extremism, and community resilience in prevention and response to violent extremism is improved” (NSW Government, n.d.). A hallmark of CVE in NSW is that it is treated as “a social issue with security implications” not a “security issue with social implications” (van de Zandt et al., 2021, p. 92), and so is considered “distinct but complementary” to the state’s wider CT programs (NSW Government, 2020b, p. 6).

Given the framing of CVE as a social issue, engagement with communities

is seen as “fundamental” to the NSW approach (van de Zandt et al., 2021, p. 92). Here, CVE activities are led primarily by social policy agencies such as the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s Connected Communities unit and Multicultural NSW, working closely with NSW communities. These activities aim to build resilience and cohesion in communities, and to protect individuals from violent extremism (NSW Government, 2020b). However, despite being framed in social policy terms, CVE remains tied to CT in NSW as part of the state’s CT Strategy (NSW Government, 2020b).

The NSW Government’s CVE and CT program has five core objectives, of which resilience is the first, treated mainly as community resilience (van de Zandt et al., 2021). This suggests looking for and improving resilience in social processes, rather than in individual behavioral processes. This framing involves generating social capital, emphasising social connectedness, community trust, and civic participation (Grossman, 2021a; Weine et al., 2013). Community resilience is put into practice by “proactively building networks across the community” as well as “improving community awareness about the pathways that can lead to violent extremism” (NSW Government, 2020b, p. 8). The focus on community-level resilience is consistent with Australian CVE policy and programming (Grossman & Gerrard, 2023).

Community resilience has not been without significant challenges and limitations, in both Australia and abroad. Generally speaking, the focus on individuals and communities in resilience discourses in CVE shifts responsibility away from the state to affected communities and local actors (Christodoulou, 2020; Stephens & Sieckelink 2020; Walklate et al., 2012). Overlap between CVE and CT has meant that community resilience has come to be seen as a potential “trojan horse or proxy for other agendas related to government concerns with security and control” (Grossman, 2021a, p. 311) and for managing cultural diversity in repressive ways (Abdel-Fattah, 2019; Thomas, 2010). As a result, resilience often becomes intertwined with the stigmatisation of specific communities. In the post 9/11 context, the “community”

in community resilience has typically meant “visibly racialised and often spatially concentrated Muslim minority communities” (Thomas & Grossman, 2023, p. 294), simultaneously marking them as both responsible for producing and for countering violent extremism. This has contributed to the dilemma where CVE resilience-building initiatives remain “primarily focused on findings ways to tackle the resilience capacity of ‘the’ and not ‘us’” (Grossman, 2023, p. 45), and puts building resilience as a social good “at risk of being dismissed along with CVE as being not good for the community” (Weine, 2016, pp. 198–199). Additionally, the focus on resilience to extremist narratives and ideology ignores more “mainstream” narratives and actors which (re)produce the kinds of polarising “us” versus “them” discourses that extremist narratives also rely on (Stephens & Sieckelinc, 2020; see also Mondon & Winter, 2020). More generally, the extant social cohesion focus of community resilience is, according to Grossman and Gerrand (2023), unable to adequately address the landscape of violent extremism in Australia “as the continuing escalation in far-right extremism despite years of social cohesion policy and programming attests” (p. 249).

While factors facilitating community resilience such as dense networks of social ties, voluntary organisations, and reciprocal trust between government and communities may contribute to building democratic resilience, they are not sufficient in themselves for a democratically resilient public sphere. More generally, the use of resilience in CVE policy and programming remains (understandably) focused on preventing the radicalisation to violence. However, this tends to omit wider democratic implications of violent extremism for the quality of citizen deliberation and the public sphere. Where democratic resilience has been included in CVE policy, it has been poorly defined, giving the impression of “resilience to extremist narratives through promoting [liberal] democratic values or practices” (Stephens & Sieckelinc, 2020, p. 147). We do not argue that democratic resilience should replace community resilience in CVE efforts but rather complement and enrich the latter by drawing attention to actors and activities in the larger public sphere.



