

Statement of Peter Wertheim

Name: Peter Wertheim

Occupation: Co-Chief Executive Officer, Executive Council of Australian Jewry

Date: 29 April 2026

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion. This statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. The views I express in this statement are based on my personal experience.
3. Where direct speech is referred to in this statement, it is provided in words or words to the effect of those words that, to the best of my recollection, were used at the time. ECAJ has provided a comprehensive response to Notice to Produce and Notice to Give a Statement in Writing No. C2026/0088 (**Notice 0088**). This statement also addresses the following paragraphs in the Schedule to Notice 0088:
 - (a) Paragraphs 9,10 and 11 (nature and prevalence of recorded/reported antisemitic incidents prior to and since October 7, 2023; key similarities and differences pre- and post-October 7, 2023; whether and how the nature and prevalence of antisemitic incidents has changed over time)
 - (b) Paragraph 15 (vilification, victimisation or abuse that is antisemitic, or any threat of violence, directed to the ECAJ)
 - (c) Paragraph 16 (funding of security arrangements at Jewish places of worship, major sites and educational and cultural facilities and/or for Jewish leaders)
 - (d) Paragraph 21 (overview of representations made by the ECAJ to the Australian Government and agencies about greater protective security for the Jewish community after 7 October 2023)
 - (e) Paragraph 22 (adequacy of Australian government responses to representations made by ECAJ since 7 October 2023 about seeking greater protective security for the Jewish community)

This statement also contains some personal reflections.

4. ECAJ also provided responses to Notice to Produce and Notice to Give Information or a Statement in Writing No. C2026/0018 (**Notice 0018**), Notice to Produce and Notice to Give

Information in Writing No. C2026/0062 (**Notice 0062**), and. I refer to ECAJ's responses to Notice 0018 and Notice 0062 in this witness statement.

5. For the purposes of preparing this statement, I have also referred to the documents in the attached list marked '**PW-1**'.

Personal background

6. I am 71 years of age.
7. My father and his parents arrived in Australia from Germany before World War 2, as refugees fleeing from Nazi persecution. They had experienced living in Nazi Germany during the 1930s and during the rise of unchecked antisemitic attacks on the Jewish community. During Kristallnacht on the night of 9 and 10 November 1938, my father's parents survived having their home in Germany broken into by Nazi thugs and vandalised in their presence, after which my grandfather was arrested and held in custody for several weeks along with several thousand others, simply for being Jewish. My father had arrived in Australia four months earlier. After Kristallnacht he managed to get his parents out of Germany, and they arrived in Australia in July 1939. My father served in the Australian Military Forces between 1943 and 1945 and passed away in 2006.
8. My mother was born and raised in Czechoslovakia. She is a survivor of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp and is 98 years of age. Her parents and most of her siblings were murdered in the gas chambers shortly after the family was deported there by the Nazis in May 1944, along with many thousands of other Jewish families. After six weeks in the women's camp at Auschwitz, my mother was sent as a forced labourer to various camps in Germany for the rest of the war. She arrived in Australia in 1950.
9. Coming from a Jewish family that survived Nazi persecution and the Holocaust is an important part of my identity, and has been one of the key influences that has shaped my outlook. In my experience it is common for Australian Jewish families to include Holocaust survivors and their direct descendants.
10. I consider myself to be fortunate to have been born and raised, and for my children and grandchildren to have been born and raised, in Australia. I grew up with only one set of grandparents and until I was married I did not have any family in Australia other than my parents and paternal grandparents, and only some family in Israel.
11. For many years, I grew up calling my parents' friends aunty and uncle. I view the Jewish community as my larger extended family and given the history of my upbringing and my family's experience as Holocaust survivors, I feel the fragility of Jewish existence poignantly in my own personal life and circumstances.

12. I am an only child, and when I was growing up, I was conscious of being the last link in the chain of my family's continuity. From the stories of survival, which I have heard from members of my own family and other Jewish families, I am conscious of how precarious and vulnerable the situation of the Jewish people is and how quickly things can change in terms of the security of Jewish communities. I married young and had kids young. I wanted to have children for their own sake, but in part I also instinctively felt it was important to help ensure the continuation of Jewish life.

Involvement in the Jewish community

13. I am currently the Co-Chief Executive Officer of the ECAJ, which is the peak national representative body of the Australian Jewish community. I was previously a lawyer for 32 years where I advised, amongst other clients, trade unions and other not-for-profit organisations and acted as honorary solicitor for a number of charities, including but not limited to the Aboriginal Medical Service Co-operative Ltd at Redfern and numerous Jewish community organisations.
14. I first became involved in Jewish community activism as a teenager, around 16 years old. I participated in peaceful demonstrations outside the Moscow State Circus in Sydney to call for the removal of emigration restrictions that were then applied to Jews in the Soviet Union and for them to be free to emigrate if they wished to do so.
15. After completing my undergraduate Arts and Law degrees at university, I started a legal career, married my first wife and together helped raise our two children.
16. In my mid-thirties, with my children at school, I felt that I needed to do something more for the Jewish community and for Australia more generally because I believed that my family and I were so lucky to live in Australia. At that time antisemitism was not a driver of my decision making. My decision to make a greater contribution was made at a time I did not have to look over my shoulder or be self-conscious about being Jewish. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, it seemed to me for a short time that the pressures of assimilation represented a greater threat to Jewish life than antisemitism.
17. There was a series of fire-bombings of synagogues and kindergartens in Australia in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq following its military invasion and takeover of Kuwait. Unlike the present time, these attacks against Jewish institutions did not occur in a social milieu of heightened anti-Jewish sentiment in Australia. There were no public expressions of support for these attacks or attempts to rationalise or downplay them. Nevertheless, these incidents motivated me to become more deeply involved in the Jewish community to protect it and the country by trying to prevent the scourge of antisemitism, other forms of racism and bigotry from developing.

18. Throughout my career, I have been involved as a volunteer in various Jewish community organisations including:
- (a) From the early 1990s until 26 February 2026, I was a Governor of the NSW Jewish Communal Appeal, which is an umbrella charity for Jewish charities in NSW, including Jewish schools and welfare organisations;
 - (b) In August 1996, I was elected as President of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, which is the NSW constituent of the ECAJ, and was re-elected in that role annually until August 2000, serving the maximum term;
 - (c) Since 1997, I have been the Chair of the Fund for Jewish Higher Education, which helps to fund university programs in Modern and Classical Hebrew, Jewish History and Jewish Civilisation, Thought and Culture;
 - (d) In 2003, I was made a member of the Order of Australia for services to the Jewish and wider communities and for work in a variety of projects promoting communal harmony and understanding;
 - (e) From 2004 to 2015, I was a member of the board of the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board, which is a State Government statutory body;
 - (f) In July 2010, I was appointed by the Australian Federal Government as a member of its Australian Multicultural Advisory Council and from 2011 to 2013 its successor body, the Australian Multicultural Council; and.
 - (g) In April 2026, I was invited by the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police to participate with four other advisers in the co-design of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) Social Cohesion forum initiative.
19. From 1986 until 2005, I was a partner and principal of the legal firm Geoffrey Edwards & Co.
20. In the 1990s and early 2000s, I was an active participant in several cases involving complaints of racial vilification made by members of the Jewish community.
21. In 1992, I was one of several officers of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies who brought a complaint of racial vilification to the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board under section 20C of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW). The complaint was made against the publisher and editor of an Arabic language newspaper called "An Nahar". The complaint related to an article that appeared in the newspaper which had criticised the Catholic Church in Australia for having published guidelines on friendly relations with the Jewish community. The complaint alleged that the An Nahar article included some grossly antisemitic which reprised traditional religious tropes about Jews as Christ-killers. The complaint was resolved by conciliation, and the resolution included publication of an unconditional, unreserved apology by An Nahar to

the Jewish community, together with an opinion piece which I co-authored with the late Jeremy Jones AM. I no longer have a copy of the piece, but the thrust of what we said was that whilst robust debate about foreign policy issues is a normal feature of any democracy, the mobilisation of racist stereotypes as a means of persuasion is unacceptable not only morally, as a matter of principle, but also for pragmatic reasons in maintaining social harmony in an ethnically and religiously diverse society.

22. In 1994 and 1995, following the publication in 1991 of the Report of the National Inquiry into Racist Violence in Australia, the Federal Government put forward draft Federal legislation to address the problems highlighted in the Report, including the problem of racial vilification. The ECAJ made a written submission to a parliamentary Inquiry in support of the draft legislation. I assisted in the drafting of that submission.
23. In 1995, Part IIA of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) (**RDA**) was enacted by the Commonwealth parliament. The new RDA provisions were entitled 'Prohibition of offensive behaviour based on racial hatred'. They established a new basis for individuals who had been the targets of racial vilification to obtain civil redress. I already had an interest in anti-vilification laws and was interested in whether the new laws under Part IIA of the RDA would give broader scope for redress than had previously existed in respect of antisemitic publications. Some of the racial vilification cases that I subsequently acted in pro bono, included:
 - (a) In 1996, I assisted the ECAJ in lodging a complaint under Part IIA of the RDA in the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (as it then was), against an Arabic-language Sydney publication called "El Telegraph". El Telegraph had published an offensive article by Al-Diar Charlie Ayoub, called "Chattering in the Face of the Death Machine," which referenced antisemitic conspiracy theories and cited the fabricated, antisemitic document known as 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion'. The complaint was successfully conciliated and an unconditional, unreserved apology was published by El Telegraph, together with several articles exposing 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' as a fabrication. One of those articles was also jointly authored by the late Jeremy Jones and me.
 - (b) In 1997, the ECAJ was concerned about Holocaust denial publications and other antisemitic content appearing online via the 'Adelaide Institute' website operated by Fredrick Toben (now deceased). I assisted the ECAJ in drafting a complaint to the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (as it then was) and acted as the instructing solicitor for the applicant in the hearing that subsequently took place before the Commission. In 2000, the Commission ruled that Toben had breached section 18C of the RDA, however, for constitutional reasons, the case had

to be relitigated in the Federal Court of Australia. In 2002 the Federal Court ruled that Toben had engaged in conduct that was unlawful under Part IIA of the RDA. Toben appealed the decision to the Full Court which unanimously dismissed the appeal: *Toben v Jones* [2003] FCAFC 137 (27 June 2003). I acted as the instructing solicitor for the applicant in both the Federal Court trial and the appeal.

