

1. INTRODUCTION

This submission is made on behalf of Waverley Greens, a branch of the Greens NSW political party that has coverage of the Waverley local government area, which includes Bondi Beach.

We note the commission's terms of reference and thank the Commissioner for the opportunity to make submissions.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

[To] inquire into the following matters:

- a. tackling antisemitism by:
 - i. investigating the nature and prevalence of antisemitism in institutions and society, and examining its key drivers in Australia, including religious and ideologically motivated extremism and radicalisation, including in the lead up to the antisemitic Bondi terrorist attack on 14 December 2025;
 - ii. identifying any opportunities to enhance the responses of governments to antisemitism including, but not limited to, best practice approaches to de-radicalisation and strengthening social cohesion;
 - iii. making recommendations to counteract and prevent manifestations of antisemitism;
 - iv. assessing the impact of antisemitism on the daily life of Jewish Australians including with respect to security, physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- b. making any recommendations to assist law enforcement, border control, immigration and security agencies to tackle antisemitism, including by:
 - i. improvements to guidance and training within law enforcement, border control, immigration, and security agencies to respond to antisemitic conduct;
 - ii. having regard to existing security arrangements for the Jewish community, improvement of protective security for Jewish places of worship, major sites, educational and cultural facilities, public events and community leaders;
 - iii. whether these authorities have sufficient powers and resources to respond to antisemitic conduct;
- c. examine the circumstances surrounding the antisemitic Bondi terrorist attack on 14 December 2025, including:
 - i. lead up to and planning of the attack;
 - ii. the interaction and information sharing between Commonwealth agencies, between Commonwealth and State and Territory agencies, and between relevant Commonwealth and State agencies with the organisers of the Chanukah event at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025;
 - iii. security arrangements for the Chanukah event and Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025;
 - iv. the attack;
 - v. emergency response to the attack;
 - vi. whether relevant Commonwealth, State and Territory intelligence and law enforcement agencies performed to maximum effectiveness, including whether they had adequate

powers and the right systems, processes and procedures, and whether there was an appropriate authorising environment for information sharing with other Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies;

- vii. whether relevant Commonwealth, State and Territory intelligence and law enforcement agencies were prevented from taking prohibitive actions by the current legislative framework and authorising environment;
 - viii. identifying any gaps in existing legal and regulatory frameworks that impede the ability for law enforcement, border control, immigration and security agencies to prevent and respond to attacks of this nature at both the state and federal levels;
 - ix. identifying any lessons for security and law enforcement agencies to prevent and respond to similar attacks in the future;
- d. make any other recommendations arising out of your inquiry into the matters set out in paragraphs (a) to (c) that would contribute to strengthening social cohesion in Australia and countering the spread of ideologically and religiously motivated extremism in Australia;
 - e. any matter reasonably incidental to a matter referred to in paragraphs (a) to (d) or that you believe is reasonably relevant to your inquiry.

This submission relates primarily to item 'e' of the Royal Commission's parameters - *'any matter reasonably incidental to a matter referred to in paragraphs a to d or that you believe is reasonably relevant to your inquiry.'*

The material below details personal accounts of the weaponisation of claims of antisemitism.

2. INCIDENTS OF WEAPONISING ANTISEMITISM

This section sets out a number of incidents involving false allegations of antisemitism. Waverley Greens members and supporters have experienced these activities in a variety of settings - local council meetings, election polling places, via social media posts, at an event held to show support for the people of Gaza and at an event held to commemorate the victims of the Bondi attack.

Acknowledging and dealing with false allegations of antisemitism needs to be factored into any consideration of dealing with antisemitism. The incidents below illustrate how false allegations of antisemitism are personally troubling and hurtful, and to some extent, impact on the effectiveness of how our society deals with antisemitism.

The verbal attacks and criticisms of the Greens members in general and specifically Waverley Greens councillors increased dramatically after Hamas attacked and entered Israel on 7 October 2023. At council meetings and at public events, Greens councillors were often heckled and abused with false allegations of antisemitism.

2.1 Response to October 7 at Waverley Council, October 2023 and beyond

Events at Waverley Council meetings provide clear examples of the lies and abuse that have been weaponised to make false allegations about the work of the Greens.