Building Democratic Resilience: Key Factors and Practical Implications for Policy

Democratic resilience is rooted in a normative judgement about what democracy is, and what is worth preserving. In other words, what democratic resilience means is closely linked to what democracy means, and this could change depending on whether one adopts a minimal or more expansive approach to democracy (Holloway & Manwaring, 2023). Our conceptualisation of democracy (and democratic resilience) has a deliberative focus, which involves a healthy public sphere, as noted above. We define democratic resilience as the ability of the public sphere (institutions and actors) to respond to extremist attacks and threats without losing its democratic capacity understood in deliberative terms. That is, a democratically resilient public sphere is one that is able to recover from the damage inflicted by extremism without sacrificing key deliberative principles, while also sustaining key democratic functions such as the free flow of information between state and society, and enabling the formation of shared identities, solidarities, and connections across difference.

Our research on the way violent extremism is tackled in the state of NSW enables us to show how democratic resilience may look in practice, and what institutions and actors are key for establishing and maintaining a reflective, competent and inclusive public sphere. Our interviews with key actors involved in developing and implementing CVE policies and practices across NSW revealed seven critical factors that enable or inhibit democratic resilience in the public sphere. In what follows, we outline these factors, and include several practical steps for public sphere actors to support a democratically resilient public sphere.

How Political Leaders Talk About Violent Extremism

The first key insight that our interviews revealed concerns the language political leaders use when talking about violent extremism. The words leaders choose can “either give terrorists what they want, or it can deny them what they want” according to Participant A,1 a senior public servant. Avoiding racialised framings that reduce minorities to essentialised characteristics related to criminality, extremism, or violence is



**POLITICAL LEADERS
OFTEN SHAPE
DEMOCRACY MORE
THAN EXTREMISTS DO.**

crucial to maintaining an inclusive and competent public sphere. As Participant K2 cautioned:

[Australian] political leaders who have been willing to throw particular communities under the bus for political points have been much more damaging to democracy than any terror attack we have had.

Initial statements by government and political leaders do more than just inform and reassure the community in the wake of a violent extremist attack. These statements set the tone for media coverage, and shape later commemoration, memorialisation, and policy responses (Vatnoey, 2015). For this reason, it is vital that government and political leaders get the response right the first time. As Participant H,3 a journalist reporting on violent extremism in NSW explained, the initial press conference following a violent extremist attack will be broadcast on repeat, meaning political leaders have “one shot to say the right thing.” As well as inflaming tensions, a poorly crafted statement from political leaders can undo previous work done to improve community relations with government agencies. As Participant D,4 a representative of

a civil society organisation explained, government “can mess it up – 20 years of work, building trust – it can really diminish in one statement.”

Of course, this does not mean political leaders should ignore the threat violent extremism poses. Rather, political leaders need to articulate and address these threats in a manner which contextualises, but also contains. Participant C,5 a civil society representative suggested that it was important that political leaders adopt the language of criminal justice rather than “some kind of civilizational struggle,” framing any incident in a less generalised manner: “so it is not ‘them’ rising up against ‘us’, but individual people who have behaved in a criminal fashion.”

Here, there is a clear need to develop and update strategic communications plans for political leaders. This is because, as our research shows, the public statements of prominent figures like cabinet ministers or state premiers in the face of violent extremist attacks will set the tone for future deliberation and policy formation. The response should therefore use inclusive and unifying language, while reiterating the democratic and inclusive character of society, using where necessary the language of criminal

justice, rather than racialised framings that can exacerbate harm. This kind of approach can be seen in the way political leaders in Norway and New Zealand responded to their country’s respective attacks in 2011 and 2019 (e.g., Miller & Beausoleil, 2023; Vatnoey, 2015).

How CVE and Associated Terms Are Understood and Implemented

In NSW, CVE is framed as distinct from CT, with CVE often led by social policy agencies and CT by law enforcement. While this distinction may be clear for government stakeholders, it is not necessarily clear to the wider public, and indeed, CVE remains tied to CT as part of the broader NSW CT Strategy (NSW Government, 2020b). Community concern regarding CVE and its relationship to CT and broader security agendas is well established, and has contributed to stigmatisation of Muslim communities in Australia (e.g., Abdel-Fattah, 2019)—an effect which has been elsewhere acknowledged by NSW government stakeholders (van de Zandt et al., 2021). Nevertheless, these same concerns were repeated in several of our interviews, especially with participants from civil society groups. Greater effort needs to be made to clarify between CVE and CT activities. Disentangling CVE from wider security and intelligence agendas may help to open the way for more civil society engagement, making it easier to deliver on social policy objectives.

