

11 June 2026

# Submission by Glen Eira City Council to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion



GLEN EIRA  
CITY COUNCIL

BENTLEIGH, BENTLEIGH EAST, BRIGHTON EAST, CARNEGIE, CAULFIELD, ELSTERNWICK,  
GARDENVALE, GLEN HUNTLY, MCKINNON, MURRUMBEENA, ORMOND, ST KILDA EAST

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Glen Eira City Council acknowledges the Boon Wurrung/Bunurong and the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation, as the Traditional Owners and Custodians, and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge and uphold the Traditional Owners' continuing relationship to the land and waterways.

Council extends its respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

# Executive summary

## **Glen Eira City Council's submission provides a local government perspective on antisemitism and social cohesion, grounded in direct community experience and place-based practice.**

It outlines how antisemitism is experienced locally, the impacts on community safety and participation, and practical, preventative responses within our role, while also calling on other levels of government to take appropriate action within their responsibilities.

Glen Eira is home to Australia's largest and most established Jewish community and has long been recognised as a place where people of many cultures, faiths and backgrounds live and participate together.

Through the delivery of more than 120 essential services, and through ongoing engagement and feedback from residents and community organisations, we are aware that antisemitism impacts both physical safety risks and sense of safety within the community. Both have significant consequences for wellbeing, participation in public life and trust in public institutions.

While reported incidents are an important indicator of local experience, they are likely to understate the full extent of antisemitism, particularly in relation to online hate, unreported incidents, and differences between incidents that are reported, recorded and substantiated. Our local experience indicates that national and international events, including periods of heightened protest activity and social tension, can have immediate and lasting impacts on sense of safety and social cohesion.

Responsibility for law enforcement, intelligence and criminal investigation sits with State and Commonwealth agencies. Local government's role is focused on prevention, early intervention, community education, place-based responses and fostering trust between communities and government.

This submission responds to Parts (a)(i), (a)(ii), (a)(iii) and (a)(iv) of the Terms of Reference. Drawing on our local government experience, it provides observations and practical considerations to support coordinated, preventative and place-based approaches to addressing antisemitism and strengthening social cohesion.

In setting out this perspective, we have drawn on our adopted policies and definitions, including the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, as a tool to support understanding, education and prevention.

# Summary of recommendations

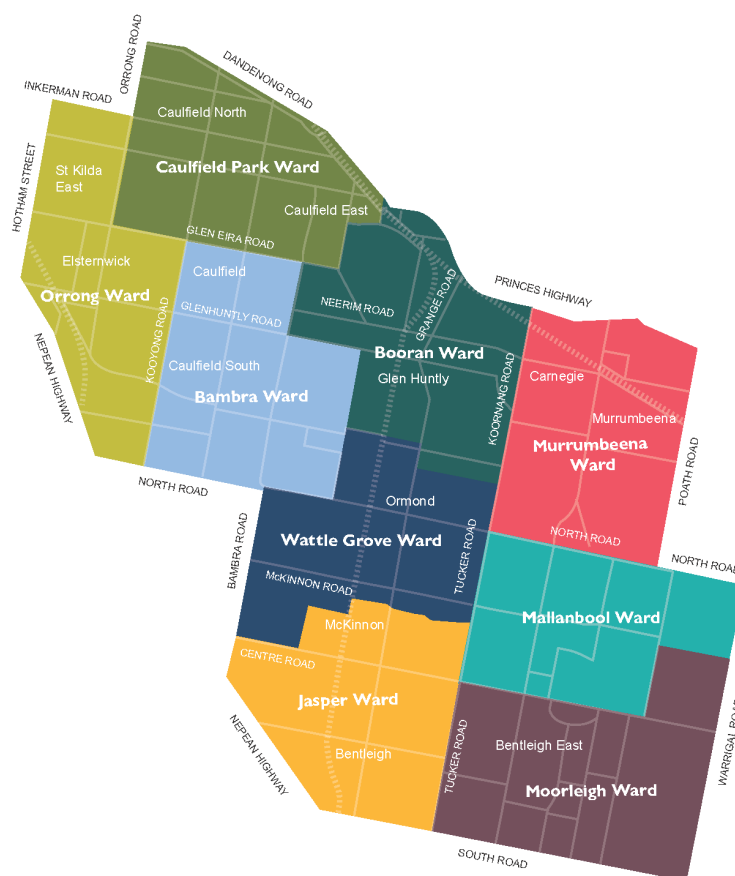
Glen Eira City Council recommends that the Australian Government:

1. Establish a nationally led *Social Cohesion Framework* with a strong and explicit focus on antisemitism, including shared definitions, principles and measures.
2. Clearly articulate roles and responsibilities across all levels of government as part of the proposed *Framework* noted above.
3. Establish a formal partnership across Australian, Victorian and local governments to support coordinated prevention, information sharing, clear escalation pathways and consistent responses.
4. Support national capability-building for local government, including guidance, training and resources to support safe and consistent responses to antisemitism.
5. Support locally delivered intercultural, interfaith and community cohesion initiatives.
6. Enable structured collaboration and shared learning between local governments through nationally supported mechanisms, recognising the Australian Government's role in coordination and funding.
7. Initiate and fund a national civic education and prevention program.
8. Develop nationally consistent public communication principles.
9. Provide dedicated national funding to support council-led, place-based responses to antisemitism and social cohesion.
10. Establish nationally consistent guidance for local governments on responding to requests for private security in public settings.

# Our City

The City of Glen Eira is located approximately 10 kilometres southeast of Melbourne’s central business district, and forms part of Melbourne’s inner south-east region.

The municipality covers an area of 39 square kilometres and includes the suburbs of Bentleigh, Bentleigh East, Carnegie, Caulfield, Caulfield East, Caulfield North, Caulfield South, Elsternwick, Gardenvale, Glen Huntly, McKinnon, Murrumbeena, Ormond and parts of Brighton East and St Kilda East. Adjoining municipalities include the cities of Bayside, Kingston, Monash, Port Phillip and Stonnington.



Glen Eira’s population is expected to reach 176,389 by 2036. Glen Eira is a diverse community made up of people with different backgrounds, culture, family type, age, and occupation.

Glen Eira City Council provides a wide range of services to its residents, including waste management, planning, building regulations, public parks, recreation facilities, libraries, and a range of community services. It also works closely with local businesses and community organisations to promote economic development and social wellbeing in the area.

## Council’s position on the Terms of Reference

This submission focuses on those Terms of Reference most relevant to local government, drawing on Glen Eira City Council’s role, responsibilities and local context, while highlighting broader implications for councils nationally.

## Term of Reference (a)(i): The nature and prevalence of antisemitism in institutions and society<sup>1</sup>

Statewide data aligns with Council’s local experience and provides an important indicator of prevalence. The *2025 Victorian Antisemitism Report* by the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and Community Security Group recorded 564 antisemitic incidents across Victoria in 2025 — the highest number recorded. Of those, 240 incidents were recorded in Glen Eira, representing 43 per cent of all reported incidents statewide.

At a local level, antisemitism most commonly presents as patterns of behaviour in public spaces and community facilities, including:

- antisemitic graffiti and vandalism in public places.
- verbal abuse and intimidation in public spaces such as shopping precincts and on public transport interchanges.
- threatening communications to community organisations.

Council service data reflects this pattern. Reports of offensive graffiti increased from 142 incidents in the 2024–25 financial year to 213 incidents in the 2025–26 financial year (as at 5 May 2026). A significant proportion of these reports include direct or indirect references to antisemitism or related themes, including references to Jewish identity, Israel or Palestine, Nazi symbolism and swastikas. Fourteen incidents involving swastikas were recorded in 2024–25, with a further three incidents reported to date in 2025–26. Reporting also shows recurring geographic patterns, with incidents concentrated in a small number of particular suburbs, streets, activity centres and transport corridors.

These figures represent reported incidents only and should be understood as partial indicators rather than a complete measure of prevalence. They are likely to understate the scale of antisemitism, particularly in relation to online conduct, unreported incidents and differences in how incidents are recorded or substantiated.

As the closest level of government to the community, Council becomes aware of antisemitism through multiple channels. This includes correspondence from residents, ongoing engagement with local Jewish and interfaith organisations, participation in and convening of relevant local, regional and sector wide forums and networks, and issues raised in relation to Council facilities, events and public spaces.

Local experience also indicates that antisemitism is shaped by factors beyond the municipality. National and international events, protest activity, online misinformation and broader social polarisation can have immediate and lasting impacts on local safety and cohesion. Community harm may also arise from individuals entering Glen Eira during periods of heightened tension or organised activity.

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<sup>1</sup>“(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;*”

The impact of antisemitism is reflected in community behaviour and participation. In a municipality with a visible and well-established Jewish community, as well as a range of schools, places of worship and community organisations, the impacts of antisemitism are observed through changes in how people use public spaces, attend events and engage with Council services. These include increased and more visible security measures at schools, places of worship and community facilities, and reduced participation in public life due to safety concerns.