The abuse went beyond calling Greens "antisemitic". At the Waverley Council meeting on 17 October 2023, Vivian Porzsolt, an elderly Jewish woman, addressed the Council meeting as a member of the public. She spoke about peace with justice for Israelis and Palestinians. In her speech, she explained that her parents were murdered in Nazi gas chambers. At that point, a person unknown to Vivian loudly interjected. They said, "Pity they did not kill you". This person was verbally hostile to her and other members of the public who mentioned Palestine when they spoke. Vivian is a member of the Greens and an activist for peace and justice for Israelis and Palestinians.

At this Council meeting, there was a long discussion about the events of 7 October and a motion was debated. Since that meeting, Councillors aligned with the Labor and Liberal parties and some members of the Jewish community have made the false allegation that Greens Councillor Ludovico Fabiano moved a motion supporting Hamas. This never happened. No Greens representative spoke about or mentioned Hamas. The Minutes of that meeting verify that this allegation is wrong. Lee Rhiannon, a local Greens member and former NSW state MP and former Senator, is one of a number of people who have heard this lie repeated many times.

Lee Rhiannon: The false allegation that there was a Greens motion put to Waverley Council and that that motion has caused the local increase in antisemitism was repeated a number of times by three women handing out materials on Saturday, 24 September 2024, for the local government election at Waverley School polling booth. One of those women was Coogee MP, Marjorie O'Neill, who is the Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Israel. The two other women were loud and abusive in the way they made these false allegations. All three women said on many occasions that the local rise in antisemitism was because Clr Fabiano had moved a motion supporting Hamas. Another allegation made in this encounter was that the Greens' motion was exposing children to antisemitism, and some children have had swastikas thrown on the ground in front of them. This allegation has not been corroborated or verified.

At the following Waverley Council meeting on 26 October 2024, Clr Fabiano was removed from the position of Deputy Mayor and both he and Clr Wy Kanak, another Greens councillor, were removed from Council committees. Commenting on these events, the NSW Council for Civil Liberties said it was concerned that the councillors' "non-controversial" statements had led to the meeting calling for their removal from the deputy mayor and committee roles.

At both the October 2024 Waverley Council meetings, Greens councillors and supporters in the gallery were subjected to intense vitriol, including death threats, from pro-Israeli and Zionist supporters.

2.2 Local council elections in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, September 2024

Voting in the 2024 NSW local council election ran from 7 to 14 September. Greens members have been active in election campaigns in Sydney's eastern suburbs for nearly four decades. During the campaign, many Greens members working on this election campaign were accused of being antisemitic. Geoff Ash, a long-time Greens member who has worked on over 25 election campaigns in and around Waverley, said the abuse he experienced at this election was the worst he had encountered by about a factor of ten. In the 2024 local government election, he worked on the pre-poll every day and on election day, giving out how-to-vote material for the Greens. He said on each day he was frequently verbally abused and confronted by voters unknown to him, whose comments made it clear they were supporters of Israel. Sometimes the abuse was very aggressive. It included being called a Nazi, accused of being antisemitic, or a supporter of terrorism, or a supporter of Hamas. None of which is true.

Many Greens members and supporters who worked on this election campaign suffered daily abuse and often high levels of physical hostility when giving out how-to-vote cards and engaging with members of the public. There were incidents where voters, who showed support for the Greens, were verbally abused. Greens' election corflutes were removed, defaced or covered with stickers with the words - "corrupt", "fraud", "racist". The people who removed or damaged Greens' corflutes were often wearing balaclavas or hoodies so their faces were hidden from view.

Better Council Inc (BCI) was one of the groups involved in disrupting the Greens' election campaign. They campaigned under the slogan "PUT GREENS LAST" and the false allegation that the Greens failed to address local issues. BCI draws on networks linked to "Together with Israel", and has been supported by the Christian Zionist group "Never Again Is Now". The activities of BCI reveal it was a form of astroturfing aimed at impacting local NSW council elections and disparaging the Greens specifically, by influencing voting behaviour on international issues.

The 2024 local government election was marred by numerous incidents where anonymous people harassed Greens volunteers. The incidents illustrate how, in some election campaigns, antisemitism is being weaponised.

The incidents included false accusations of antisemitism and, in most cases, involved people associated with BCI. The BCI people were easy to identify because of their Orange t-shirts and the materials they handed out.

2.3 Statement by Greens Councillor, Dominic WY Kanak, about the 2024 local election, where on numerous occasions he was falsely accused of being antisemitic.

At times we did feel intimidated by some of the reactions we received during the pre-poll and on polling day. We were often called "antisemitic", "antisemites" and "there's another jew hater". We felt insulted. Greens have frequently worked with the Bondi Jewish community.