- (c) Also in 1997, Olga Scully, a woman in Tasmania, was distributing antisemitic leaflets and I assisted the ECAJ to draft a complaint against her to the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. I acted as the instructing solicitor for the applicant in the hearing that subsequently took place before the Commission. In 2000, the Commission ruled that Scully had breached section 18C of the RDA. For the same constitutional reasons, the case had to be relitigated in the Federal Court, and in 2002 the Federal Court ruled that Scully had engaged in conduct that was unlawful under Part IIA of the RDA: *Jones v Scully* [2002] FCA 1080 (2 September 2002). I acted as the instructing solicitor for the applicant in the Federal Court proceeding.

24. Under their respective constitutions, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies each year elects ten Councillors to the ECAJ from among its Deputies to represent the NSW Jewish community. I was first elected as a Councillor of the ECAJ in the early 1990s and was re-elected to that position annually until 2009. For most of that time, the ECAJ had no physical office and no employees. Its work was done by its President, Honorary Officers and other elected Councillors as volunteers, including the late Jeremy Jones, who effectively operated as the ECAJ's Executive Director. The ECAJ operated on a relatively small budget. Its revenue consisted solely of affiliation fees paid by its constituent and affiliate organisations. From 2001 onwards, there was a noticeable uptick in both anti-Israel and antisemitic activity in western countries, including Australia. (This followed in the wake of an NGO "Anti Racism" Forum in Durban that year, during which antisemitic materials, such as The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, were distributed and Jewish delegates were so severely harassed that UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson subsequently reported that "there was horrible antisemitism present".¹) The ECAJ created one employed position at a relatively junior level to assist with the growing volume of work. After Robert Goot AO SC was elected as ECAJ President at the Annual General Meeting in November 2007, he and the Honorary Officers decided that the ECAJ would need a more senior professional to lead its work. Robert Goot and one of his Honorary Officers, Jillian Segal, asked me to consider taking on such a position and I expressed interest in it. It took about 18 months to raise the necessary funds from donors to fund the new position and a physical office. I ceased being an ECAJ

¹ BBC News, 21 December 2002: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/forum/1673034.stm, page 46 of PW-1.

Councillor and was formally employed as the ECAJ's Executive Director from 1 September 2009.

Work at ECAJ

25. Before 7 October 2023, my work at ECAJ included responding to antisemitism in Australia, but it was only one part of a broader Jewish communal and public policy role. By 7 October 2023, I was involved with building alliances and supportive relationships with other sectors of Australian society, educating the wider community about the threat to our liberal democracy posed by antisemitism and other forms of racism, and improving knowledge of, and the standard of discourse about, Israel.
26. After 7 October 2023, a Pandora's Box of antisemitism opened. Since then, a much greater part of my day-to-day work has been consumed by responding to acute antisemitic threats, security issues, incident reporting, media controversy, and urgent engagement with government, police, universities, social media platforms and the community.
27. More specifically, since 7 October 2023, my work has involved, among other things:
 - (a) seeking urgent government security funding for the Jewish community;
 - (b) dealing with threats to Jewish communal institutions and personnel and to individual members of the Jewish community;
 - (c) monitoring the spread of antisemitic incidents and trends in antisemitic discourse;
 - (d) addressing the conduct of hate preachers;
 - (e) responding to doxxing incidents;
 - (f) engaging with universities about campus encampments and manifestations of hatred (including antisemitism) at universities;
 - (g) engaging with leaders of communities of different faiths about the need to demonstrate leadership in the face of rising antisemitism;
 - (h) engaging with a variety of institutions and organisations – some publicly funded and some privately owned – about antisemitic incidents and how to appropriately address them;
 - (i) supervising a growing team at the ECAJ in work to address the uptick in antisemitic incidents and the growth of antisemitic discourse across society;
 - (j) engaging with the media with greater frequency on the topic of antisemitism in Australia in response to the changing external environment; and
 - (k) addressing the politicisation of schools, healthcare and online spaces.

28. Since 7 October 2023, I am much more conscious of how pervasive antisemitic sentiment has become in parts of Australian society where it may have been latent but not manifest.
29. I have read each of the ECAJ's Annual Antisemitism Reports. Since 2013, when Julie Nathan began authoring these reports, she has sent me a first draft of each chapter of the report for review and editing. Much of the editing involves deciding which items of discourse should be prioritised and included in the final version, and which should be excluded because of space limitations. The sheer volume of items of antisemitic discourse, especially online, is too large to fit into a single hard copy publication.

Lived experiences of antisemitism

Personal lived experience of antisemitism

30. I did not encounter antisemitism or discrimination growing up or in my adult life in Australia, save for very rare and low-level casual comments of an antisemitic nature. Outside my communal and professional roles, encounters with antisemitism did not affect how I lived my everyday life or how I thought about the future of my family in Australia.
31. Once I became involved with the organised Jewish community in my mid-thirties and onwards, my exposure to antisemitism increased. I observed antisemitism that was directed to the Jewish community or individuals within the Jewish community. This experience made me realise that in my earlier life I had underestimated the prevalence in Australia of various forms of prejudice, including antisemitism. Through my work with the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and then at the ECAJ, I began to understand the extent of the antisemitism members of the Jewish community were being subjected to. But I still did not encounter antisemitism directly in my personal life or view antisemitism as impacting the way I lived my everyday life.
32. Prior to 7 October 2023, I observed closely as new forms of insidious antisemitism emerged, or older forms in a new guise, including a recrudescence of Nazism. Neo-Nazism had been a fringe phenomenon for decades. From about 2016, neo-Nazism in Australia and other western countries seemed to take on a new lease of life. There was also a surge in far-left antisemitism, which implicitly demanded that Jews conform to certain other people's distorted, self-serving and ahistorical conceptions of Jewish identity and give up our internationally-endorsed right to determine our own collective future and to have a Jewish national homeland and state.
33. However, even though antisemitism was displayed at society's fringes, it seemed to me that antisemitism was still overwhelmingly regarded as shameful in Australia and as having no place in public life.

34. It no longer seems that way to me. That is one reason why the developments since 7 October 2023 have been so disturbing to me.
35. The images of the atrocities committed by Hamas and its supporters on 7 October 2023 were, for many people in the Jewish community and certainly for me, reminiscent of the Nazi period and of the opening phase of the Holocaust. Given that the Australian Jewish community includes a very high proportion of Holocaust survivors and descendants, that shock ran very deep.
36. What shocked me most in the immediate aftermath of 7 October 2023 was the march to and protest at the Sydney Opera House on 9 October 2023, which featured chants of “f... the Jews” and other grossly antisemitic slogans. The NSW government had agreed to light up the sails of Sydney Opera House in the Israeli flag colours of blue and white in solidarity with the victims of the murders, rapes, mutilations and kidnappings committed by Hamas and its supporters. Instead, the Opera House protest became a hate-filled orgy of celebration of these crimes. I have lived in Sydney all my life and had never previously seen anything like this. I regarded the conduct there, and the fact that it was allowed to unfold as it did by our political leaders, as signalling that overt antisemitic behaviour was being normalised and tolerated in Australia. This was ameliorated somewhat by many private expressions of support for the Jewish community which I received, mostly by email, from around Australia from people of many backgrounds. However, expressions of disapproval of the protest from political leaders were in many cases muted, and irrelevantly bracketed condemnations of antisemitism with condemnations of Islamophobia, which had not been evident at the protest. The “mob” that walked from the Sydney Town Hall to the Opera House, with an officially-approved police escort, reminded me of the atmosphere of the Pogroms of the 19th and early 20th century in Eastern Europe which had had official sanction. Although no-one was hurt, the ugly outpouring of Jew-hatred and violent rhetoric was reported prominently in the media in many parts of the world. It seemed to me to be a portent of much worse to come.
37. I have long been mindful, because of my family history and Jewish historical consciousness, that things can change quickly for Jewish communities.
38. After 7 October 2023, and especially after the disgraceful scenes at the Opera House, that apprehension ceased to be abstract. It has grown with each new outbreak of antisemitism since then. Some of the more notorious episodes and events from my perspective have been:
 - a. the spate of public religious hate-preaching in November and December 2023, portraying Jews collectively in derogatory and sub-human terms;
 - b. the mass doxxing of Jewish writers and artists in February 2024;
 - c. the university encampments in April-June 2024;

- d. the Adass synagogue arson attack on 6 December 2024;
- e. the 'Summer of Terror' from October 2024 to February 2025, including an arson attack on the former home of my ECAJ colleague Alex Ryvchin;
- f. the neo-Nazi demonstration outside the NSW parliament on 8 November 2025;
- g. the Bondi Beach murders on 14 December 2025.

39. I have described the impact of these incidents on the Jewish community further below.
40. In terms of their personal impact on me, for the first time in my life, I found myself asking how safe I was, as a Jewish person, and how safe my family was, as Jewish people, in Australia.
41. That was not a thought I had ever expected to have in this country.