While this submission focuses on antisemitism, these patterns are not experienced in isolation. Other cultural and faith communities report similar experiences of hostility and exclusion, reinforcing that antisemitism has broader implications for social cohesion and community safety.

Council does not investigate criminal matters. Responsibility for law enforcement, intelligence and criminal investigation rests with State and Commonwealth agencies. Local government's role is focused on prevention, early intervention, education and maintaining safe and welcoming public spaces through local laws, facility management and referral to appropriate authorities where required.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Australian Government:

### **1. Establish a nationally led *Social Cohesion Framework* with a strong and explicit focus on antisemitism that:**

- provides shared definitions, principles and measures for understanding and monitoring antisemitism across Australian society, drawing on established and widely adopted definitions, including the IHRA working definition, informed by institutional and community settings and supporting consistent adoption across Commonwealth and State Government institutions.
- is co-designed in partnership with local government, recognising councils as trusted, place-based institutions with direct insight into community impacts, risks and prevention opportunities.
- includes mechanisms for evaluation, reporting and continuous improvement to ensure national policy remains responsive to emerging risks and lived community experience.

### **2. Clearly articulates roles and responsibilities across all levels of government,** including practical guidance for local government on escalation thresholds, referral pathways and appropriate responses within councils' municipal remit.

## Term of Reference (a)(ii): Opportunities to enhance the responses of governments to antisemitism<sup>2</sup>

Our experience responding to antisemitism locally highlights opportunities to strengthen timely, structured and sustained communication across Australian, Victorian and local governments, including access to relevant situational information to prepare for emerging risks, clear escalation pathways, and consistent communication before, during and after major trigger events.

Local governments are often responding to heightened community concern without timely access to information held by Victorian or Australian government agencies. Where appropriate, timely updates for councils — such as information about planned public activities near community facilities or increased risks to places of worship and schools — would support local decision-making and coordination with community organisations and Victoria Police.

The *2025 Victorian Antisemitism Report* identifies that spikes in antisemitic incidents are frequently linked to major or international ‘trigger events’, with impacts often extending beyond immediate crisis periods. Councils require advance notice, clear escalation pathways and sustained coordination to respond effectively.

Clear and practical escalation pathways should include guidance on evidence capture, referral thresholds, consistent public messaging, and coordination with police, emergency services and community organisations. These arrangements would support councils to respond confidently within their municipal remit while ensuring matters are escalated appropriately.

Beyond information sharing and escalation, there are opportunities to strengthen collaboration across the local government sector itself. Structured mechanisms for councils to share practice and collectively build capability across the local government sector would support more consistent place-based responses and reduce duplication of effort.

At the community level, investment in local programs that bring people together, encourage understanding between cultures, and support young people are critical parts of prevention. Approaches informed by trauma-informed community development, which recognise the widespread and cumulative impact of trauma on residents, help build community resilience over time. For Glen Eira, this includes locally delivered education and bystander programs, capacity building for community leaders, and initiatives that strengthen relationships between communities through shared civic participation.

There is also ongoing value in continued, coordinated advocacy to Victorian and Australian governments on the role of local government in addressing antisemitism. This includes advocating for clear policy settings, shared responsibilities and adequate resourcing to enable councils to respond effectively and safely, supported through partnerships with peak

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<sup>2</sup>“(a) tackling antisemitism by:

(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;”

bodies such as the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

**The following examples illustrate how these opportunities can be realised in practice at the local level, within Council's roles and responsibilities**

In response to community concerns, we established a Social Cohesion Taskforce to coordinate our approach to combatting antisemitism in partnership with key community stakeholders, alongside progressing the development of a dedicated *Antisemitism Strategy*. These actions demonstrate the role local government can play in identifying emerging issues early and initiating place-based responses, within its roles and responsibilities.

Collaboration with neighbouring municipalities, including the City of Port Phillip, has supported a more coordinated response to local incidents and emerging community tensions. For example, following the Adass Israel firebombing incident on 6 December 2024, existing relationships with neighbouring councils and sector partners were used to share situational awareness, coordinate with relevant agencies, and align local communications and community-facing responses where appropriate.