During the week prior to and on election day, we were regularly abused, with people using these terms. These terms were used by people once or twice every hour, depending on the number of people coming to vote. Some people would say, "I'm not going to vote for the Greens". We were also called "terrorists" and "racists".

The Better Council group had an involvement in encouraging people to abuse us. Their posters had a red circle crossing out the Greens logo and the words: "Put the Greens Last", "Environmentalism, not extremism" and "rubbish, not radicals". These posters were on the power poles.

Some incidents were prolonged and very disturbing. One young person, in the pre-poll queue, called me "antisemite". He was just six to 12 inches from my face. Then he said the same thing to a man waiting to vote - maybe because that man appeared to be interested in reading the Greens voting information leaflet that I had just handed to him. The person who had been "in my face" got very loud, saying things like "the Jews have built this country". This same person also told us we should leave Bondi as "Jews have been here longer than other people". That same person was swearing, telling people to "fuck off". That loud type of conversation was carried on by that same person all the way in the moving prepoll queue towards the front door and then immediately inside the polling place building. One voter, attending the pre-poll queue with his young son, asked that person, who had just been abusing us, "Please be quiet and stop swearing, I have my child with me".

In another incident, we were approached by a large man. I was disturbed by his body language. In a loud voice so everyone nearby could hear, he called us "antisemitic scum". He had an angry look on his face. I found him intimidating.

Some people, when they walked past us on their way to the polling booth, would say under their breath, but clearly targeting us, expressions like "antisemite", "Jew hater" and "antisemitic scum".

In the evening before election day, we had put up some Greens posters around the Bondi Beach polling booth. When we turned up on election day, our posters had been defaced with Better Council stickers.

On the Sunday after election day, when I walked past a group of young people in Bondi Beach, one said to me, "Hello Hamas". That group did not try to engage with me and just kept walking on, but it made me feel disappointed as the term was being used, I felt, in an offensive way to me. I thought this was unfortunate as voting for that election was now over.

2.4 Statement by Greens Councillor, Ludovico Fabiano, about the 2024 local election, where he was subjected to intimidation, verbal abuse, and political campaign interference that were linked to false allegations of antisemitism

I write to report a series of incidents that occurred during the pre-poll period and on election day at the Margaret Whitlam Centre in Bondi Junction. I was present at the pre-poll location each morning throughout the voting period, engaging with voters in my capacity as a candidate.

During this time, on many occasions, I was falsely accused of being antisemitic and a racist by people I did not know. These incidents were deeply hurtful. From what I witnessed, the incidents of reputational damage that I suffered and the defacing of my campaign materials were linked to people making false allegations of antisemitism.

1. Verbal Abuse and Intimidation

Across the pre-poll period and election day, I experienced repeated verbal abuse from members of the public and people associated with various groups. These incidents occurred consistently throughout each shift, averaging approximately 10 or more hostile interactions per day.

The most common form of abuse involved being called "antisemitic." In many instances, individuals made this accusation and then disengaged immediately, not allowing for any response or dialogue.

Several incidents escalated beyond general remarks:

- *An individual approached and accused me of making Jewish people feel unsafe, repeatedly labelling me antisemitic and refusing to engage in discussion.*
- *A separate individual became highly aggressive, calling me a "fascist" and "Mussolini," and entered my personal space in an intimidating manner. I was required to warn that I would contact police if the behaviour continued.*
- *On election day, an individual shouted that I "should not live here" and that the area was "for us," which I experienced as exclusionary and intimidating.*
- *Other individuals, including younger and older voters, made similar accusations while passing by, often without stopping.*

These interactions created an environment that I experienced as hostile and, at times, intimidating. None of these people were known to me.

2. Misinformation and Reputational Harm

During the campaign period, I was repeatedly confronted with claims that I had been responsible for initiating "international motions" on Israel-Palestine issues at Council. This is incorrect. These matters were introduced by other Waverley councillors, and my involvement was limited to responding and proposing amendments to the motions they moved.

I was also made aware of printed campaign material circulating within the community that also attributed various local issues to me personally, including rate increases and parking impacts. I consider these claims to be inaccurate.

Photographic evidence of some of this material is available.

3. Interference with Campaign Materials

Throughout the campaign, there were multiple instances of Greens campaign signage (corflutes) being removed, damaged, or defaced across locations, including Bondi Road and Bronte.

