



To the Senate Legal & Constitution Affairs References Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the adverse comments made in a submission to and during testimony at the recent inquiry.

The Australian Jewish Association (AJA)

The Australian Jewish Association (AJA) is a membership-based, national organisation for the Australian Jewish community. AJA is by far the largest Australian Jewish organisation on social media and in terms of community engagement. AJA runs weekly online events attended by hundreds of Australian Jews which have been addressed by MPs from different parties, ambassadors, leading journalists and others. AJA is sought after by the media almost daily for comment, including by several newspapers and TV networks from across the political spectrum. AJA takes a centre-right position on politics.

Right wing Extremism

The Australian Jewish Association commends this committee for studying right-wing extremism.

Australian Jews are one of if not the main target of right-wing extremists. The Australian Jewish Association has been targeted on multiple occasions by right-wing extremists which has included receiving threats online and via email and having online events interrupted.

That said, for this inquiry to be effective, it should really be focused on extremism more broadly.

The Australian Jewish community is targeted overwhelmingly by two sources, Islamic extremism and left-wing extremism.

In our experience, right wing extremists in Australia tend to be loners or small groups without significant public support. Police do a good job at disrupting their activities. In contrast, left-wing and Islamic extremists have institutions and organisations supporting them. We have significant concerns that these two dangerous ideologies have been co-operating recently in Australia. In one example, the University of Sydney has seen extremist Muslims associated with the Hizb ut-Tahrir group (which is banned in many countries) jointly formed an encampment with radical left-wing activists.

THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

Correcting False claims

Both the newly formed Jewish Council of Australia (JCA) and the Australian Jewish Democratic Society (AJDS) are miniscule groups that the overwhelming majority of the Australian Jewish community strongly disagree with.

It is unfortunate that these groups attempted to turn an inquiry into right-wing extremism into an attack on the Australian Jewish community.

It could be that these two groups indulged in an abuse of process to use this committee as a forum to attack Jewish organisations with which they disagree. The transcript shows the Chair cautioning a JCA speaker after he suggested that the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) “have been openly collaborating with the far right”.

Jewish history from biblical to modern times records a phenomenon of a small number of Jews actively undermining both Judaism and the Jewish community.

During the testimony of these groups, as well as the written submission of the AJDS, outrageous claims were made about the Australian Jewish Association (AJA), the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the Australian Jewish News (AJN), the Never Again is Now (NAIN) rallies and others.

The Australian Jewish community is known as one of the most Zionist in the world and very proud of this. Australian Jews have contributed greatly to Australia, including by being among the largest philanthropists. Similarly, Australian Jews proudly support many projects and charities in Israel. The ugly attacks on Australian Jews for their generosity are disgraceful.

In their testimony, a range of respected people were labelled ‘islamophobes. One example is internationally sought-after commentator, Douglas Murray who thousands of Jews along with many other Australians turned out to see on his recent visit to Australia. Language like that is intended to silence opinions and views that activists disagree with.

Correcting individual adverse claims

AJDS Claim - “In 2019 it held a forum for far-right parties in the NSW state elections held that year.”

The Australian Jewish Association has on numerous occasions held events with and hosted guest speakers from many political parties, including the Coalition and Labor. Since its inception, AJA has been careful to never endorse political parties or candidates. The particular event that AJDS takes issue with was over 5 years ago ahead of an NSW State election. It was deliberately framed as a forum for small parties. The speakers at the time were Sen David Leyonhjelm - Leader, Liberal Democrats, Rev Fred Nile - Leader, Christian Democratic Party, Greg Walsh - Lead candidate, Australian Conservatives and Mark Latham - NSW Leader, One Nation. The MC & Moderator was Rowan Dean from Sky News and the Spectator Magazine. Hundreds of Australian Jews attended. Two of the speakers went on to be elected to the NSW Legislative Council. AJA is proud to have provided the community an opportunity to hear a variety of positions. The AJDS attack is an attack on normal Australian democracy and the right of Australians to hear a range of political views.

AJDS Claim - In 2024 Organisation A claimed that the floodgates were being opened to terrorism because of visas being given to refugees from Gaza, despite strict probity checks

AJA has publicly expressed concerns about the security risks involved in rapidly processing visas to Gazans often in under 24 hours, sometimes as little as one hour from application. Polling of Gazans has repeatedly shown high levels of support for terrorism and terrorist groups.

AJA's concerns are shared by many Australians. National security experts and many Members of Parliament have made similar comments including Opposition Leader Peter Dutton who said, *"The inadequacy of these checks could result in a catastrophic outcome in our country. Taking people out of a war zone without conducting the checks, particularly those that are available to us in the US, is reckless..."* The prime minister here needs to hit the pause button — I'm not saying people shouldn't come at some point — but people should come when all the checks are conducted."

Sen James Paterson, former Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security, has made public statements very similar to those of AJA.

It's not clear that the AJDS has any national security experience nor why they feel they can silence genuine security concerns.

AJDS Claim – "In particular, Organisation A has hosted several online meetings/fundraises with the Nachala Settlement movement, featuring its PR manager and director, Daniella Weiss"

AJA hosts a weekly Zoom event which is attended by hundreds of Australian Jews. AJA Zooms are a great opportunity to hear from a wide variety of speakers from across the political spectrum in Australian and internationally, including many who would be considered left-wing and from numerous Muslim and Arab speakers. The AJDS submission is a dishonest attempt to misconstrue the Zoom events. They are not 'fundraises' (sic). AJA has only ever hosted one Zoom event with Daniella Weiss not 'several'.

AJDS Claim – "Organisation B, a religious group with a strong international fundraising network and presence in the Occupied Territories has also been a co-sponsor of at least one online session."

It's unclear what the AJDS means by 'co-sponsor' here, but this is not true.

AJDS Claim – "Weiss is a neighbour and colleague of the extremist Israeli Minister Benjamin Smotrich who is quoted saying that the village of Huwara should be "wiped out". Haaretz newspaper in Israel reported that an Australian Friends of Nahala had been set up, though we have been unable to discover any such organisation on the ACNC database. It may exist under another name. Organisation B through affiliates in the US, has also provided a crowd-funding platform for Nahala"

The AJDS submission is full of numerous mistakes and strange, bizarre statements like claiming as significant that someone's neighbour made an extremist comment. It also contains flimsy speculation such as the above about the well-respected Organisation B which has many centres across Australia.

The Australian Jewish Association would greatly appreciate the opportunity to address this committee to clear up some of the false claims and to provide a mainstream Jewish perspective on the issues raised.

President, Dr David Adler

Chief Executive Officer, Robert Gregory