On 26 February 2026, in partnership with the City of Port Phillip, we hosted the *Victorian Local Government Antisemitism and Social Cohesion Forum*. This forum enabled councils to exchange insights from incidents, strengthen response capabilities, and hear from a range of speakers, including Jewish peak bodies and research organisations. In the context of increased antisemitism nationally and locally, this cross-council collaboration supports more timely, consistent and place-based responses, helping ensure affected residents and community organisations experience clear and coordinated support.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Australian Government:

- 3. Commit to implementing a formal partnership across all levels of government**, including local government. The nationally led framework should embed structured collaboration and shared learning between Australian, Victorian and local governments, recognising councils as key place-based partners in prevention, education and early intervention.
- 4. Support national capability-building for local government** as part of the nationally led framework. It should include access to evidence informed training, guidance and resources to support councils and elected representatives to respond to antisemitism safely, confidently and consistently, recognising that councils are the closest level of government to the community.
- 5. Support locally delivered intercultural, interfaith and community cohesion initiatives**, including community events, arts programming, early-years education and leadership development for community organisations, to strengthen relationships and reduce prejudice across communities.
- 6. Enable structured collaboration and shared learning between local governments through nationally supported mechanisms.** This should

include formal networks, communities of practice and mechanisms to share data, practice insights and emerging risks, recognising the Australian Government's role in coordination and funding.

## **Term of Reference (a)(iii): Recommendations to counteract and prevent antisemitism<sup>3</sup>**

Based on our experience responding to antisemitism locally, effective prevention emphasises early intervention, education, sustained community partnerships and meaningful intercultural engagement. In practice, this requires:

- measures across schools, universities, youth settings, sporting clubs, cultural organisations, libraries, arts settings and wider community venues
- education and awareness initiatives that build understanding of antisemitism, Jewish identity and the impacts of hate.
- support for locally led social cohesion strategies that are responsive to the community and developed in partnership with affected communities.

This work should be supported by sustained investment in community education, bystander and upstander initiatives, early-years learning, and leadership development for community organisations as part of a long-term prevention approach.

Locally led social cohesion initiatives should promote meaningful engagement and relationship-building across communities, not only awareness raising, in order to strengthen trust, resilience and shared civic participation. These include inclusive community events, library programming and resources, community grants, youth and family services, and collaboration with schools and community organisations to promote respectful engagement and challenge harmful stereotypes. Examples include Courage to Care and Upstander programs delivered in schools, which would benefit from sustained Victorian Government funding and broader promotion.

Effective prevention requires sustained investment and should be embedded in formal policy and strategy settings, supported by dedicated funding. This includes using community grants and social cohesion funding to support locally delivered initiatives that strengthen inter-community connections, build resilience and respond to emerging issues.

In Glen Eira, this approach is being progressed through our Social Cohesion Taskforce, comprising ten cross-sector leaders. The Taskforce monitors emerging community tensions, provides advice on immediate risks and responses, co-designs local prevention initiatives and builds partnerships across local government and community organisation sectors. This work is complemented by Council's Community Safety Committee, which supports information sharing and coordination across local partners, including Victoria Police and key community organisations, to strengthen situational awareness and align responses.

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<sup>3</sup>“(a) tackling antisemitism by:  
(iii) making recommendations to counteract and prevent manifestations of antisemitism;”

Prevention efforts must also respond to the role of misinformation and disinformation, conspiracy theories and wider social division, including online discourse that can spill into local community settings. Effective responses to misinformation and disinformation require a structured approach across three phases: anticipatory (early detection and risk identification), active (real-time response and communication), and recovery (community reassurance and rebuilding trust).

This requires more than digital literacy alone and should include coordinated counter-misinformation capability across communities and institutions. There is also value in guidance and education that supports responsible public communication, including in media settings, to reduce harmful framing, victim-blaming and inflammatory reporting that can further damage social cohesion.

Practical measures within a local government role include clear codes of conduct for Council-run events and venues, staff training on responding to complaints and hate incidents, rapid removal of graffiti and vandalism from public assets, and consistent communications that reinforce community standards. Ensuring that local governments are adequately resourced to, respond to issues raised by residents, support affected community members and coordinate place-based responses, is critical to the effectiveness of these measures.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Australian Government:

- 7. Initiates and funds a national civic education and prevention program** that is embedded within formal national policy and strategy settings and delivered in partnership with local councils and community partners, with implementation across schools, universities, sporting clubs, cultural institutions and broader community settings. The program should include digital literacy, counter-misinformation capability and bystander education.
- 8. Develop nationally consistent public communication principles,** including guidance for public institutions and media settings, to support accurate reporting, reduce harmful framing and misinformation, and promote community confidence during periods of heightened tension.