Lived experiences of antisemitism shared with me

42. A substantial part of my experience of antisemitism has been as an activist in the Jewish community hearing about the experiences of others.
43. For many years, because I was involved with the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and then ECAJ, I saw and heard regular reports coming in from victims, witnesses, communal organisations and security groups about antisemitic incidents. This opened my eyes to the fact that the problem was more pervasive than I had previously thought.
44. Before 7 October 2023, the concerns being shared with me were already serious, although they were generally experienced against a background in which many Australian Jews still regarded Australia as a comparatively good and tolerant place in which to live. Over the years, community members reported to me that antisemitism was increasingly manifesting in several interconnected ways. One recurrent theme was that social media had become a major vector for antisemitic conspiracy theories, abuse and intimidation, particularly during periods of wider social stress or conflict involving Israel. During the COVID pandemic, conspiratorial claims about hidden Jewish power and control circulated online, and some members of the community reported feeling shocked and isolated by the way previously apolitical or welcoming online environments had suddenly become hostile to Jews.
45. In May 2021, there was a short period of conflict between Israel and Hamas, which was accompanied by a sharp escalation in extreme anti-Israel posts and antisemitic commentary, including rhetoric that left members of the Jewish community feeling unsafe and targeted. Incidents reported to the ECAJ in that period by members of the Jewish community and by the wider community, some of which came to me via the ECAJ's "info" email address,, included threats via social media, antisemitic graffiti at synagogues and communal institutions, abusive emails and literature, and verbal abuse directed at Jewish adults and

school-children, causing some parents to fear for their children's safety in public places, at communal institutions and at sporting venues. Details appear in the ECAJ's Antisemitism Report in 2021 (ECA.0001.0001.0006) pp. 103-104 and Chapter 7.

46. A further theme which I noticed from reading the reports to the ECAJ before 7 October 2023 was the increasing brazenness of neo-Nazi and other extremist activity. The reports described conspiracy theories, anti-vaccination and anti-lockdown agitation, and organised neo-Nazi propaganda as contributing to a worsening climate for Jews. This was noted in the ECAJ's Antisemitism Report in 2022 (ECA.0001.0001.0007), p. 6, and cited by High Court Justice Jayne Jagot in the Sir Zelman Cowen annual lecture on 5 October 2023.²
47. The ECAJ had recorded 495 antisemitic incidents in the twelve months prior to 30 September 2023, representing a steady increase over previous years. There were especially significant increases in postering, stickering and graffiti incidents. The reports recorded that neo-Nazi groups had become more overt, including by displaying Nazi salutes on the steps of the Victorian parliament (See Victorian Legislative Assembly Hansard 30 August 2023³) and also outside the Holocaust Museum in Adelaide, targeting synagogues with antisemitic posters and stickers, and propagating antisemitic material in public places. Those developments contributed to a sense among many in the community that antisemitism was no longer confined to the fringe, but was becoming more visible, confident and normalised.
48. In the year following 7 October 2023, the ECAJ recorded 2,062 reported incidents, with large increases in all categories of incidents. I had conversations for the first time in my life with people in the Jewish community asking whether they needed a "Plan B" as an alternative to living in Australia, and questioning whether they were safe here. That, in my experience, marked a fundamental change in perception about where we fit in as Jews and how safe we feel in this country.
49. With each of the instances of antisemitism that became notorious and were featured in media reports, there was a reaction in the Jewish community that manifested itself in anguished complaints and expressions of distress that were communicated to the ECAJ and to me. The following stand out in my memory.

Religious hate preaching incidents

50. In November and December 2023, there was an increase in reported instances of hate preaching against Jews by self-described Muslim clerics. One of them, Imam Ahmad Zod, of the Masjid As-Sunnah in Lakemba likened Jews to "rats". Another, William Haddad, delivered

² <https://www.hcourt.gov.au/sites/default/files/assets/publications/speeches/current-justices/jagotj/Sir%20Zelman%20Cowen%20lecture%202023%20-%20AGLC%20Publishing%20Format.pdf>, page 69 of PW-1.

³ <https://new.parliament.vic.gov.au/parliamentary-activity/hansard/hansard-details/HANSARD-2145855009-21875>, page 84 of PW-1.

a series of speeches to his followers at the Al Madinah Dawah Centre in Bankstown in Sydney which were video-recorded and uploaded to various online platforms. The speeches included generalised statements about the Jewish people, describing them as mischievous, treacherous, vile and murderous, among other alleged characteristics. Dehumanising entire communities has frequently been a precursor to social exclusion, discrimination, persecution and violence against them.

51. Various Jewish community members contacted me expressing concern about this preaching and what it might lead to, and those concerns reinforced my own impression that the preaching was grossly antisemitic and had the potential to normalise antisemitism and promote violence and other forms of anti-social behaviour against Jewish people and institutions.
52. It quickly became obvious to me from their public statements that the police and other authorities would not take any legal action to deal with this sort of preaching through the criminal justice system. They said they were powerless to take effective action, just as they had said they were after the scenes at the Opera House the previous month. Accordingly, the ECAJ decided it would take private civil action to seek redress under the provisions of Part IIA of the RDA. It had been more than 20 years since the ECAJ had brought Part IIA complaints against anybody and obtained judgments against them in the Federal Court. Those cases had been against Nazi-style antisemites. The ECAJ decided that the time had come to take the same kind of legal action against Islamist antisemites. The complaints were brought by me together with ECAJ Deputy President Robert Goot.
53. The complaint against Zod was resolved in May 2025 through the AHRC's conciliation process. Zod published an agreed form of apology online, withdrew the offending comments from the online sites where they had appeared and undertook in writing not to republish them. See ECAJ's Media statement dated 29 May 2025.⁴
54. The complaint against Haddad became the subject of proceedings in the Federal Court: Wertheim v Haddad [2025] FCA 720. Judgment was handed down on 1 July 2025 with further orders made on 17 July 2025. In summary, the court found that three speeches by Haddad made perverse generalisations against Jewish people as a group, which were fundamentally racist and antisemitic, and their publication was in contravention of the provisions of Part IIA of the RDA. The court ordered Haddad and his Centre to remove recordings and texts of those speeches from any internet page or other publication in their control, to publish corrective notices online and have them featured and pinned, and not to republish any similar content in future. Haddad and the Centre were also ordered to pay our legal costs

⁴ <https://www.ecaj.org.au/statement-on-racial-hatred-complaint-re-ahmed-zod/>, page 107 of PW-1.

Mass doxxing of Jewish writers and artists

55. The next major event in the escalation of antisemitism in Australia that caused widespread consternation in the Jewish community occurred in early February 2024 when a support group of 600 Jewish artists, writers, musicians and other workers in the cultural sector were 'doxxed'. That is, their personal details from a private WhatsApp group were published without their consent by anti-Zionist activists, making these persons a target. The Jewish artists group had come together because they were being pushed by fellow artists to denounce Israel as a modern-day Satan or else be banished from the local arts scene. Under attack, the WhatsApp group had been formed for Jewish creatives, where some in the group shared their feelings of alienation with fellow Jewish artists. Perhaps ironically, members of the chat group were largely left-wing Jewish artists who disagreed with many policies of the Israeli government and were devastated by the loss of life among Palestinian civilians from the war in Gaza. They were also deeply wounded by the minimisation, justification, and denial by fellow artists of the October 7 atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel. I am aware of this because of personal conversations with several of them at the time in February 2024, and subsequently,
56. The WhatsApp group was breached, and chats were stolen and participants' names, businesses, work details and pictures were published alongside their comments. The group was labelled "Zio600" and they were accused of supporting "genocide, racism and white supremacism". "Zio" is a slang and generally abusive term. Although it is shorthand for Zionist, it is usually used as a codeword for "Jew". In this context I regarded the word "Zios" as being a reference to Jews. Various social media influencers and groups posted these links on Instagram. Further details appear in confidential documents ECA.0001.0002.0099 to ECA.0001.0002.0103. For me, and at least two people who had been doxxed who I spoke to at the time, although the malicious 'branding' of Jews in this highly organised way was not state-orchestrated, it triggered emotions recalling the lists of Jews who were expelled from various professions in Germany drawn up by the Nazi regime in the 1930s.
57. On 8 February 2024 the Prime Minister stated in parliament that the "social disharmony" brought on by the war in Gaza was "the worst I have seen".
58. Several doxxed artists texted and phoned us at ECAJ to say they had received torrents of online abuse and had suffered professionally, as they had lost work, been excluded from artistic or professional opportunities, or had become the subject of a complaint themselves after objecting to antisemitic conduct.

59. The ECAJ noted media reports that Jewish saxophonist Joshua Moshe was doxxed and received online threats simply for being a member of the WhatsApp group⁵). The harassment became so bad that a band he was a member of fired him. They did this via Instagram, instead of telling him to his face, even though they had worked together for almost ten years. The band issued a public apology to him in March 2026, more than two years after this incident.⁶
60. The antisemitic incidents reported to the ECAJ or which the ECAJ picked up from the media which followed the doxxing are listed in the ECAJ's 2024 Antisemitism Report (ECA.0001.0001.0009) at p. 72. For example, people's families were threatened. A Jewish couple who received a photograph of their five-year-old son from an anti-Zionist activist with the threatening message "I know where you live".
61. The ECAJ immediately wrote to both the Australian Federal Police and the eSafety Commissioner asking them to establish a formal complaints mechanism, ideally online, to allow allegations of doxxing to be reported to the AFP, investigated, screenshots recorded and action taken as appropriate. We also asked them to request internet service providers, social media platforms and other relevant parties to identify and de-platform the perpetrators. The ECAJ letters are dated 16 February 2024 and appear in the ECAJ's Annual Report 2024 (ECA.0001.0001.0017) at pp. 341 to 342 and pp. 343 to 344. Their replies appear at pp. 345 to 346 and pp. 347 to 348. Whilst I thought their replies were sympathetic in tone, they essentially said they were powerless to act. In March 2024 we provided similar information to the government in response to its consultation on doxxing. Eventually, in September 2024, the Federal government amended the *Criminal Code* by introducing a new criminal doxxing offence, as the ECAJ had been urging.⁷

University encampments

62. From April 2024, 'Gaza solidarity' tent encampments of students and outside activists were established at seven of Australia's 42 universities, beginning with the University of Sydney on 24 April 2024, where the inflammatory slogan 'Globalise the Intifada' was featured each day on the protesters' whiteboard of things to do. Images of the whiteboard that were published in the University's student newspaper *Honi Soit* between 24 and 26 April 2024 are reproduced below.⁸

⁵ See, for example, <https://www.newsweek.com/antisemitism-down-under-turning-vicious-opinion-1867358>, page 112 of PW-1.

⁶ <https://www.skynews.com.au/australia-news/politics/propalestine-melbourne-band-issues-apology-after-dumping-jewish-saxophonist-amid-doxxing-turmoil/news-story/e3b25d887f13c49b02724143ad2005a6>, page 121 of PW-1.