The lack of clarity around CVE and CT has been partly compounded by the lack of a clear and consistent vocabulary with which to discuss the challenges of violent extremism in NSW, both within government and with the public. There is no standard policy definition of violent extremism in the NSW CT and CVE strategy (NSW Government, 2020b). For NSW government agencies working in CVE, it has meant that some agencies and frontline providers continue to operate by slightly different definitions. While this definitional plurality was not perceived as a major issue by government stakeholders interviewed, it was seen as contributing to confusion among the public regarding CVE in NSW. In addition, as Participant N6 described, the “lack of a clear, consistent definition” of violent extremism was “hugely problematic” in that it makes it difficult to reliably evaluate success in CVE policy and programming.

Moving forward, in addition to clarifying CVE terminology and implementation in both government and public communications, there is a need for better data on CVE implementation and incidents of violent extremism and related phenomena like hate or bias crime. Accurate and reliable information is essential for a democratically resilient public sphere as it provides an evidence basis for good deliberation. The lack of a comprehensive dataset in Australia, at either the state or Commonwealth level, makes it difficult to understand the scope of the problem, and efficacy of programs to address it.

How Minorities Are Included in the Public Sphere

The public sphere cannot be democratically resilient if numerous members of society feel marginalised and unable to participate confidently. Stigmatisation happens when a particular group of people is associated with negative stereotypes. It reduces their sense of belonging in society and hinders their free and equal participation in the public sphere, and so acts as a key barrier to a democratically resilient public sphere. As Participant C explained:

Violent extremism flourishes in an environment. . . where the perception of “us” versus “them” takes hold. We need to think about ways of bringing people along on the journey where they don’t feel stigmatised and attacked.

Key public sphere actors like government and news media therefore need to encourage an inclusive sense of belonging, one where everyone can feel that they have a place in society irrespective of identify markers such as language, culture, ethnicity, religious beliefs, gender, or sexual orientation. As Participant D explained, the issue of stigmatisation is especially pronounced with respect to Australia’s Muslim community, and can only be resolved when:

the rest of society sees Muslims as a part of this country, and not as people that can be ostracised, marginalised, or simply asked to “go back to where you came from”.

Minority voices need to be better included in government decision-making processes, but not simply as sealed entities or homogenous groups. Public sphere actors should recognise the



intracultural diversity that exists within each community. Communications from government for example should emphasise the multiplicity of identities within minority communities and emphasise the commonalities of citizenship, while also engaging with a range of community voices, not just dominant identity groups.

The issue of minority inclusion is not just a matter for government messaging. Media representation and participation of minorities is also crucial for a democratically resilient public sphere. This is because increased representation ideally dampens narrow conceptions of national identity while encouraging those from minority groups to see themselves as part of the public sphere. Additionally, increasing diversity in media through greater minority participation may also help to promote a more nuanced discussion about violent extremism and how it impacts the lives of those communities targeted by violent extremism. As journalist Participant J7 explained, Australian media has a “blind spot” when it comes to “sophisticated discussions of race,” attributable in part to the lack of diversity in Australian media. One way of addressing this is for

government and media companies to explore additional avenues to promote multicultural and multilingual media. One such example, the Australian Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), provides a model for increasing avenues for minority participation in the public sphere.

How Inclusive Collective Identities Are Constructed

In the public sphere collective identities are imagined and re-imagined in ongoing processes of communication, as well as through symbolic ceremonies, cultural expressions, public events, and monuments. All these practices, rituals, and artefacts structure the relationship between self and society, and function as crucial ingredients of the social imagery—who are we, what do we value, who belongs to this social imagery, and who is outside of it. When addressing extremism, the rituals and performance of commemoration and the processes of public memorialisation can play a crucial role in fostering democratic resilience.

It is important not to treat these practices as tokenistic performances, but as sites of reflection and collective healing. Governments can play an important role in facilitating meaningful

practices of commemoration and memorialisation. To do so, they must work closely with those affected and the wider community to determine not only how and when to act, but how to balance the competing needs of various stakeholders. The formation of both permanent memorial sites, as well as commemorative efforts, need to include the public—and especially the victim's families, survivors, and first responders—in planning. This is not an easy task, as research on memorial sites for the 9/11 (Hajer, 2005) and 22 July, 2011 attacks (Salomonsen, 2021) illustrate. Participant L,⁸ an academic researching terrorism and violent extremism in Australia, explained some of these challenges in developing memorial sites for violent extremist attacks:

There is incredible complexity in the memorialisation of a terrorist attack. . . how do we honour the victims, without retraumatising the first responders? . . . how do we create something that is respectful without reinforcing existing traumas?

