

Part D. Social Cohesion in Australia: The Real Picture

1. Social cohesion is the holy grail of harmonious mutual interdependence, but it eludes most societies. Today, the Nordics and a few nations outside the mainstream of global commerce or geopolitics possess it. More or less. The vigorous Australian debate on how to nurture it has many strands; the Commission would be aware of them, and I will not rehearse them here.

2. One tendril, however, must be severed: the presupposition that Australia was long blessed by social cohesion and that today's discordant notes are new to the landscape. Deep fractures have existed since 1788 - the political and social disenfranchisement of First Nations peoples, and racist policies until the 1970s to guarantee white homogeneity. In the Age of Information, both are being unmasked relentlessly, igniting widespread discontent and polarisation. Australia was socially cohesive only if these two factors were excluded from the equation.

3. It is patently wrong to suggest that if antisemitism vanished, Australia would be cohesive. The social incohesion now evident is the product of bigotries of all kinds. Erasing antisemitism alone is not a sufficient remedy.

Multiculturalism

4. The challenge to social cohesion sharpens in a multicultural society. Differences of faith, ethnicity, race, language, and [day-to-day mores](#) raise the question of whether diversity undermines unity. Divisive tendencies emerge as Jewophobia, Islamophobia, Hinduphobia, Palestinophobia, misogyny, homophobia, racism, gender discrimination, intolerance of mental and physical disability, and more.

5. Having contributed modestly to the introduction of Multiculturalism in Australia in the 1970s - with Grassby and his ilk - I know the debates on its pros and cons from the inside out. All reservations then by the naysayers have been proved woefully wrong; Multiculturalism has underwritten Australia's economic, political and social successes for the last fifty years. However, like any other long-standing policy, stresses and strains, including antisemitism, are showing. The time has now come to re-evaluate it in light of the changes it itself has wrought and the geopolitical and social developments that directly affect its practice today. I would argue that Multiculturalism should be taken to the next stage: **Interculturalism**. My article, [Multiculturalism's Use-By Date. Are we there yet?](#) addresses this issue.

Are All Ethnic Communities Equal?

6. Your Commission will have received copious representations arguing that there is a serious imbalance between Australian Governments' response to the scourge of antisemitism and the relatively somnolent response to other anti-social activities, e.g. domestic killings, Islamophobia, blatant racism, etc. Therefore, I will not cover the same ground here, restricting myself to three observations:

- Like Justice, all ethnic communities in Australia should not only be treated equally but also be seen to be treated equally.
- Above all, the treatment the Federal and State Australian Governments accord to different ethnic communities is best evidenced by the behaviour of public servants towards them. They are the ones who interface with communities at the front desk. The principle of a secular approach in dealing with the public, irrespective of ethnic background, has been a pillar of public service provision in Australia for over a century.
- Therefore, the following official notice comes as a shock. Reminiscent of the Soviet dogmas about how the Muscovy bureaucracy must treat various nationalities in the USSR, this amounts to indoctrination of Australian public servants on *what* to think about Judaism, Israel and Zionism.

You're invited to Understanding Judaism: cultural and religious awareness training for staff

Understanding Judaism: cultural and religious awareness training for staff
 Fri, May 1, 2026 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM
 (UTC+10:00) Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney

The OCNS Practice Group invites CDPP staff to attend training on **Understanding Judaism: cultural and religious awareness training for staff.**

Date and time:
 Friday, 1 May 2026 at 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm AEST

Location: [REDACTED], Sydney office and livestreamed on Teams. The session will be recorded and available on LearnHub for those unable to attend.

Attendance: All staff are encouraged to attend this session.

Training: The training will be delivered by [REDACTED] of the Executive Council of the Australian Jewry, who will present on the following topics (45 minutes):

1. History of antisemitism;
2. Jewish culture in Australia;
3. Statistics and lived experiences of Jewish Australians;
4. Classic myths and antisemitic stereotypes;
5. Zionism; and
6. The difference between being anti-Israel and antisemitic.

Following [REDACTED] presentation, [REDACTED] will be available for a Q&A session (45 minutes).

Staff may ask their questions during the session via the Teams Q&A function, ask them in person if attending from the Sydney office or send any questions in advance to the OCNS PGC via Teams message or email.