⁷ ECAJ response to Consultation on Doxxing 25.3.2024: https://consultations.ag.gov.au/integrity/doxxing-and-privacy-reforms/consultation/view_respondent?uuld=471296943, page 135 of PW-1.

⁸ <https://honisoit.com/2024/04/day-2-of-the-usyd-gaza-solidarity-encampment/>; <https://honisoit.com/2024/04/day-4-of-usyd-camp-for-gaza-sees-greater-media-and-community-attention/>, page 141-159 of PW-1.

heard from them almost daily during the encampment period about the harassment and intimidation they were experiencing from the actions of protesters, some of them from off-campus, and the inaction and professions of powerlessness of the University authorities.

64. On 26 June 2024, the ECAJ joined with the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, the Australian Academic Alliance Against Antisemitism (5A), Australia Israel & Jewish Affairs Council, and the Zionist Federation of Australia in issuing a joint statement condemning the University of Sydney for its capitulation to Islamist extremists and declaring our lack of confidence in the capacity of the University to provide for the physical, cultural and psycho-social safety of Jewish students and staff members.¹³ The capitulation took the form of a formal agreement by the university to allow a group associated with Hizb ut-Tahrir to participate in a working group to review the university's investments and defence and security-related research activities. (Hizb ut-Tahrir was recently proscribed as a prohibited hate group under the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)).
65. Although there were two parliamentary inquiries in the wake of these events, calls for a judicial inquiry from the Jewish community went unheeded.

The Adass synagogue arson attack

66. On 6 December 2024, the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne's south was firebombed. The study hall was completely destroyed by fire along with other service rooms. The Torah scrolls were kept in a fireproof safe, but the heat of the fire was so intense that the fireproofing was only partially successful. Some scrolls were saved, but five were damaged by fire and water and needed to be repaired or replaced. Hundreds of prayer books and volumes of the Talmud were destroyed and required burial in accordance with Jewish law. Two congregants who were in the building at the time escaped with minor burn injuries. If the attack had occurred during the morning prayer service which usually commences at 5:30am and is well attended, there would almost certainly have been serious injuries or loss of life.
67. On Monday 9 December, police declared the Adass Israel attack to be a terrorist incident.
68. Like every other member of the Jewish community I spoke to, I found the incident deeply triggering. Although the attack was not state-sanctioned and nobody thankfully was killed, my immediate emotional reaction was to think of my paternal grandparents and their experiences on Kristallnacht when synagogues in different parts of Germany were burned to the ground, in events that preceded the Holocaust.
69. Although it was only small consolation, following the Adass Israel arson attack I received an outpouring of emails expressing sympathy and support for the Jewish community from other

¹³ A copy of that statement appears in **ECA.0001.0001.0017** - ECAJ Annual Report 2024, p.217 (Attachment AI).

Australians and from representative organisations of other faith communities. For some of these people and organisations, this was the first time they had reached out to the ECAJ after October 7, 2023.

The Summer of Terror

70. In October 2024, the shop of a kosher catering business in Bondi in Sydney was attacked by arsonists in the dead of night leaving the premises, shop fittings and stock completely gutted. In November 2024, 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. This was followed by the burning down of the Adass Synagogue on 6 December 2024. January 2025 saw more cars in Sydney set on fire and daubed with anti-Israel and antisemitic slogans. Allawah and Newtown synagogues in Sydney were defaced with antisemitic and anti-Israel graffiti. The former home of my colleague ECAJ co-CEO Alex Ryvchin in Dover Heights was vandalised, two cars were firebombed, including one with antisemitic graffiti, and two others were damaged. The garage at the front was smeared with red paint. 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 reported as a fabrication. Although it was reported as part of a criminal plan that only made it appear like a terrorism plot, the creation of fear in the Jewish community was an essential part of the incident and the mastermind was revealed to have had a history of posting antisemitic comments online.¹⁴ 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 Sydney on 1 February 2025. On 12 February 2025, two Muslim nurses on shift at Bankstown Hospital were recorded in a video conversation with a Jewish interviewer and boasted in the video that they would kill Israeli patients if they had to treat them.
71. Arrests of most of the alleged perpetrators were reported to have occurred during 2025, although it was clear from the official Australian government announcement on 26 August 2025¹⁵ that those arrested were low-level criminals and not those who had ordered and orchestrated the attacks. In late August 2025, the Federal government 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 the kosher catering business in Sydney, and most likely some of the other

¹⁴ Stephen Rice and Will Seitam, ‘[Sayet Erhan Akca, mastermind allegedly behind caravan ‘terror’ plot, posted vile antisemitic slurs](#)’, *The Australian*, March 14, 2025, page 172 of PW-1.

¹⁵ Reproduced in the ECAJ’s Annual Report 2025 - ECA.0001.0001.0018 - at pp. 372 to 374.

antisemitic attacks. Although the Federal government took strong and welcome action by expelling the Iranian ambassador in Australia and proscribing the IRGC as a terrorist organisation, the message I was getting from the Jewish community was one of apprehension that the seriousness of the physical threats to our community was escalating. My colleague Alex Ryvchin wrote about this mood in the Free Press after his former home was torched and cars nearby were vandalised with “F-ck Jews”, and concluded: “It won’t end with arson. The question before Australians now is: Will someone get killed before it does?”¹⁶

72. The frequency and severity of antisemitic incidents in Australia abated somewhat after February 2025, but remained at historically high levels, and it was evident to me that the psychological impact on the Jewish community was profound.

Neo-Nazi demonstration outside the NSW parliament

73. On 8 November 2025, about 60 neo-Nazis gathered outside the NSW State parliament for 20 minutes and made speeches calling for ‘the Jewish lobby’ to be ‘abolished’. I took this to be directed at Jewish organisations like the ECAJ. Unlike previous neo-Nazi stunts, most of the participants were not masked, and were quickly identified. Some of them appeared to be ordinary, everyday types, but others included convicted women bashers, stalkers, drug dealers and an accused paedophile. One of them, a civil engineer who was employed with a multinational company, was subsequently deported with his family to his native South Africa. Two days after the demonstration, the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney issued a statement condemning it, noting that it had “*rightly drawn condemnation from across the community – particularly as it occurred on the eve of the anniversary of Kristallnacht, the 1938 pogrom against Germany’s Jewish community*”. He demanded that the authorities take action and concluded: “*Antisemitism has traded in lies, hate and violence for centuries. When it appears in modern day Australia it must be named, resisted and rejected. Antisemitism—whether from the far left or far right—has no place in Australian society.*”¹⁷

74. I was heartened by this reaction.

75. On the other hand, I found the decisions of the NSW Police on this occasion to be baffling and disturbing. The media reported that people inside and outside the Jewish community were outraged that the NSW police had not opposed the holding of the gathering. I received several phone and text messages to that effect. The reason given by the NSW police seemed utterly unconvincing. They maintained that the purpose of the gathering and the slogans

¹⁶ ‘In Australia, Jew-Hate is out of control’, January 22, 2025: <https://www.thefp.com/p/in-australia-jew-hate-is-out-of-control>, page 177 of PW-1.

¹⁷ <https://sydneyanglicans.net/mediareleases/scrutiny-needed-on-protest> page 182 of PW-1.

were not in breach of any law.¹⁸ Yet only a month earlier, in *Commissioner of Police v Amal Nasser* [2025] NSWCA 224, the NSW police had opposed (rightly in my view) another proposed Gaza war protest march to the Opera House because of “public safety” considerations, regardless of whether the purpose of the gathering and the proposed slogans were in breach of any law. I was at a loss to understand how the NSW police could fail to see a paramilitary-style line up of neo-Nazis outside the NSW parliament as a threat to public safety. “Public safety” concerns are not limited to the risk of a crowd crush. The neo-Nazi line-up took place on a main public road in the heart of Sydney on a Saturday morning. If a person wearing Jewish or other religious clothing, or a person of colour, had happened to pass by, it requires no leap of the imagination to understand the threat of verbal abuse or physical violence they would have faced. The incident illustrated to me a disturbing ignorance on the part of NSW police about the nature and history of Nazism, its ideology of power worship, its adherence to the law of the jungle, its contempt for the higher human instinct to seek justice and protect the vulnerable, and its propensity for violence.

The Bondi Beach murders

76. The mass shootings and killing of 15 people at a Chanukah event at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025 was the first time in Australia Jews were killed at a Jewish community gathering where they were simply being Jews. I could not help but recall the shameful history of the Pogroms, the Holocaust and of anti-Jewish atrocities in other countries. It was something I would never have imagined possible in this country. It pains me greatly to say this, but I feel that the moral disgrace of this atrocity has indelibly stained the fabric of Australian life.
77. Eleven days before the shootings, on 3 December 2025, the ECAJ released its 2025 report on antisemitic incidents in Australia showing that in the two years since 7 October 2023 there had been three times the number of reported antisemitic incidents than in the two years prior, and an annual average of five times the annual average for the ten years prior. However, the shootings at Bondi Beach were the first attack on Jews in Australia that claimed human lives.
78. The shooting attack occurred at a Jewish community event, but it took place at Bondi Beach, the people’s beach, on what should have been a carefree summer’s day. It was an attack on all Australians, our freedoms and our way of life.
79. There were numerous acts of heroism by Jewish participants at the event, by bystanders including a bystander of Syrian Muslim background, and by the first responders including

¹⁸ Jordan Beazley, [Was the neo-Nazi rally outside NSW parliament legal? Could police have stopped it?](#), *The Guardian*, 12 November 2025; Jessica McSweeney and Patrick Begley, [‘Neo-Nazi protesters outside parliament did not incite racial hatred, police find’](#), *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 1, 2026, page 184-194 of PW-1.

volunteer surf lifesavers and others who rushed to the scene to provide assistance to the wounded.