In contrast, signage belonging to other candidates in the same areas appeared largely unaffected.

A security guard on duty reported observing two individuals removing signage at approximately 1:00 am, who fled when challenged. I did not personally witness these individuals.

I have photographic evidence documenting the defacing of campaign materials.

4. Conduct of Campaign

Throughout this period, I conducted myself in a calm and respectful manner. I did not engage in abusive or aggressive behaviour, and I sought to de-escalate interactions where possible.

5. Supporting Evidence

I can provide the following material to support this report:

- *Photographs of campaign materials containing alleged misinformation*
- *Photographs of damaged signage with stickers*

2.5 Fathers' Day Event at Bondi Beach, September 2025

On Fathers' Day, 7 September 2025, a peaceful, family-oriented gathering was held on Bondi Beach to show support for the flotilla aid relief mission to Gaza underway at the time. The highlights of this gathering included children's activities, a local surfers' paddle out, sea shanty singers entertaining passers by and participants, and the line of brightly coloured origami boats stretched across the sand towards the water. The event was organised by Jews Against the Occupation '48 and local community groups.

Greens members were present and reported that pro-Israel groups, including StandWithUs Australia and the Lions of Zion, staged the aggressive confrontation against participants in the Fathers' Day event. There was physical pushing and abusive chants that included "go back to Lakemba", "this is our beach" and "off the beach".

Individuals were told they should move out of Bondi. Women were targeted with abuse about being raped and the chant "get into a bikini". Some Greens members, who were assaulted, have made formal complaints to the NSW Police. At least one of those matters is still the subject of an active police investigation. The complainant in this case was hit on the arm by an Israeli supporter. This blow resulted in her phone being knocked out of her hand. This sequence of events damaged her

phone. When the Father's Day event concluded, police agreed to escort participants off the beach and across the promenade. Many locals and police held concerns for the safety of the participants in the Gaza boat event.

Prior to this event and at the event itself, the prominent message of the Zionist protesters and some public figures was that this event should not be held at Bondi Beach. Even 2GB's Ben Fordham described Waverley Mayor Will Nemish's call for the event to be banned as "*way over the top*". Fordham went on to say: "*... the beaches are for everyone. No matter where you come from. We cannot ban Palestinian people from the ocean at Bondi just because some Jewish people don't want them there.*" But that is precisely what the Zionist groups attempted to do. Their chanting "*go back to Lakema*", "*off the beach*", and the statements to some individuals that they should not live in Bondi, combined with comments about rape and physical intimidation, were intense.

[Video footage is available of these incidents.]

2.6 Harassment of a Bondi resident

This is a worrying example of what the weaponising of antisemitism claims can lead to. A young adult man, resident in Bondi, had a small "Free Palestine" sticker [about 5cm x 5cm] on the back bumper bar of his car. He was sitting with friends in a local club when approached by a group of young men. He knew some of them. They had attended the same high school. Some of them are Jewish.

These young men then tell him they have taken the sticker off his car, and they are showing off a video of how they took the sticker off. The main man in the group aggressively moves into the car owner's personal space. The man [who owned the car with the sticker] stayed seated and said "settle down" as he felt they were looking for a fight. The men were effectively standing over him.

The owner of the car with the sticker said he felt threatened and that his own property had been violated as they were showing around a video of them taking the sticker off his car in what he described as like a "trophy moment" for them. [The young man does not wish to be identified.]

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Waverley Greens urges this Royal Commission to consider adopting recommendations that would -

- Urge the federal government to consult with diverse Jewish voices and organisations when carrying out their work to combat antisemitism and racism.
- Urge the federal government to adopt in full and fund the Australian Human Rights Commission's anti-racism framework.
- Support a Human Rights Act.
- Protect free speech, political expression and public assembly.
- Limit the spread of online hate.
- Develop mandatory legal obligations on large tech companies and impose penalties for non-compliance.
- Fund and support community initiatives across cultures committed to strengthening respect, tolerance and solidarity.
- Avoid weaponising claims of antisemitism that would damage social cohesion.
- Not equate Palestinian advocacy or criticism of Israeli policy with antisemitism.
- Establish fair processes for reporting antisemitic rhetoric to ensure that complaints are investigated fairly rather than used to weaponise complaints.
- Ensure that anti-discrimination measures are applied consistently to all forms of bigotry, rather than focusing solely on one form of abuse.