



**Executive Council of  
Australian Jewry**

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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**Events in Charlottesville, Virginia, USA**

Events at the so-called "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia in the US on August 11 and 12 are a warning for democracies everywhere, according to Anton Block, President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the peak national body of Australia's Jewish community.

*"It is a disgrace to any society when hate-filled men march in the streets, openly flaunting Nazi insignia, waving Nazi flags, giving the Nazi salute and chanting blatantly antisemitic slogans. It is even worse when they kill an innocent young woman. But when this happens in the world's foremost democracy, whose leader initially responds with only a vague rebuke, something is seriously amiss", Block said.*

The rally was advertised beforehand on the neo-Nazi website *The Daily Stormer* as one "to end Jewish influence in America". During the rally a car was driven into a group of people, resulting in the death of a counter-protester, Heather Heyer, and injuries to others. A 20-year old suspect, identified as a neo-Nazi, has been charged with her murder and denied bail.

*"The events in Charlottesville are a vivid reminder that hate speech is often a precursor to violent behaviour and hate crimes", Block said. "If we truly value freedom and democracy, we need to stand firm not only against racist violence but also against the hate speech which precedes it. Hate speech has nothing to do with free speech or the robust interchange of competing ideas."*

Block also expressed sympathy for Heather Heyer and her family and those who were injured in the car-ramming attack. *"The Australian Jewish community stands in solidarity with all who oppose the evils of racism and its ugly consequences. Terrorism is always to be abhorred, whether it emanates from Islamists, far-right fundamentalists or any other group, and whoever its victims may be."*

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