80. In my observation, the shootings took the levels of shock and trauma in the Australian Jewish community from the surge in antisemitism over the previous two years to far greater heights. The most severely affected were the survivors and the families of those killed. One of the ECAJ's own staff members was shot and wounded in the attack and required repeated visits to the hospital for treatment. All ECAJ personnel were advised to obtain counselling.
81. It seemed to me that the shock and trauma was felt not only by the Jewish community but also by the whole nation. There was a massive, spontaneous outpouring of public support for the Jewish community as the entrance to the Bondi Pavilion became the site for vigils, public solidarity gatherings, speeches by public figures, the laying of wreaths and lighting of candles, including the lighting of a large Hanukkah each evening during the eight day festival of Chanukah. The ECAJ, like other Jewish bodies, received a flood of messages of support from government and political figures, civil society leaders, Christian, Sikh, Muslim and Hindu religious leaders, high profile personalities in many sectors of society and private individuals. Most of the messages from within Australia were heartfelt and specifically called out antisemitism and terrorism. The ECAJ responded to each of the messages it received. Messages from a small number of other Australian organisations unfortunately ignored that it had been an attack specifically on the Jewish community and referred only to generic racism.
82. The messaging from government leaders in condemning the killings as an antisemitic attack was clear and appropriate, but it seemed too late for words.
83. In addition to attending meetings of the Jewish community's crisis management group in NSW on the evening of 14 December and over succeeding days, I had daily contact with the Prime Minister and his staff, the Minister for Home Affairs, the Director-General of ASIO and the AFP Commissioner, to discuss the full range of official responses that would need to follow, including the religiously appropriate treatment of the bodies of those killed, disaster support and recovery funding needed by their families and survivors, security measures for the Jewish community and ECAJ personnel, legislative reform including new hate speech offences, education reform, implementation of the Special Envoy's action plan, and immigration and visa tightening measures.

Street protests

84. All of the foregoing events I have described took place against a backdrop of almost weekly street demonstrations in Sydney, Melbourne and elsewhere concerning the ongoing war between Israel against Hamas and other terrorist groups. These demonstrations could at

times be peaceful and politically focused, but the rhetoric frequently descended into expressions of naked hatred of Israel's very existence and thereby provided a tacit social licence for expressions of antisemitism. In my observation there can be a range of opinions in the Australian Jewish community about various Israeli government policies and actions from time to time, just as there is in Israel itself. However, in the Jewish community, there is near unanimous support for Israel's fundamental right to exist in peace and security. In my observation it has been the depth and breadth of support for this fundamental right by the Australian Jewish community that has at times been used as a pretext by those who oppose Israel's very existence to express hatred against the Jewish community as a whole, or particular individuals, and at times to act on that hatred in the ways I have described above (eg the hate preachers, the doxxing incidents and the university encampments). In my observation, the effect of the outpourings of vitriol that were evident on such occasions was to intimidate Jewish people who support Israel's right to exist against expressing that view in public or socially or at work, or at least to give them pause before doing so.

85. Another example which I believe illustrates the slippery slope from ostensible political protest to antisemitism was well described in the judgment handed down on 26 February 2026 by Vice President Judge Tran in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) case of *Vorchheimer v Tayeh* [2026] VCAT 134. The case related to repeated chants of "All Zionists are terrorists" by organisers and participants at a "pro-Palestine" rally in Melbourne's CBD on 23 March 2025. One protest leader was taken to VCAT by Jewish lawyer Menachem Vorchheimer. Tayeh had initiated the chants. Mr Vorchheimer alleged the word "Zionist" in this context was a codeword for "Jew". He contended that Mr Tayeh's chant racially and religiously vilified Jewish people, in contravention of sections 7 and 8 of the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (Vic). Vice President Judge Tran ruled in Mr Vorchheimer's favour. The judge's reasoning is summarised in the following extracts from the judgment.

"The fundamental question in this case is not what "Zionist" means; but rather what the impact of Mr Tayeh's initiation of the chant "All Zionists are terrorists" was on the emotions of ordinary rally participants. Emotions are by their nature impressionistic and impulsive rather than the product of a stepped through rational process of textual construction." [40]

"[E]ncouraging thousands of people to chant a simplified and absolute statement ("All Zionists are terrorists") is conduct calculated to incite emotional and impressionistic responses, rather than careful thinking. By its nature, a chant fires the emotions and encourages a sense of unity in its participants. When what is chanted is the attachment of a heinous label (terrorist) to an undifferentiated group of people (All Zionists) it normalises and encourages extreme emotions such as hatred towards the targets of the chant." [76].

"This was an audience primed by their experiences for incitement to strong emotions." [78]

"Mr Tayeh engaged in conduct (initiating a simplistic chant assigning a heinous label to an undifferentiated class of people) which was inherently likely to incite strong emotions such as hatred. As explained at the outset, ss 7 and 8 are not concerned with outlawing criticism;

but rather with outlawing the incitement of a relevant emotion on the ground of race or religious belief or activity..." [111]

"In the entirety of the circumstances described above, I have concluded that the natural and ordinary effect of thousands of people united in chanting "All Zionists are terrorists" at the Rally would be to tip many rally participants over the threshold into hatred directed towards Jewish people." [121]

86. In addition to the specific incidents and events I have described in paragraphs 40 - 98, the ECAJ continues to receive complaints from Jewish people in sectors such as education, healthcare, the arts and culture, and workplaces, including complaints about bullying, politicisation, ostracism and a general sense of being unsafe or unwelcome.
87. I have never before seen Jews excluded from so many different areas of public life in Australia within such a short period of time.

Experiences of antisemitism or threats experienced by ECAJ and its people

88. Although historically much of the antisemitism I encountered in my ECAJ communal role was directed at the Jewish community more generally, since 7 October 2023, the ECAJ itself, and members of its leadership, have increasingly been targets.
89. On 12 October 2023, a message was posted on the ECAJ's Instagram account from an account called [REDACTED]. The message said, "We are coming for you soon from western Sydney". Attached to the message was an image of a man wearing a mask and brandishing a knife, standing behind another kneeling man dressed in an orange robe. ECAJ staff immediately recognised the kneeling man as journalist James Foley shortly before he was beheaded by the Islamic State terrorist holding the knife in 2012. The image had been widely disseminated online and in the media at the time. The ECAJ immediately reported the message to police. The ECAJ dealt with other hate emails in July 2024, including other threatening social media messages, and engaged with police in relation to the charging of persons responsible.¹⁹
90. As I described above, Alex Ryvchin's former home was targeted in January 2025, when two vehicles were graffitied and firebombed and the garage was doused in red paint.
91. In January 2025 I received a personal security briefing from police and was advised to take additional precautions in relation to myself, my family and my home.
92. In February 2025, the ECAJ reported to the AFP a threat made to Alex Ryvchin.

¹⁹ See documents ECA.0001.0002.0086 to ECA.0001.0002.0091.

93. In January 2025 after the Dural caravan incident I described above, the police came to my home in the early hours of the morning to check the safety of the premises after a report of an intruder in the vicinity, which I found highly unnerving.
94. Following the Bondi Beach terrorist attack on 14 December 2025, police protection was made available to me day and night for a period. I was grateful for the professionalism of the police officers involved, but I found that level of protection unnerving, and it brought home to me how grave the threat environment had become.
95. In parallel to the deterioration of the physical security environment, the online environment for Jewish public figures and organisations has substantially worsened. There has been a proliferation of antisemitic content online, some of which is overtly threatening and comes from persons of interest who require monitoring by law enforcement and Community Security Groups as well as by Jewish communal organisations. That content includes specific threats against ECAJ personnel including me, as well as specific threats against ECAJ as an organisation.
96. In response to growing antisemitic discourse, and, in some instances, incidents, online, the ECAJ has had to turn off the comments on its social media posts on Facebook, except for people who have 'friended' or 'followed' the ECAJ page. After monitoring our Facebook page for several months, and receiving feedback from members of the Jewish community, we reached the view that the growing deluge of antisemitic discourse vastly overwhelmed positive engagement with our posts and had the impact of instilling fear in members of the Jewish community and discouraging them from engaging with the ECAJ's online content.
97. As a result of the increased antisemitism directed at ECAJ personnel, the ECAJ was advised by a former Head of CSG NSW who now heads his own protective security company to conduct monitoring of online threats and abuse directed at our senior leadership with public-facing roles – both Honorary Officers and senior staff. I wish to emphasise that this is different from the recording of antisemitic incidents and antisemitic discourse directed at the community, which the ECAJ captures through its existing reporting mechanisms. Instead, this is monitoring of online mentions of the names of our key public-facing personnel, which is conducted for health and safety reasons. It comprises monitoring for threats and abuse directed specifically towards certain identified senior ECAJ Officers and staff. The security monitoring, with confidential monthly reports, commenced on 1 November 2023, and will continue for the foreseeable future. The security monitoring is provided by an external commercial provider at a significant ongoing cost to the ECAJ. The ECAJ has also been requested by the law firm which has represented Robert Goot and myself since January 2024 in the Federal Court proceedings of *Wertheim v Haddad* (and the preceding complaint to Australian Human Rights Commission) to have the same commercial provider undertake

threat monitoring for our lawyers in that case and this is also continuing through the process of enforcing the costs order we obtained. There is no Government or other external support for these additional protections, which the ECAJ has been carrying as part of its annual operating expenditure, and continues to carry. The abuse and threats are real and significant. I give some examples from the most recent month:

Social media posts directed at Alex Ryvchin in February 2026:²⁰



²⁰ The watermelon has been used since the 1980s as a symbol of Palestinian nationalism and solidarity because its red flesh, black seeds, and green/white rind are the same colours as the Palestinian flag. In the digital age, the watermelon symbol has taken the form of an emoji: <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/08/1222718339/why-watermelons-are-symbol-of-palestinian-solidarity>, page 195 of PW-1.

Witness Statement of Peter Wertheim

On Four Corners, Alex Ryvchin here blamed lack of leadership for the Bondi terror. Well he's correct, it was the lack of leadership from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and others who instead of displaying typical moral values and empathy on the killing in Gaza. The ECAJ supported the killing in Gaza and objected to any ceasefire.



may every Israeli and their supporters go into extinction... a painful extinction... an eternal state of death and dying without end or relief

Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth... so soft and sweet... the masks of Satan

he's a very sick man. I just wish that his illness was terminal, painful and slow.

