

**SUMMARY - ECAJ REPORT ON ANTISEMITISM IN AUSTRALIA
1 OCTOBER 2005 - 30 SEPTEMBER 2006**

In contemporary Australia, to accuse any person or organisation of antisemitism is to allege that their behaviour is antisocial and unacceptable. No one with aspirations to public credibility admits to holding antisemitic views or to associating with openly antisemitic organisations.

While individuals and organisations associated with the political left who promoted extreme anti-Israel racism, which sometimes included offensive and gratuitous anti-Jewish imagery, were particularly keen to assert that they were not antisemitic, even far-right and neo-Nazi groups publicly professed to be "anti-Zionist" rather than anti-Jewish, although the material both groups distribute can give the lie to any such distinction. Further, Holocaust deniers, including those who present the claim the Holocaust is a Jewish confidence trick played on gullible Christians as one part of a raft of anti-Jewish slurs, generally claim they are only "researching" historical subjects. The small number of individuals holding public office who have associated with anti-Jewish groups always maintain that they have contact despite the latter's promotion of antisemitism, not because of it.

Between 1 October 2005 and 30 September 2006, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry logged over 440 reports of anti-Jewish violence, vandalism, harassment and intimidation. Anti-Jewish propaganda in fringe publications and from extremist organisations remained a serious concern. During debates on a number of matters of public policy overtly anti-Jewish language, and/or inflammatory slanders, sometimes were part of the mainstream discussion. Conspiracy theories abounded on the internet and these included a disturbing proportion which were overtly or implicitly antisemitic.

In the mass media during the year in review, a number of commentators and a large number of contributors of letters and other forms of public feedback crossed the line between political commentary and anti-Jewish slander. In the period in review, a large percentage of offensive commentaries came during the period when Israel was engaged in military activity against Hamas and Hezbollah. Other anti-Jewish comments came in the course of public discussions on for example the US military involvement in Iraq, the prosecution of Nazi War Criminals when this involved Australian residents and the personal campaign against Israel by an individual author who promoted himself as a victim of a mythical anti-democratic Jewish establishment. In non-mainstream publications, anti-Jewish rhetoric was also invoked in other discussions such as on Australia's anti-terrorism laws and on Australian Jewish support for victims of racism.

Issues of antisemitism emanating from Islamic sources in Australia were a significant topic of public discussion during the period in review. The Mufti of Australia came under the public spotlight when it was reported that he had promoted Holocaust denial in his Sydney mosque in 2006. A number of media reports appeared noting anti-Jewish books available in bookshops serving Australia's Muslim community.

The topic of far-left anti-Jewish harassment also received some media attention during the period in review, with the situation on university campuses a particular focus.

During the period in review, a number of speeches were delivered in Australian parliaments which condemned antisemitism, and a resolution was passed in the Senate (which was less forthright in criticism of anti-Jewish activity than resolutions had been in some previous years).

In cases under the Federal Racial Hatred Act, the ECAJ was successful in having an article in the One Nation political party's newspaper found to be in breach of the Act and having an Apology ordered. The case against the Bible Believers' web-site was fully heard in the Federal Court and a judgement is anticipated early in 2007. In the state of New South Wales, the Administrative Appeals Tribunal determined a Jewish couple had been the victims of unlawful anti-Jewish racial vilification. In Western Australia, a person was charged with making anti-Jewish telephone calls. In Queensland, a case commenced against a person who had used telephone text messages as a mode for harassment. Further, amended legislation as part of counter-terrorism policies was raised as a possible means for legal action against anti-Semitism in Australia in the future.

Jeremy Jones AM