



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY Inc.

November 29 2007

Anti-Jewish attacks in Australia reach record high.

The peak body of the Australian Jewish Community has been told that **638** separate reports of anti-Jewish assault, vandalism, intimidation and harassment were recorded during the 12 months ending 30 September, 2007, a figure more than twice the previous average and eight percent higher than the previous worst twelve month period.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry at its annual meeting in Melbourne this week received a comprehensive briefing on all aspects of antisemitism in Australia by Jeremy Jones, a former President of the Council and an internationally acknowledged authority on contemporary anti-Jewish vilification and prejudice, who has provided detailed annual analyses to the Council since 1989.

Mr Jones said that reports of anti-Jewish harassment are divided into the broad categories of "attacks" and "threats". Incidents of assault, arson attacks, face-to-face harassment and vandalism, which are broadly defined as "attacks", were recorded at the highest rate on record, and an "alarming" three times the previous average.

"Threats", conveyed through the telephone, mail, leaflets, posters or e-mail, were recorded at a rate nearly twice the previous average.

Amongst the incidents recorded during the past year were

- * An orthodox Jewish man was verbally abused and punched in the face while walking to synagogue.
- * A Jewish school student was hit by a full can of drink thrown from a passing vehicle, while waiting for a school bus.
- * A Jewish day school student abused, physically assaulted, on public bus.
- * Bricks were thrown through windows of classroom of Jewish school.
- * Vehicles parked outside a synagogue were spray-painted with swastikas.
- * An orthodox Jewish man was injured by a bottle hurled from a vehicle while he was walking to synagogue.
- * A Jewish man traveling on commuter train abused and assaulted.
- * A Jewish youth was assaulted and kosher cafe vandalised in a suburb with a substantial Jewish population.
- * On numerous occasions, eggs were thrown at Jewish people walking to or from synagogue

Threats and abuse yelled at Jewish people, but not involving assault, was recorded at five times the previous average.

While reports of graffiti were received below the average rate, amongst the reports were:

- * Graffiti "Fuck Jews" in CBD.
- * Graffiti at primary school, including "Die Juden", "We hate Jews", "Fucking Jew" and swastikas.
- * Antisemitic graffiti "Jews go to Hell!" spray-painted in suburb with substantial Jewish population.
- * Racist graffiti in urban centre including slogan "Die Jews Die".
- * Antisemitic graffiti daubed on fence of Jewish day school.
- * Antisemitic graffiti "kill Jews" daubed in school grounds.
- * Graffiti "There is a Jew among us. Weed him out and kill him" and "The Holocaust never happened" daubed at the business premises of a Jewish man.

The receipt of abusive, threatening and other antisemitic email sent to individuals and communal offices was reported at a rate of more than seven times a week in the year in review. The total during this reporting period was almost five times the average and forty percent greater than the previous worst year.

Telephone calls, which often contained extreme antisemitic abuse, were recorded at the fourth lowest rate in eighteen years. Most of the (anonymous) threats were received by Jewish institutions. Incidents of hate mail were also recorded at the fourth lowest rate in eighteen years, but abusive and threatening mail continued to be received at private homes and by Jewish institutions. In addition to the modes of harassment and intimidation identified above, the Jewish community receives reports on a regular basis of the receipt of text messages, leaflets and other material placed in private letterboxes by hand, the sighting of posters with anti-Jewish themes, stickers on buildings and telegraph poles and other similar forms of dissemination of anti-Jewish propaganda. Reports of material in these categories were received in the twelve months in review at twenty four percent of the average.

On the positive side, in a matter litigated by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry under the Federal Racial Hatred Act, the Federal Court determined that the individual responsible for the Bible Believers' web-site had acted in breach of Australia's Racial Hatred laws. There were also court findings against antisemitic behaviour in Victoria, against members of an antisemitic neo-nazi group in Perth as well as disciplinary action against participants in sporting competitions who had engaged in antisemitic harassment.

In his overall assessment, Mr Jones observed

* "In Australia in 2007, 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 promote extreme anti-Israel racism, which sometimes included offensive and gratuitous anti-Jewish imagery, are particularly keen to assert that they are not antisemitic, even some far-right and neo-Nazi groups publicly profess to be "anti-Zionist" rather than anti-Jewish, although the material they distribute can give the lie to any such distinction."