Zionism is a terminal disease of the mind body and soul... utterly fatal with no redemption possible

Witness Statement of Peter Wertheim



Social media posts directed at me in February 2026:





98. The demonising and dehumanising rhetoric in these posts is especially disturbing, including completely invented references to “paedophiles”, which is an obvious red flag because of the violent emotions and vigilantism that paedophilia is known to provoke. This has been building for some time and has been observed by the external security provider that monitors online threats to ECAJ personnel and our officers. The hate speech and threats have not plateaued despite the ceasefire in October 2025. External events such as the COVID 19 pandemic and the Jeffrey Epstein scandal which have nothing to do with Jewish community organisations or their representatives have added a new layer to antisemitic conspiracy theories and provided further impetus to manifestations of online hate. Another feature of these posts is the sadistic ideation calling for a slow and painful death for individuals who are made hate

objects, which is often what is being acted out in the atrocities committed by terrorists, including on October 7, 2023. As the rhetoric escalates to more violent language, and becomes more emotive, it seems to me to become more likely that it will galvanise unstable and impressionable people into violent action.

99. Where the threat is considered to be extreme or a potential criminal offence, the ECAJ's external security consultant refers the threat to State or Federal police. Those referrals to police are occurring on a regular basis.
100. These online threats are concerning, time-consuming to analyse, and create a significant resource burden on the ECAJ, eating into time that would otherwise be available to ECAJ staff to communicate with individuals and organisations within the Jewish community who need assistance, or who have ideas for developing new educational, inter-cultural or inter-religious programs. For example, the scope of duties of ECAJ's Chief of Staff, Lynzi Bennun, has nothing to do with security. Yet she needed to spend many hours liaising with police and providing police with a formal statement in relation to the "beheading" image that was posted on the ECAJ's Instagram page, as detailed above.²¹

Impacts of antisemitism

101. In my view, the key current impacts of antisemitism on Jewish Australians are pervasive feelings of fear, loss of trust in institutions, and a changed sense of place and belonging in Australia, such that it has changed how Jewish Australians live. The overall feeling is a sense of a steady escalation in the number and severity of antisemitic incidents and a corresponding ongoing diminution in our sense of safety and security.
102. There has been fear and intimidation in ordinary daily life. As outlined earlier in this statement, antisemitism has been used as a weapon to try to intimidate the Jewish community and other supporters of Israel into silence. It has spilled over into politics, the media, social media, universities, schools, trade unions, the arts sector, the health care sector and faith communities. I and many other Australian Jews I have spoken to see these developments as a direct threat to Jewish life and the Jewish way of life in Australia, and also a long-term threat to the future of Australia as a vibrant democracy and a free and peaceful multicultural society. I have been deeply disappointed to read claims, even from generally respected sources,²² that the charge of antisemitism has been raised disingenuously to try to stifle free speech and legitimate debate about Israel's war against Hamas and other actions by the Israeli government. I can only speak from the Australian experience, but I believe these claims have

²¹ See document ECA.0001.0002.0088.

²² <https://www.humanrights.unsw.edu.au/research/commentary/antisemitism-plan-australia-contentious-definition>; <https://www.amnesty.org.au/special-envoys-plan-to-combat-antisemitism-risks-freedom-of-speech/>, page 211-218 of PW-1.

no foundation whatsoever. Whilst it is entirely reasonable for different people to have differing views about various proposals that have been proposed to combat and prevent antisemitism, I have been appalled by claims that the Jewish community is exaggerating or exploiting the problem for ulterior ends. At best these claims are based on a kind of blinkeredness concerning the nature of antisemitism exhibited by people who seem to have a far more generous and empathetic understanding of all other forms of racism. At worst the claims themselves proceed from antisemitic assumptions.

103. I have also observed antisemitism affect the willingness of some Australian Jews to identify openly as Jewish in public. Some Jewish people have stopped wearing religious garb in public, or have concealed Star of David necklaces from public view, and synagogues and communal institutions have had to be secured behind ever higher walls, cameras and guards. I believe this has a very significant impact. It means that antisemitism is not merely offensive or upsetting. It changes behaviour, restricts confidence, and causes people to modify how visibly Jewish they are in public life.
104. I have also seen the impact on the education system and on younger members of the Jewish community. Jewish students have reported feeling isolated, fearful and abandoned by educational institutions that are supposed to protect them or make them feel safe. Some have reconsidered their participation in campus activities for fear of their safety. Jewish parents have feared for the safety of their children while travelling, at communal institutions and at sporting venues. In my view, when antisemitism affects whether children and young adults can participate freely and confidently in education and community life, that has a deep and lasting effect on communal life as a whole.
105. I have seen people shrink away from public Jewish participation, including by avoiding outdoor celebrations, public rallies, Holocaust memorial events and other communal gatherings because they fear for their safety. The richness and vibrancy of Jewish life has thereby been shaken and diminished.
106. I have also seen the opposite response, namely people participating all the more strongly in Jewish life out of a determination not to yield to intimidation. So the impact has not been only fear and withdrawal. It has also been a strengthening of communal solidarity and resolve. But that solidarity has been forged under strain, and against a background of very real fear, hurt, and concern by Australian Jews for their own, their families' and their community's well-being, safety and security.
107. Overall, I would say that the richness and vibrancy of Jewish communal life has been adversely affected, even though on the surface Jewish communal life continues. In my observation, the complete freedom and wholeheartedness with which people once

participated in the life of the Jewish and wider community has been tempered by caution, wariness and concern for safety.

108. I also consider that antisemitism has affected the way in which many Jews view the broader society and its institutions, because repeated failures by policing agencies, regulators, universities and governments to act effectively or promptly, as outlined above, have conveyed to many that their safety and dignity are not being given the priority they deserve.

Impact on Jewish leadership

109. Despite the events I describe in this statement, I have never for a moment regretted becoming involved in Jewish community leadership. I have had a range of experiences and have been given insights into a breadth of perspectives I never could have imagined. I have built relationships not only with many people in the Jewish community but also with communities of different ethnicities and faiths. My role as a Jewish leader has enriched my life profoundly.
110. At the same time, I know that younger Jews today face pressures at universities, in workplaces and elsewhere that never existed in my day, and I do not judge them if they feel intimidated or pressured to hide their Jewishness. I regard that as a great shame and, in a way, a tragedy, because pressuring Jews to retreat from their identity and collectively to disappear through assimilation by submitting to the beliefs and expectations of others is one of the motivations for antisemitism.
111. Jewish community leaders outside of the ECAJ have had to put in place protective measures at significant cost. Rabbis and leaders who do not have the capacity to monitor the online or physical environment may also face risks they may be unaware of.
112. Based on my exchanges with younger Jewish communal leaders and others, I think antisemitism has plainly made leadership and public Jewish visibility more daunting than it ought to be.

Security

113. The Jewish community is now at greater risk than ever before because of the number of antisemitic events described above and the failure of our political leadership to move more quickly to denounce that conduct as unacceptable. The more Jewish synagogues or schools or businesses or homes or cars that have been destroyed, damaged and defaced, the greater the likelihood that these events including physical harm to members of the Jewish community will increase in the future. The events send a chilling message to members of the Jewish community and their impact goes well beyond the financial harm or inconvenience caused by damage to property.

114. ECAJ has been making representations to the Commonwealth for Jewish community security funding since at least 2007.
115. Over time, Commonwealth programs have evolved from the Secure Schools Program, to the Safer Communities Fund, to the faith-based places program, and then, after 7 October 2023, to the Enhancing Security for Jewish Communities program.
116. In October 2023, the immediate security support ECAJ sought was not limited to guarding at individual sites, but extended to increased manpower, additional services, training of staff and personnel, technology, patrols, crisis management and security monitoring through the Community Security Groups (CSGs) nationally, with allocation to be made by the National Council for Jewish Community Security (NCJCS) on a needs basis. The NCJCS is responsible for the coordination of security matters for the Australian Jewish community nationally and across and between the States and Territories. The NCJCS is constituted under the aegis of the ECAJ, including the ECAJ President and myself, together with the most senior representatives of the CSGs and their respective governance and oversight bodies, to provide sound governance and relevant security expertise. Established just before the COVID pandemic in 2020, it reflects the necessity of establishing strong national coordination on key security matters, given that any adverse security outcomes in one State affect the Jewish community nationally. The NCJCS remit traverses all aspects of providing the Jewish community with the physical security it requires, from the provision of support to operational security to every corner of the Jewish community nationally; to the management of open-source intelligence; the research and analysis of information; the relationship with state and federal authorities; the management of crisis situations; and funding. My role has been to liaise with government in connection with funding and with senior representatives of communal organisations about funding and related issues.
117. On 11 October 2023, ECAJ sought urgent one-year security funding support of \$25 million for the specific security needs of the Jewish community, including support for communal security groups and administration through the NCJCS.
118. That request was acceded to and publicly confirmed by the Commonwealth on 19 October 2023.²³
119. However, demand outstripped supply, because 164 applications were received by the ECAJ from Jewish organisations around Australia requesting more than \$42.17 million against the available pool of \$25 million. The applications received by the ECAJ sought funding for security infrastructure (this includes security camera and monitoring systems, access controls, security lighting, fences and gates, detection and alarm systems, fireproof doors,

²³ See government announcement in document ECA.0001.0002.0003.

shatterproof windows and other security fit-out), guarding costs and funding towards the operational costs of the CSGs. The applications came from schools, early learning centres, synagogues, Jewish museums, sporting organisations, youth groups, CSGs, State and Territory roof bodies and other communal organisations. Our request for urgent one-year funding support came before Israel's ground campaign in Gaza had commenced in response to the October 7 atrocities. Jewish community institutions were already deeply concerned about the changing security landscape and the rise of antisemitism, and there was a recognition at the communal level that irrespective of what might happen in Israel and Gaza, the security situation for Jews in Australia was deteriorating markedly.