Sincerely,
 Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions

7. This defies the principle of secularism in the Australian public service. If it is justified to 'guide' public servants about the "difference between anti-Israel and antisemitic", then perhaps they should also have cultural and religious awareness training in the difference between Hinduism and Hindutva, between Sunni Islam and Shi'ite Islam? Such understanding would make them aware of the mindsets they are dealing with for providing them effective services.

Israel's Cultural Diplomacy in Australia

8. In the Age of Cross-pollination of peoples through migration, when people of many cultures live in Australia, its social cohesion also depends on how the 'parent' nations of any one ethnic community seek to protect and advance its welfare. In international relations between Governments, Cultural diplomacy is a prime vehicle for doing this. But as with other aspects of diplomatic relations, nations not infrequently cross the lines between overt and covert means of practising this art. Covert means often constitute blatant interference in a country's internal affairs.

9. Australia has resisted malicious foreign influence in all its forms since the Second World War, principally from the Soviet Union, China, apartheid-era South Africa, North Korea, and India. Several covert attempts to interfere in the Australian political processes have been thwarted.

10. The government of Israel has every right under international law to ensure the welfare of Jewish communities worldwide, notably that they are not subjected to antisemitism. Hasbara (literally, "explanation" or "clarification") is Israel's system of Cultural diplomacy, which aims to do this through shaping international opinion in favour of Israel's policies and narratives. Its methods include the dissemination of videos, infographics, viral social media posts, hashtags, TV commercials and newspaper ads. Among Hasbara's objectives, the principal one is to combat antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiments on campuses.

11. It is a measure of how much Israel spends on public diplomacy that the President of the World Jewish Congress, Ronald Lauder, said on 10 May 2026 that, "Since Oct. 7, 2023, all Jewish organisations in the United States together have spent upwards of \$600 million fighting this avalanche of antisemitism. Has it helped? Has all this money stopped? Even slowed down the hatred against us? The answer is no. All the efforts of TV commercials, the full-page ads in newspapers and conferences - all the attempts to tell the world the facts have accomplished very little." (Understandably, he did not amplify, at least in public, on why this might be the case.)

12. One can only imagine the amount of money the Zionist organisations in Australia spend in spinning the Israeli case to the Australian polity and public under the guise of fighting antisemitism. In this context, it is notable that the Knesset has approved the 2026 Hasbara budget of \$730 million for "global messaging". The increased allocation specifically targets "College Campus Outreach (Outside Israel)" under the rubric of "public diplomacy".

13. (It is not irrelevant to note that the 2025/26 budget of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for public diplomacy is \$90 million. Australia's population is three times the size of Israel, and has to 'sell' itself to a far more diverse range of cultures and economies.)

14. It is a tenet of Australia's foreign policy to support Israel, whatever it does, wherever it does it, and to whomever. (At various times, I was involved in implementing this support.) This stance is particularly creditable because, even with

the wildest imagination, Australia cannot be accused of being complicit in the suffering of the Jews in Europe at the hands of the Nazis or others. Australia inherited antisemitic traits from the Mother Country but never discriminated against Jews to the extent that it continues to discriminate against the First Nations people.

15. In the context of the US war on Vietnam, Secretary of State Kissinger remarked that, "It might be dangerous to be America's enemy, but to be America's friend is fatal." It is a salutary caution that Australia would do well to heed in its relations with any foreign country.

16. I stress that scrutinising a foreign government's influence impugns no Australian. To do so in the case of Hasbara is not to question the loyalty of Jewish Australians who are as Australian as I am; the question is never their loyalty, but the conduct of a state that presumes to speak in their name.

17. The real picture, then, is sobering but not despairing. Australia's social cohesion has been a work in progress since 1788. Discords today reflect long-ignored fractures being dragged, at last, into the light. Antisemitism is one thread in that din. To mistake it for the whole is to misread the score.

18. Social cohesion in Australia will not be advanced if one community's grief is elevated above all others, nor by conscripting a secular public service into the service of any foreign state's narrative. It is advanced by treating every community equally and being seen to do so; letting multiculturalism mature into a genuine interculturalism; by combatting prejudice of every stripe - Islamophobia, the continuing dispossession of the First Nations, and the rest - with the same good faith as against antisemitism. That, and not the silencing of legitimate dissent, is the surest guarantor of the social cohesion your Commission must defend.

Conclusion: Cohesion is not consensus. Cohesion does not fail when differences are expressed.