Incorporating deliberative and participatory planning processes may mean having to navigate between economic interests and legal obligations, the need to respect those impacted, as well as the desire to “find a symbolic reply” to an attack (Hajer, 2005). But too much government direction may undermine the collective healing commemoration and memorialisation affords. As Participant L, suggested:

It should be the role of the state to pay for memorialisation, but it is up to community groups, advocates, and liaisons to talk to the community about what they want. Because at the end of the day, it is their trauma.

In NSW there is a lack of policy frameworks for commemorative activities and memorial development. Any policy guidance should underscore the importance of centring the needs of victims and survivors, adopting time-sensitive implementation strategies, and ensure public consultation and participation in planning.

How News Media Reports on Violent Extremism

As a key pillar of the public sphere, the media has the potential to undermine or enhance democratic resilience. Harmful framing of impacted communities can lead to fracturing through the process of stigmatisation outlined above. For example, how Muslim communities have been reported on in the aftermath of a violent extremist attacks in Australia

has had a major effect “on the way Muslim’s see themselves as they belong to this country,” according to a Participant D. At the same time, the way in which extremist actors and events are covered can unintentionally further the reach (and harm) of extremist propaganda and provide legitimacy to extremist actors and narratives. While the need for a press free from government intervention or direction is vital for a healthy public sphere, there is a serious and urgent need to address poor media practices in the extremism space.

There are major discrepancies in how so-called religiously motivated violent extremism is framed compared to reporting on far-right violent extremism, namely, that media disproportionately fail to link non-Muslim white perpetrators of mass violence to terrorism (Bell, 2018; Dreier et al., 2022). In the post-9/11 context, terrorism has been framed as a primarily Muslim phenomenon (Corbin, 2017), and this has exacerbated the stigmatisation of Muslims in multicultural societies. Such coverage can cause people to withdraw from the public sphere. As Participant E,⁹ who works in the community sector explained, sensationalised media coverage that links violent extremism to Muslims “really impacts their ability to engage, to stay engaged” as full citizens in public life.

When it comes to reporting on violent extremists themselves, there is a delicate balance between reporting on a matter of very real public interest, while also ensuring such reporting does not incidentally serve the objectives of violent extremists (Phillips, 2018). As Participant M,¹⁰ a journalist, explained: “the most difficult thing working in this space is the balance between telling the stories that matter and that are important for democracy and society, and platforming [extremists].” It is a balance that Australian media have generally failed to get right according to Participant G,¹¹ a civil society representative who warned that Australian media often inadvertently “do the propaganda work of extremists for them.” Sensitive coverage of violent extremism is possible, as the protocol adopted by New Zealand’s five major news outlets for covering the trial of the Christchurch terrorist. These guidelines, aimed at limiting coverage of “statements that actively champion white supremacist or terrorist ideology,” helped to keep excerpts from the perpetrator’s so-called manifesto, as well as any symbols, imagery, or gestures made by the shooter

promoting his ideology during the trial, out of the news (Stuff, 2019).

According to several of our interviewees, Australian newsrooms are largely under-prepared and under-resourced to report on extremism, particularly far-right extremists. This presents a serious barrier to building a democratically resilient public sphere, as extremists “understand what the weaknesses of the Australian media are and how to use it to their own ends,” according to Participant J. Reporting on extremists like neo-Nazi’s should focus “not on what they say, but what they do. . . and how those actions effect society,” according to Participant M. Civil society representatives tended to agree, with Participant G¹² noting that reporting on violent extremism needs to be guided by an approach that informs the public “without giving violent extremists the oxygen that gives them celebrity status and helps them recruit and helps solidify their internal strength.” As Participant I,¹³ an academic researching the Australian far right explained:

On the one hand, you want people to know what the threats are. . . But if every time there is a Nazi swastika scrawled on a street sign and it hits the media, it just gives the extremists exactly what they want, because they are engaged in an information war. . . It encourages them try to do more stunts to get in the media because they want more attention.

