



24 March 2026

James Chessell
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Dear Mr Chessell

David Rowe cartoon – AFR 23 March 2026

We write to you in connection with the David Rowe cartoon headed “Running on Empty: Oil Check”, which appeared in yesterday’s Australian Financial Review.

The cartoon depicts Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu riding a missile in the form of US President Donald Trump and conducting an oil check on it, with the caption reading: “Running on empty. Oil check.” Superficially, the cartoon’s message is that the US-Israel war against the Iranian regime is faltering because of the regime’s disruption of oil supplies and the threat of petroleum shortages. If that was all there was to the cartoon, we would have not felt it necessary to write to you.

However, it is obvious that there are several other supplementary messages which go well beyond political commentary and are of an overtly racist nature. The cartoon features the following classical antisemitic tropes.

- The Jewish conspiracy/inordinate Jewish power trope – Israel is portrayed as being in the rider’s seat and directing the US in this war. This is a ludicrous proposition. The Iranian regime has been in a self-declared state of war with the US since 1979, and successive US governments have frequently made known why the US seeks to counteract the regime’s nuclear and regional ambitions.
- The blood libel - The "oil" being drawn from the Trump-shaped missile and fuelling its journey is depicted as red, the colour of blood, not oil. This is a classic trope used to falsely accuse Jews of wantonly shedding innocent blood. It has been used many

times to fan hatred against Jews and to provide a pretext for shedding innocent Jewish blood.

- A speech bubble from the Trump figure reads: “Torah! Torah! Torah! Or whatever.” Superficially, this is an allusion to the code words “Tora, Tora, Tora!” used by Japanese fighter pilots to confirm their surprise attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, as referenced by the US President at a recent media conference with the Japanese Prime Minister. However, the Torah is the most sacred text of Judaism. The “Torah” reference in the Rowe cartoon reinforces the false message that the US war effort is being driven by alleged “Jewish” values.
- Next to the Israeli Prime Minister, the words “oy vey” are written. This is a dead giveaway. “Oy vey” is a Yiddish expression, not Hebrew, the language of Israel. According to Rowe, it is not Netanyahu the Israeli Prime Minister who has been driving the US into this war, but Netanyahu the archetypal Jew. Neo-Nazis have frequently used this same Yiddish expression to mockingly essentialise and dehumanise Jews as a group and stoke anti-Jewish hatred and violence. It is an overt and disgraceful form of antisemitism.

In light of the above, we were astonished to read that you approved of the cartoon and found no issue with it. In fact, you were reported to be “supportive” of it. We cannot believe it possible that a person of your standing could be so ignorant or obtuse as to be incapable of seeing the gross antisemitism in this cartoon, which has been obvious even to many non-Jews.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you in person.

Yours sincerely



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