* "In the mass media, during the year in review, commentators and contributors of letters and other forms of public feedback occasionally crossed the line between political commentary and anti-Jewish slander in discussions of the alleged strength of "Jewish lobbies" in both the USA and Australia, as well as in some discussions of Israel. Notably, this took place less often in the period in review than in any of the previous seven reporting periods. Anti-Jewish rhetoric was also invoked in other discussions such as Australia's anti-terrorism laws and on Australian Jewish support for victims of racism."

- " On-line communities, Facebook and You-Tube in particular, have been the venues of crude and intense anti-Jewish prejudice being expressed openly and unashamedly. While the sum total of reports of each and all such behaviour is not sufficient to suggest that it is rampant, it is nevertheless cause for genuine concern."

* "Antisemitism emanating from Islamic sources in Australia was a significant topic of public discussion during the period in review. The first Mufti of Australia was the subject of continued media focus and his supporters included some who were openly anti-Jewish. A number of media reports appeared noting anti-Jewish books available in bookshops serving Australia's Muslim community, as well as DVDs originating in Australia and circulating internationally which defamed Jews and Judaism."

* "There is no evidence to suggest that Australians in general think of Jews in negative terms. Unlike many other societies, Australia does not have a past to which antisemites can comfortably look with nostalgia. Nevertheless, some Australians have anti-Jewish prejudice which equates to, for example, anti-Asian, anti-Aborigine, anti-Arab or anti-African prejudice, expressing itself in terms of racial superiority. In addition, anti-Jewish prejudice considered normative in some other cultures has been brought to Australia by immigrants and can exist for many years within sub-cultures. However, antisemitism in Australia often goes beyond simple contempt, hatred or discrimination based on the fact that a Jewish person is perceived to be in some way different."

* "Sources of anti-Jewish stereotyping and vilification are quite diverse and it would be misleading to portray antisemitic organisation and individuals as acting in concert. Although some of the antisemitic organisations will present a grab-bag of stereotypes to rationalise their prejudice, it is generally possible to identify a central theme in organised anti-Jewish campaigns".

* "It is unfortunately common for extremists and antisemites in Australia to use the experiences of Jews as victims of Genocide, murder and assault as a means to insult Jewish people and incite or justify hatred of them. The most extreme example is the historically and logically inappropriate designation of language and symbols associated with the Nazi genocide to Jewish people, such as accusing Jews of being "Nazi-like", committing "Holocausts" and/or Genocide, or supporting "concentration camps"."

* "A thread common to a number of types of prejudice and vilification which are specific to Jews is the depiction of Jews as representing an existential threat to non-Jews and who have enormous power and drive to achieve their aim, generally presented as "world domination".

* "The Australian far-right fringe is internally dynamic and in a constant state of flux. Individuals who promote, for example, a return to policies which actively disadvantage Indigenous Australians, have shown a mobility between overtly antisemitic groups, populist movements and pseudo-militia groups. The extremist element of the anti-immigration movement divide their time and attention between these groups and neo-Nazi or quasi-nationalist movements. For those who have antisemitism as their prime concern there are alternatives such as the various Identity Churches, conspiracy propagandists with no firm affiliations, as well as groups who have social division high on their political agendas. Amongst the small group of individuals who, figuratively and literally, wave the flag for US-based neo-Nazi groups including the Ku Klux Klan, the Church of the Creator and White Aryan Resistance, transference of allegiance takes place at a pace which seems to be determined by the intent of gaining optimal media interest."

Mr. Jones added: "While the sources of antisemitism are many and varied, the reality in

Australia is that there has been excellent political and moral leadership against antisemitism in recent times, with the Federal and State Parliaments passing strong, unanimous resolutions on the subject in 2004 and 2005, and a growing awareness of the responsibility by the mass media to avoid being hijacked by racists," Mr. Jones commented.

"In the current climate it is very significant that Muslim and Christian leaders in Australia, as well as senior figures from other Faiths and the broader community, have joined with Jewish leaders and the Jewish community in common cause against those who would use religion to justify hatred and racist violence, a fact which sets Australia apart from many other societies," Mr. Jones concluded.