Based on these insights, we suggest government (both state and Commonwealth) explore ways to support newsrooms to develop best practice guidelines for harm minimisation in reporting on violent extremism, and create opportunities to share lessons from research with media practitioners. Best practice guidelines for reporting on sensitive topics, such as suicide, can provide a starting point or framework for how to better manage reporting on violent extremism (Beckett, 2016). While researchers in other jurisdictions like the US have developed guidelines for careful reporting on violent extremism in collaboration with journalists and editors (e.g., Phillips, 2018), it is crucial that any guidelines are developed with specific attention to context. As journalist Participant H explained, these issues need to be probably contextualised and appropriate for an Australian setting: “we take so many of our cues from American reporting. . . are we making sure that the Australian nuance is properly conveyed?”

How Government Engages With Civil Society and the Public

Building a cohesive civil society network is central to the NSW CVE program. As noted in recent evaluations of NSW CVE programming, “further effort should be directed to community-based prevention,” with an emphasis on “bottom-up” programs (Acil Allen Consulting, 2019), while ensuring that “community networks are being led from within” (Wise et al., 2018). Of course, civil society is not in itself a panacea for violent extremism, as civil society organisations are not necessarily pro-democracy (Lundberg, 2021). Indeed, civil society organisations can and have provided support for illiberal and anti-democratic movements, so it is vital that community-directed CVE efforts support the flourishing of a “pro-democratic civil society” (Pedahzur, 2003).

Interviews with civil society actors working in the CVE space at both the state and national level in Australia highlighted several barriers hindering the formation of a vibrant, pro-democracy civil society network, as well as broader issues of community trust. What our interviews highlight is a pressing need for the government to increase its emphasis on consequentiality in its engagement with community and civil society. Consequentiality is about deliberative engagements having an impact on outcomes (Felicetti, 2016). This includes not only concrete policy decisions via influence on decision makers, but also informal effects such as cultural change (Dryzek, 2010). Government needs to demonstrate how civil society input will be valued, and communicate the next steps.

Trust was frequently cited as the issue inhibiting community relationships with the NSW Government in the CVE space and affecting the resilience building efforts. Several interviewees working in civil society organisations pointed to a series of workshops in 2015-2016 run by the Commonwealth Attorney General’s office as a critical juncture where trust was severely damaged, and this impacted some of those working in NSW. According to Participant E, many community and civil society organisations who attended these workshops were already sceptical of the sincerity (and ability) of government to meaningfully work with community in this space: “they [Attorney General’s Office]



weren’t well aware of the communities that were connecting to them. They didn’t know how to engage with us.” When the workshop concluded with no decisive outcome and without follow-up (i.e., a lack of consequential engagement), many participants felt the process to be little more than a box-ticking exercise. The result has been a lack of trust among some in the community sector with respect to the Commonwealth’s commitment to social cohesion, which has carried over into the NSW CVE setting.

To help address this, government should also look to create spaces and opportunities for listening and reflection. While democracy is usually associated with the practice of expression—finding a “voice,” speaking up, and making oneself heard—listening and reflection are equally important practices in a well-functioning democracy. It is important from a deliberative perspective that decision-makers and other empowered elites listen and learn from the lived experiences of diverse communities. Such practices of “institutional listening” shift the responsibility from citizens to express their voice onto government institutions to make themselves receptive and responsive (Scudder et al., 2021).

In addition to trust, the representatives of civil society organisations interviewed for this study pointed repeatedly to issues of funding and the difficulty of sustaining relationships with NSW government agencies. Even the flagship COMPACT Program, which was designed specifically to address these problems by providing multi-year grants through a partnership model (Multicultural NSW, 2023), was still affected by these concerns according to interviewees. While competitive submissions processes are standard for grant funding across a range of NSW Government programs areas, it can introduce unintended problems for civil society organisations. As a Participant E explained:

COMPACT brought together an incredible alliance around social cohesion at a time when it was much needed. But when the next funding round comes around and new projects get picked up, some of those amazing relationships are severed. We need a grants process that can integrate new projects with existing ones so that the knowledge and experience can be shared to better tackle these complex issues.

How Dis- and Mis-Information Are Addressed

The spread of dis- and mis-information, as well as violent extremist content, poses a serious challenge to the deliberative integrity of the public sphere. Particularly in the fast-moving digital space, the proliferation of dis- and mis-information can cause harm by stoking community tensions, increasing political polarisation, and undermining trust in government.

