

## **INQUIRY INTO ANTISEMITISM IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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## **Submission to NSW Government in regard to Anti-semitism in Healthcare**

I am a member of the NSW Australian Jewish Medical Federation. An organisation set up around the time of second world war to help support doctors who had either escaped from the perils of the Nazi war machine or were released from the Concentration camps and made their way to the safe shores of a new country. They spoke little or no English and their qualifications were not recognised. Their colleagues here supported them, taught them, and housed them to get them on their feet. Those people became Professors who set up research facilities, became General practitioners, cardiologists plastic surgeons, dermatologists, gastroenterologists, administrators who have run our public hospitals and much more. Their expertise was welcomed and lauded. They were essential, responsible members of Australian society who gave back.

We are the next generation of doctors, the sons and daughters of those people. Our children are also following in our footsteps giving to the community by joining the proud professions in healthcare as doctors, nurses, administrators, speech pathologists, psychologists, podiatrists etc..

There is a difference, things have changed for us. We can no longer wear our Star of David's around our necks openly – a symbol of our religion and heritage. We don't mention taking time off work for our festivals anymore. We don't excitedly speak of our son's or daughters Bar or Batmitzvah's at work.

Why? Because we are fearful. We are scared that we will be taken to task over the war between Hamas and Israel, because we might be forced to justify the actions of the Israeli government- some of us agree with their actions, others do not. We have concerns that we have to defend our rights as Jewish people to exist. Some of us are scared to 'out' ourselves and make ourselves targets.

We are doctors and healthcare workers, politics and religion are not part of our remit in the workplace. What we believe as individuals, how we practice our religion and celebrate our heritage is immaterial to our approach to our patients and clients. A human being is a human being, and we will always look after people who need help to the best of our ability without any concern as to their ethnic origin, political or religious beliefs. We expect that we will be respected as members of our professions. There have been situations when a Jewish patient has been approached by a Hijab wearing medical practitioner and felt fear that they will be treated properly. The threats and assertions made by the Blacktown Hospital nurses has worried us. How do know that your

anaesthetist will wake you up? Do you refuse your procedure? Can you trust anymore?

In the workplace there have been instances where Jewish doctors have been passed over for promotion or committee positions or shunned by institutions. Some years ago, I was sent away from a Catholic Nursing home because I was Jewish, despite having looked after the person I was visiting for many years prior to their admission. I said nothing to anyone about this until now. I am not the only one having experienced something like this especially since October 7, 2023.

There is a new division in our Australian society that we need to address.

Provision and receipt of healthcare should be beyond the boundaries of politics and religion.

Recipients of care should be treated without fear. All healthcare workers should be able to attend work safe in the knowledge that they will be respected by their peers, colleagues, staff, patients and clients as used to the case. There is a group Medical Mums, a number of Jewish doctors were members. Some have been blocked or excluded from the group for countering the overall anti-Semitic and anti-Israel sentiment.

Over the last few days the Australian Anthropology Association has voted on and accepted a number of anti-Semitic motions and have come out in support of the BDS, Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement. They have decided not to link with Israeli academics or their institutions.

Why should certain members of Australian society since October 7, 2023, from all walks of life all creeds and cultures utilise this cruel event to attack Jewish people on our shores. Everyone has forgotten that Hamas planned and executed this attack invading Israeli territory killing, maiming, raping and taking hostage innocent Israelis and others. No one has literally turned their backs other groups of people in this country despite their countries of origin or others from their ethnic origin waging war or attacking another country. Why us?

It is enough and we need the assistance of those in the corridors of power to change the rhetoric.

We are a minority who give back much to society, now we need society's protection.

How do we change the rhetoric?

We need to hear Penny Wong our Foreign Minister to speak up hard and strong to counter some of the misplaced and misappropriated comments. No more fence sitting or avoiding an answer.

Our ancestral land is Israel. This is undeniable and proven by historical and archaeological records.

Many of us live as citizens in other countries. Just like everyone else we want to be free to practice our culture and our religion. We give back to those countries as doctors, lawyers, politicians, service personnel, teachers, university professors, accountants, secretaries nurses etc. etc.. Now in Australia we have faced marginalisation, criticism, anti-semitism and physical attacks on places of worship and more. We had thought that understanding of the crimes of the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazi's would stop all of that. That the world's people had learned that attempts at destroying another's

culture and denigrating a race was unpalatable, unconscionable and inconceivable.

Some Australians need to take a mirror to themselves and ask themselves if their behaviour passes the proverbial pub test. In my opinion it does not. How did we get so many men and women in our streets marching Sunday after Sunday wearing K'fir's shouting 'from the River to the Sea Palestine will be free'? Some, when questioned, weren't certain which river or which sea. The scenes at the Opera House two days after Hamas's invasion were frightening in my view mainly because of the findings of the enquiry which encouraged a different interpretation of what was being chanted. To me this was a cover up.

The mainstream media have fed our public with pictures depicting starving Gazans and hospitals being blown up. Regaled us with stories of no aid getting to the Palestinians. Yet the trucks have gotten over the border only to be hijacked by Hamas and the food supplies stolen for use by their forces and not for their children or the mothers or the elderly. There is no evidence of genocide or mass starvation. The only places being targeted are those where Hamas operatives are using it as a base or have taken refuge. But I shouldn't have to defend a foreign powers' actions, yet I feel compelled to do so because I no longer feel protected here.

Our media outlets have to shoulder some responsibility for the situation in which we now find ourselves. Our leaders in our Federal government have not taken a strong enough stand to condemn this behaviour, destroying our social cohesion and created disharmony and fear.

We need a different message to be heard by our citizens. One with a balanced view. A voice that recognises the right of Jewish people to exist. That recognises the right of Israel to exist and like other countries to defend itself – just like Ukraine is defending itself from its Russian invaders.

We need to ensure that just as it was pre October 7, all Israeli visitors are welcome here. That we want our academics and theirs to learn from each other. We need our Federal leaders to change the rhetoric. Currently we are not hearing any words of support.

The inaction, relative silence and apparent support our Federal leadership has exhibited for Gaza and Hamas has fuelled the anti-Semitism we see. If the discourse doesn't change from the top down this will get worse.

We turn this around together with education, respect and open dialogue in all workplaces, schools, universities, council chambers and Parliaments. We need to ensure balanced reporting from our Media outlets. We have to change the feeling of fear currently permeating through our community.