120. After the Adass synagogue firebombing, the ECAJ sought a further round of funding totalling \$32.5 million,²⁴ and that too was approved, but again requests exceeded available funding by more than 58 per cent.
121. In my view, government funding has been important and, in some instances, materially effective, because it has enabled hardening of buildings, CCTV, alarms, barriers, protective works and guarding that would otherwise have been unaffordable.
122. For example, on erev Shabbat on 4 July 2025, about 20 people were taking part in a Shabbat service inside the historic East Melbourne synagogue when flammable liquid was poured on the front door of the building and it was set alight. I was informed by ECAJ President Daniel Aghion that the President of East Melbourne synagogue had said that fortunately the door had been upgraded in recent years using Federal government security funding. It was a solid, fire-resistant door and it prevented the fire from spreading into the building. There was also a CCTV video-recording of the incident which made it possible to obtain an image of the offender's face. That image assisted a member of the Jewish community the following evening to identify a man who was walking through the Melbourne CBD as the possible offender. Police subsequently arrested and interviewed a 34-year-old man from Toongabbie in NSW and charged him with reckless conduct endangering life, reckless conduct endangering serious injury, criminal damage by fire, and possession of a controlled weapon.
123. By a letter dated 21 July 2025, ECAJ informed the Commonwealth that, while significant new spending on existing security infrastructure might be limited for the next three to four years, the Jewish community would continue to need government support for the NCJCS and State CSGs in providing overall security cover, and for guarding costs incurred by individual Jewish organisations across Australia.²⁵

²⁴ See document ECA.0001.0002.0018.

²⁵ See document ECA.0001.0002.0024.

124. In that application, ECAJ proposed that any further grant be made available for allocation by the NCJCS in order of priority, first for the CSGs in providing overall security cover to the Jewish community, and secondly for guarding costs.
125. ECAJ also sought a three-year funding model, namely \$31 million for April 2026 to March 2027, \$34 million for April 2027 to March 2028, and \$37 million for April 2028 to March 2029, because that was considered more conducive to longer-term planning and the spreading of expenditure where possible. In the estimates we provided to the government with that letter²⁶, we assumed that most of the infrastructure works had been completed and that going forward about two-thirds of the security need would be for guarding costs and the rest for CSGs operational expenditure.
126. Despite several follow-up phone calls from me, no decision in response to our letter of 21 July 2025 was communicated to the ECAJ until 15 December 2025 during telephone conversations I had with the Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs. On 19 December 2025 the ECAJ received a letter from the Minister for Home Affairs stating:
- “As you would have seen reported, on 15 December 2025 the Prime Minister has agreed to provide additional funding through the National Council for Jewish Community Security to provide overall security cover to the Jewish community, including for security guarding and funding for the State Community Security Groups. This commitment aligns with the request outlined in your letter of 21 July 2025.”*
127. After that, it took a few months longer than we had hoped, but the Department of Home Affairs and the ECAJ agreed in March 2026 on the Grant Opportunity Guidelines as part of the terms of the new grant agreement. The ECAJ was then asked to lodge a formal grant application and supporting documents with the Department of Home Affairs, This was done on 8 April 2026. On 23 April 2026 the Department emailed me with the Grant Agreement and related documents. As I understand it, all that now remains to be done to activate the funding is for the grant agreement to be signed by the ECAJ and the Minister.
128. After the Bondi Beach terrorist attack, the ECAJ further requested that the Commonwealth increase the grant to a level that would fund all CSG operational costs for the next three years, representing an increase of approximately \$22 million above our July 2025 request. This request was made for the reasons set out in in the letter dated 24 December 2025 from the ECAJ to the Minister for Home Affairs.²⁷ We have yet to receive the Commonwealth Government's formal response to this additional request, although the informal response has been sympathetic.

²⁶ See document ECA.0001.0002.0025.

²⁷ See document ECA.0001.0002.0031

129. The ECAJ also told the Commonwealth government that further increases were likely to be required over coming years, including increases in the overall quantum of guarding, changes in the nature of guarding, and the extension of guarding to sites that had previously limited or no security coverage. This was flagged as a future requirement rather than put as a formal request, so there has been no formal response.
130. Even with the Commonwealth government support in the dollar amounts we have requested, security and broader risk assessment and management has placed an enormous burden on Jewish institutions and personnel, and the requests for funding set out in ECAJ's correspondence (see document number references cited) show that the need has remained acute and in significant respects unmet. The Commonwealth Government support does not cover security costs for protection of individual personnel who may be targeted on account of their activism in support of the Jewish community's rights, and the cost of responding to risks to individual personnel is borne directly by those personnel and/or their organisations. The overwhelming sentiment in the Jewish community is that we would prefer to live without antisemitism and without the security funding it has necessitated.

Recommendations to government made by ECAJ

131. The ECAJ has made repeated representations to the Commonwealth government for increased and more flexible security funding for Jewish institutions, communal security groups and operational security costs. I have detailed this in other parts of my statement. Such representations have been conservative and have not asked for funding to meet anything other than essential security needs. As already noted, such representations have not included requests for funding to provide protective security for individuals. I believe that the Grant Opportunity Guidelines that have been approved for the new three-year funding arrangement (once the agreement has been signed) will be sufficiently flexible to meet the kinds of security needs the community has demonstrated under the previous funding arrangements. However, as stated above, the amount of funding will need to be increased by an estimated \$22 million over three years.
132. The ECAJ has also made recommendations to the Australian Government about hate crime, online hate, measures to combat right-wing extremism, measures to prohibit slogans that promote racial hatred, review of criminal law protections against hate speech, anti-discrimination laws, antisemitic conduct in various sectors, foreign and domestic extremism, and education, among other matters.

Hate crime

133. Since about 2020, ECAJ has advocated for the establishment of a national system for recording hate-motivated crime, analogous to the systems operating in Canada, the United

States and the United Kingdom.²⁸ The ECAJ's outline of how such a system could work is document ECA.0001.0002.0052. Although we shared this outline with the then Federal government and the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2020, and referred to it in our submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security Inquiry into extremist movements and radicalism in Australia in 2021, we have never received a formal response to our proposal. On 23 December 2025, the Australian Government and Australian Institute of Criminology announced that The National Hate Crimes Database has now been developed to track hate crimes and other hate incidents on behalf of the Australian Government. A dashboard on legislated hate-related offences recorded by police where an offender has been charged is the first phase of the database.²⁹

Hate speech

134. The ECAJ has advocated for a more systematic legislative response to antisemitism and hate speech, including an intentional promotion of hatred offence, prohibition of Nazi and terrorist symbols and gestures, prohibition of hateful expressions and slogans, and criminalisation of conduct that seeks to intimidate or prevent people from attending a place of religious worship or that intentionally damages a place of religious worship. ECAJ advocated reform of existing hate-speech laws so that the law focuses on the inherently hateful conduct itself, rather than requiring proof about how a member of the public in the presence of the conduct may have felt. ECAJ recommended, among other things, replacing the concept of inciting hatred with promoting hatred, broadening the notion of a public act so it captures conduct occurring in meetings or venues accessible by invitation or membership, and ensuring that the law can address coded, symbolic and implicit forms of hatred and threats as well as explicit threats.³⁰ An example of such language which the law could not reach occurred in 2014 when an extremist preacher described Jewish people as “the hidden evil” and called for “a jihad against the Jews”.³¹ The conduct was reported to Federal and/or State authorities,³² however no prosecution eventuated,³³ presumably as the intention to incite violence could not be

²⁸ Appendix to Submission to PJCIS Inquiry into matters relating to extremist movements and radicalism in Australia – 12.2.2021: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-Submission-12.02.2021.pdf>, page 219 of PW-1.

²⁹ <https://www.aic.gov.au/media-centre/news/national-hate-crimes-database> page 265 of PW-1.

³⁰ ECAJ submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security on the *Combating Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026* - 15 January 2026: ECA.0001.0003.0020; ECAJ letter to the NSW Law Reform Commission's review of the Anti-discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) - 22 August 2025: ECA.0001.0003.0023; ECAJ submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the *Criminal Code Amendment (Hate Crimes) Bill 2024*: ECA.0001.0003.0026; Responses to questions on notice 12.12.2024: ECA.0001.0003.0027; Responses to questions on notice 12.12.2024: ECA.0001.0003.0027; ECAJ submission to Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security – Review of the Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures) Bill 2023 - 20.7.2023: ECA.0001.0003.0036; ECAJ submission on banning the public display of Nazi symbols and gesture – 18.4.2023: ECA.0001.0003.0038.

³¹ The Guardian, '[Advocating genocide' to be crime under proposed new national security laws](#)', 4 September 2015, page 266 of PW-1.

³² SMH, '[Radical Muslim leader's anti-Semitic rants referred for criminal charges](#)', 1 April 2015, page 270 of PW-1.

³³ The Guardian, '[New South Wales hate speech laws to clamp down on 'violent extremists'](#)', 19 October 2015, page 274 of PW-1.

proven beyond reasonable doubt. It remains to be seen whether new State legislation in Queensland directed against the slogans “globalise the intifada” and “river to the sea” will be sufficient to capture conduct which incites or promotes hatred or violence in these implicit or in coded terms.

135. ECAJ identified these two particular slogans as well as slogans such as ‘Khaybar, Khaybar ya Yahud’, and ‘Death to Israel, Death to the IDF’ as requiring legal and operational sanctions. ECAJ’s position was that reform should be accompanied by practical police guidance so that officers can identify slogans, symbols and coded language that promote hatred or violence in protest settings and other public contexts.³⁴

Foreign Extremism

136. ECAJ pressed government to respond to the foreign-state and extremist dimensions of the threat environment. Most recently, ECAJ advocated maintaining and strengthening the listing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a state sponsor of terrorism following the assessment that attacks on Jewish targets in Australia had been orchestrated by the Iranian regime, and it continued to advocate a whole-of-government response to extremism, including educational, disengagement and online-governance measures, rather than a response confined only to isolated criminal prosecutions after the event.³⁵
137. The ECAJ has also advocated that Australia’s intelligence and law enforcement agencies be conferred with legislative power to access universities’ records of funding from designated foreign governments or designated foreign government-controlled organisations, as well as recommending other measures that would support compliance with the existing regulatory framework for addressing foreign interference. (See under ‘*Antisemitism at Universities*’ below).