Current programs aimed at media literacy in NSW focus on online safety and are targeted primarily at youth via school curriculum programs. While recent research has highlighted a need for further curricular development and application of news and media education in Australian schools (Dezuanni et al., 2020), these programs are not necessarily fit for purpose in terms of addressing the specific challenges of information pollution and extremist content. As Participant B, a senior public servant explained:

young people feel there is a disconnect between the skills they are learning in the [e-safety] curriculum. . . there is a gap between the real-world experience of what young people are experiencing online and their ability to translate critical thinking skills to that space.

As such, there is a need to think beyond school programs, including as Participant G suggested, broader education initiatives similar to public health campaigns in Australia. But, while digital and media literacy is important, approaches that only address individual critical thinking are not enough. The challenge posed by dis- and mis-information and violent extremist content online also requires addressing the policy and technological structures that allow for such content to proliferate. As Participant J explained:

the biggest issue to action on misinformation is that every technology company gets to set the terms of what information they share and how we understand it. They are all black boxes. . . [transparency] is what government should be pushing for to inform good policy.

Though primarily the responsibility of the Commonwealth, government at both state/territory and federal levels need to push for greater action from major technology companies like Google or Meta, particularly around transparency on algorithmic design and the development and application of standards for content moderation.

Conclusion

To date, the default approach in Australia has been to “strengthen an already startling counter-terrorism law regime—not to develop innovative ways for countering the threat over the longer-term” (Hardy, 2019, p. 274). In this paper, we shift the focus from counter-terrorism law regime to the public sphere in tackling violent extremism. Drawing on the theory of deliberative democracy we focused on the public sphere, conceptualised democratic resilience, and identified the key factors that matter for building democratic resilience.

We defined democratic resilience as the ability of the public sphere (institutions and actors) to respond to extremist attacks and threats without losing its democratic capacity understood in deliberative terms: reflective, competent, inclusive. To unpack and contextualise how these terms might look in practice, we drew on interviews with key public servants and civil society actors involved in developing CVE policies and practices in NSW. The purpose of the empirical research was to contextualise and refine, rather than test, the theoretical ideas discussed in this paper.

Our research shows democracies can take deliberate steps to build and strengthen the resilience of the public sphere in the face of violent extremism. Having said that, the purpose of this paper is not to provide a checklist of required actions. Rather, our aim is to present a set of issues public sphere actors, such as government, need to reflect on and take into consideration in their CVE efforts. While the research conducted for this report focused on possible ways forward for the NSW Government in Australia, it contains lessons for other jurisdictions, and other countries as well, given the global challenges posed by violent extremism.

Our work focused primarily on the democratic resilience of the public sphere in responding to far-right and jihadist forms of violent extremism, consistent with the contemporary threat landscape in Australia (ASIO, 2023, 2024) and the focus of the NSW CVE agenda. As such, our analysis does not engage with other forms of violent extremism, such as those motivated by anti-government or involuntary celibate (Incel)¹⁵ beliefs—which fall outside the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation’s

(ASIO) two main categories of violent extremism: religiously motivated (RMVE) and ideologically motivated (IMVE; ASIO, 2023, 2024)—or left-wing violent extremism, which is not present in contemporary Australia (Campion, 2023; Peucker et al., 2023). Nevertheless, other forms of violent extremism still carry similar considerations for the public sphere in that they can stoke division and distrust, distort the processes of deliberation and opinion formation, and spread exclusionary and anti-democratic ideals, and so the responses of public sphere actors remain critical for containing the harm of such acts. For example, the response to misogynistic violent extremism in Australia has seen commentators and politicians “dismiss or rationalise” this kind of violent extremism (Tomkinson, 2020, p. 160), and has risked “treating this threat only at the point of violent acts” (Agius et al., 2022, p. 697). Future research should consider the way public sphere actors like media or political leaders respond to other forms of violent extremism like those motivated by male supremacism, to better nuance the democratic resilience framework and identify context specific considerations.

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The weeks leading up to the festive seasons had been extremely busy for the Academy members. Many followers from overseas and other Australian states travelled to Tasmania to partake in the festivity, joining Tasmanians at Christmas parades in Hobart, Brighton, New Norfolk, Oatlands and even George Town in the state north!



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