## Term of Reference (a)(iv): The impact of antisemitism on the daily life of Jewish Australians<sup>4</sup>

Engagement with residents and community organisations indicates that antisemitism influences daily decision-making for Jewish community members, particularly decisions about safety, visibility and participation in public life. These impacts relate both to direct safety threats and to sense of safety, each of which can affect confidence, wellbeing and willingness to participate in community settings. These impacts are particularly relevant for children, young people and young adults, including in schools, universities, online environments and other community settings where identity, belonging and safety are negotiated.

In Glen Eira, where many residents participate in school, worship, sport, recreation and cultural life locally, concerns can arise about travel routes, visibility of religious or cultural identifiers, and participation in Council-run or Council-hosted activities. These concerns generate operational pressures for councils, including requests for event security planning, risk assessments, physical infrastructure, coordination with police and emergency services, and practical reassurance measures for affected communities. This has included requests for enhanced security arrangements at Council-facilitated or public events, including requests to permit private security providers such as Community Security Group (CSG) to be armed in public or civic settings.

These requests raise complex governance, safety and role clarity considerations for local government, particularly where expectations extend beyond a council's statutory role, create inconsistencies with state legislation or public safety frameworks, or require decisions beyond Council's expertise and authority.

As land managers and permit authorities, councils are required to conduct and document their own risk assessments in relation to the use of public land and facilities and cannot rely solely on Victoria Police advice. This includes setting clear permit conditions and maintaining appropriate records to evidence due diligence. Embedding these considerations within local government risk assessment and approval processes supports governance, legal and safety obligations, while maintaining appropriate role boundaries.

The evidence before the Commission identifies a need for structured and well-documented planning and risk arrangements for public-facing, higher-risk events involving the Jewish community, including festivals, community events and High Holy Days. Council's experience indicates that responsibility for approvals and security planning rests primarily with event organisers, with Victoria Police involvement primarily focused on public order considerations.

For many community members, the impacts of antisemitism are cumulative and may also carry intergenerational dimensions. This can lead to a greater need for reassurance, practical support and visible support from public institutions like councils. If left

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<sup>4</sup> "(a) tackling antisemitism by:

(iv) assessing the impact of antisemitism on the daily life of Jewish Australians including with respect to security, physical and mental health and wellbeing;"

unaddressed, the cumulative effect of these experiences risks eroding trust in public institutions and weakening social cohesion. This underscores the importance of clear, consistent and supportive responses by local government within their role, including maintaining safe and welcoming public spaces, supporting participation in community life, and working with Victorian and Australian government agencies and community groups to ensure concerns are heard and passed on appropriately.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Australian Government:

- 9. Provide dedicated, evidence-based funding to support council-led, place-based responses,** with resourcing calibrated to local incidence, community impact and service demand, including in municipalities experiencing disproportionately high levels of antisemitic incidents.
- 10. Work with States and Territories to develop a clear, nationally consistent** position to guide local government in responding to requests from the Jewish community to use private security and armed guards in public and civic settings.

# Conclusion

Glen Eira City Council welcomes the Royal Commission as a critical opportunity to strengthen national leadership and coordination in responding to antisemitism. We remain committed to supporting social cohesion, community safety and inclusive civic participation, and to working collaboratively with all levels of government to prevent antisemitism and strengthen community trust.

This submission demonstrates that antisemitism has tangible and ongoing impacts at the local level. In Glen Eira, these impacts are reflected through community members reporting experiences of unsafety, reduced participation in public and civic life, heightened security concerns, and increased demands on community support and local government resources. Antisemitism is not an abstract issue. It manifests in everyday community settings and requires urgent and sustained attention.

Our experience highlights that antisemitism is driven by a combination of direct behaviours and broader systemic factors, including misinformation, global and national events experienced locally, limited understanding of Jewish identity and history, and increasing social polarisation. These drivers extend well beyond the influence of any single organisation or level of government and require coordinated, preventative and long-term action across Australian, Victorian and local governments.

Local government is the closest level of government to the community and plays an important role in supporting prevention, education, community connection and early intervention. But councils cannot respond effectively without clear roles, timely information, consistent guidance and adequate resourcing from other levels of government.

We are calling for national prioritisation of these issues and a nationally led framework that provides leadership, consistency and sustained funding. National leadership must be matched by coordinated State and local action, recognising that effective prevention and response must occur across multiple community settings and institutions.

In the absence of national leadership and clear role definition, local governments are left to manage the impacts of antisemitism without the preventative systems, structures and tools required to respond effectively. Addressing antisemitism effectively requires action not only on individual incidents, but also on the broader systems and environments that enable harm, including misinformation, social polarisation and uneven access to resources. A broader social cohesion approach should remain explicit about antisemitism while also contributing to safer, more inclusive and more resilient communities for all.

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