Domestic extremism

138. Earlier in this statement I described the contribution made by groups opposed to the very existence of Israel to the surge in the number and severity of antisemitic incidents in Australia and in the volume and toxicity of antisemitic discourse. In the ECAJ’s submissions on the subject of sources of domestic extremism we have noted a convergence and coalescence of

³⁴ ECAJ submission to the NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety on NSW measures to prohibit slogans that incite hatred – 16 January 2026: ECA.0001.0003.0019; ECAJ submission to the Queensland Parliament’s Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee’s *Fighting Antisemitism and Keeping Guns out of the Hands of Terrorists and Criminals Amendment Bill 2026* – 25 February 2026: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/20260225-ECAJ-Fighting-Antisemitism-Queensland-submission.pdf> (ECA.0001.0003.0016)

³⁵ ECAJ submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security review on the listing of the IRGC as a state sponsor of terrorism – 30 January 2026: ECA.0001.0003.0018 ; ECAJ Submission on Human rights implications of recent violence in Iran – 5.12.2022: ECA.0001.0003.0040; Review of the relisting of Hamas’ Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code 24.8.2021: ECA.0001.0003.0045; Review of the relisting of Hizballah’s External Security Organisation as a terrorist organisation under the Criminal Code: ECA.0001.0003.0046

the ideologies of extremist groups, whether they are designated as 'right-wing', 'left-wing' or religiously-motivated.

139. We consider all of these groups to be insidious and destructive of social cohesion, and for essentially the same reasons. Each of them is dedicated to the replacement of Australia's democracy, freedoms and rights by a totalitarian order enforced by brutal repression. Each uses hate speech, hate-fuelled behaviour and associated thuggery or menace to promote its dystopian vision of society. Each seeks to set Australian against Australian on the basis of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual preference, gender identity or disability. Each carries within it a clear propensity for violence, and an intimidatory menace towards any sources of opposition it encounters, including from law enforcement officials.
140. Some of the measures we have called for, such as the introduction of a new listing regime to proscribe extremist hate groups have now been implemented, but sadly only in the wake of the atrocities committed at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025. Other measures, such as the creation of a new offence of intentional promotion of hatred still remain out of reach. Our submissions have called for further reforms especially in the field of education.³⁶

Education

141. In October 2023, ECAJ also indicated to the Prime Minister that the surge in antisemitism would need to be countered over time by additional education initiatives.
142. ECAJ's recommendations included a substantial education and institutional response. In 2025 ECAJ publicly supported the Special Envoy's action plan, which overlapped with ECAJ's own 15-point plan, and which included age-appropriate education in schools about antisemitism and the Holocaust, consequences in funding and reporting for universities and arts programs that fail to address antisemitism, Border Force training to identify antisemitic entrants, removal of DGR status from charities promoting antisemitic speakers or conduct, and further funding for Jewish communal security. Our proposals regarding education also appeared in our submission to the Department of Education's National Anti-Bullying Review in June 2025.³⁷

³⁶ ECAJ submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security on the Combatting Antisemitism, Hate and Extremism Bill 2026 - 15 January 2026: [ECA.0001.0003.0020](#); ECAJ submission to the NSW Parliament inquiry into measures to combat right-wing extremism - 10 February 2026: [ECA.0001.0003.0017](#); ECAJ submission on the review of the definition of a 'terrorist act' in section 100.1 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 – 17 October 2025: [ECA.0001.0003.0021](#) ; ECAJ response to adverse comments by a fringe group to the Senate inquiry into right-wing extremist movements in Australia – 16 July 2024: [ECA.0001.0003.0032](#); Inquiry into matters relating to extremist movements and radicalism in Australia: [ECA.0001.0003.0047](#)

³⁷ Submission to the Department of Education's National Anti-Bullying Review: [ECA.0001.0003.0024](#)

Universities

143. The ECAJ has made numerous submissions to public inquiries concerning antisemitism at Australian universities. Among other proposals, we have sought the introduction of defined limits to the use of academic freedom as a pretext for over-riding the right of students to safety and security at universities; more effective operationalisation of codes of conduct; adoption of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism in all its parts, together with education and training about its meaning and application; faster and more effective responses to complaints about racism, including antisemitism, and the prompt publication of de-identified reports of actions taken in response to such complaints; and effective sanctions for staff, students and student organisations who engage in hate speech against other students or academic staff.³⁸

Online safety; misinformation and disinformation

144. Misinformation and disinformation about the Jewish people have always been at the core of antisemitism. The advent of online platforms has provided purveyors of these falsehoods with vast new audiences accessible instantaneously. This has greatly magnified the potential for spreading hateful narratives and for stoking violence among ignorant and impressionable consumers of this content, especially among the young who rely on these sources for “news”.

145. The ECAJ therefore supported the principles behind the government’s exposure draft of legislation to address this problem, although the Bill did not proceed. Among our recommendations were³⁹:

That the Bill be modified so that the emphasis is on the harms caused by misinformation and disinformation rather than the way such harms are caused (i.e. an approach of neutrality regarding technology).

That the ACMA develop a basic standard regarding misinformation that is applicable to the entire digital platform industry, and that where a section of the industry does not have a code in place the ACMA be required to determine a more specific standard in relation to that section of the industry.

³⁸ ECAJ submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights - Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities – 28 November 2024: [ECA.0001.0003.0025](#); ECAJ submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Criminal Code Amendment (Hate Crimes) Bill 2024: [ECA.0001.0003.0026](#); ECAJ submission to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee inquiry into the Universities Accord (National Student Ombudsman) Bill 2024 1 October 2024: [ECA.0001.0003.0028](#); ECAJ submission to Hodgkinson inquiry into University of Sydney’s policies and processes: [ECA.0001.0003.0029](#); ECAJ submission to Senate Commission of Inquiry into a Bill to Establish a Judicial Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities: [ECA.0001.0003.0030](#)

³⁹ ECAJ submission on revisions to the Communications Legislation Amendment (Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill) 2024 – 26 July 2024: [ECA.0001.0003.0031](#); ECAJ letter to the Senate Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy’s inquiry into the prevalence and impacts of misinformation and disinformation relating to climate change and energy - 11 September 2025: [ECA.0001.0003.0022](#); Review of ABC Complaint Handling in response to its invitation for public comments and submissions on the issues being considered 9.12.2021: [ECA.0001.0003.0044](#)

Witness Statement of Peter Wertheim

That an Ombudsman's office be established that is specifically tasked with the independent review of complaints from the public concerning misinformation and disinformation across all media. If the Ombudsman determines that there is a plausible possibility that content which is the subject of a complaint includes misinformation or disinformation, the content be tagged wherever it appears and reported in the Ombudsman's bulletin, so as to notify the public that such content may include misinformation and/or disinformation.

146. We have expressed similar concerns about inflammatory misinformation and disinformation in news and current affairs content on the ABC, and the inadequacy of its processes for dealing with complaints related to such content.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

PW-1

- BBC News article (21 Dec 2002) — http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/talking_point/forum/1673034.stm
- Appendix to Submission to PJCIS Inquiry into matters relating to extremist movements and radicalism in Australia – 12.2.2021: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-Submission-12.02.2021.pdf> (in **ECA.0001.0001.0014**)
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- ECAJ letter to the NSW Law Reform Commission's review of the Anti-discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) - 22 August 2025: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/20250822-ECAJ-Letter-to-NSWLRC-Anti-discrimination-act-review.pdf> (**ECA.0001.0003.0023**)
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- Responses to questions on notice 12.12.2024: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-responses-to-questions-on-notice-Hate-Crimes-Bill-2024-inquiry.pdf> (**ECA.0001.0003.0027**)
- ECAJ submission to Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security – Review of the *Counter-Terrorism Legislation Amendment (Prohibited Hate Symbols and Other Measures) Bill 2023* - 20.7.2023: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-submission-to-Parliamentary-Joint-Committee-on-Intelligence-and-Security-Review-of-the-Counter-Terrorism-Legislation-Amendment-Prohibited-Hate-Symbols-and-Other-Measures-Bill-2023.pdf> (**ECA.0001.0003.0036**)
- ECAJ submission on banning the public display of Nazi symbols and gesture – 18.4.2023: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-Submission-to-SLCAC-re-Nazi-symbols-ban-18.4.2023.pdf> (**ECA.0001.0003.0038**)
- ECAJ submission to the NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety on NSW measures to prohibit slogans that incite hatred – 16 January 2026: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/20260116-ECAJ-submission-on-measures-to-prohibit-slogans-that-incite-hatred.pdf> (**ECA.0001.0003.0019**)
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- Criminals Amendment Bill 2026* – 25 February 2026: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/20260225-ECAJ-Fighting-Antisemitism-Queensland-submission.pdf> - (ECA.0001.0003.0016)
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 - ECAJ Submission on Human rights implications of recent violence in Iran – 5.12.2022: <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=f187ca6d-3963-4cae-9f34-25f8a058cc71&subId=727736> (ECA.0001.0003.0040)
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 - Alex Ryvchin, 'In Australia, Jew-Hate is out of control', The Free Press (22 Jan 2025) — <https://www.thefp.com/p/in-australia-jew-hate-is-out-of-control>
 - NPR article on watermelon emoji — <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/08/1222718339/why-watermelons-are-symbol-of-palestinian-solidarity>
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 - <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-submission-to-NSW-Parliament-inquiry-into-right-wing-extremism-20260210.pdf> (ECA.0001.0003.0017)
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- ECAJ submission to Hodgkinson inquiry into University of Sydney's policies and processes: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-Submission-Hodgkinson-Inquiry-23.9.2024.pdf> ([ECA.0001.0003.0029](#))
- ECAJ submission to Senate Commission of Inquiry into a Bill to Establish a Judicial Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-submission-to-the-Senate-inquiry-into-the-bill-to-establish-a-judicial-inquiry-20240822-REDACTED.pdf> (ECA.0001.0003.003)
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