

Joint Civil Society Submission

Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

A joint submission from Australian civil society organisations

Submitted by

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Executive Summary

This submission is made by a coalition of Australian civil society organisations that share a deep stake in the health of Australian democracy and social cohesion. We acknowledge the terrorist attack at Bondi on 14 December 2025 with profound grief. That attack represents the most extreme expression of the environment of hatred and social fracture this submission addresses throughout. Our focus on prevention and structural change is not a deflection from that event. It is the most constructive response available to civil society: to address the conditions that make such violence possible, so that the Commission's work produces lasting structural change.

We do not claim to speak for the Jewish community. We are here because social cohesion is a shared responsibility, and because organisations that work in Australian communities have both standing and obligation to respond when the evidence is this clear.

Social cohesion in Australia is under serious stress. The Scanlon Foundation's longitudinal research shows declining trust, rising polarisation, and deepening fault lines around race, culture and religion. Antisemitic incidents have reached their highest recorded levels, with the period following October 2023 representing a sharp and sustained escalation. These are not isolated data points. They are signals of a broader deterioration in the conditions that allow a diverse society to hold together.

In our assessment, the current system lacks the coordination and architecture to respond effectively. Responsibility for social cohesion is fragmented across multiple Commonwealth and State bodies with no institution or level of government holding the full mandate to act as system owner. Without an agreed shared national definition, a measurement framework capable of detecting deterioration before it reaches crisis point, or a sustained national framework to connect and resource the preventive work that evidence shows reduces the conditions in which hatred takes hold, commitments, even at the highest levels of government, cannot be converted into coordinated action on the ground.

Civil society organisations across Australia are already delivering that preventive work, in many different settings (including community settings, early childhood and education settings and workplaces), and using diverse approaches including facilitated dialogue programs, place-based community initiatives, and leadership networks. Many of these can demonstrate measurable impact on the conditions that either produce or prevent social fracture, and the infrastructure often exists – albeit variably across the nation – to ensure this work is locally owned, contextually grounded, and trusted by the communities it serves. What it lacks is the national framework to connect it, the sustained resourcing to allow it to operate at scale, and the structural recognition that would make it a durable part of Australia's social cohesion response.

This Submission is focused on Terms of Reference 2, 4, 5 and 6: the drivers of antisemitism, opportunities to enhance government responses, leading practice

approaches to strengthening social cohesion, and recommendations to counteract and prevent antisemitism. We address Terms of Reference 1, 7 and 8 where our evidence is directly relevant, and acknowledge the boundaries of our standing to speak to the lived experience of affected communities. On Term of Reference 3, our submission addresses upstream prevention, recognising that security and law enforcement responses are addressed elsewhere in the Commission's evidence.

The coalition also acknowledges that social cohesion in Australia sits within a larger structural context, including a multicultural story, a history of colonisation and the unresolved status of Indigenous Australians in our nation. As part of an overall strategy for social cohesion, these issues deserve their own full treatment, which falls outside the terms of reference this submission addresses.

Recommendations

The following five recommendations respond directly to the Commission's terms of reference and to the evidence set out in this submission. They are not independent measures. Together they constitute the architecture required to convert Australia's stated commitment to social cohesion into an operational reality.

1. Establish a national social cohesion architecture with clear accountability to government and Parliament, grounded in civil society and community ownership, anchored by a nationally shared definition of social cohesion adopted across all levels of government. *[Responds to ToR 4, 6]*
2. Implement a longitudinal national measurement framework built on existing community-grounded instruments, tracking both attitudes and behaviours and the relationship between them, with findings linked to a defined accountability mechanism that directly drives policy and investment decisions on a recurring basis. *[Responds to ToR 4, 6]*
3. Introduce long-term pooled funding for civil society cohesion work, replacing project-based grants with multi-year investment tied to outcomes rather than outputs. *[Responds to ToR 5, 6]*
4. Recognise and resource civil society as the primary delivery infrastructure within the national cohesion architecture, connecting and building on what already exists, with structured relationships and mutual accountability between government and civil society partners. *[Responds to ToR 4, 5, 6]*
5. Fund community-level cohesion infrastructure in the geographic and demographic gaps where it is currently absent, prioritising prevention and relationship-building over crisis response. *[Responds to ToR 5, 6]*

1. Who We Are and Why We Are Submitting Together

Antisemitism is a stress test for Australian democracy. When hatred of one community is permitted to take root in our institutions, our public discourse, or our streets, it signals a failure of the values that hold a diverse society together. We come to this Royal Commission not as advocates for a single community, but as organisations that understand how quickly the conditions that enable one form of hatred create the conditions for others. Our shared interest is an Australia where difference is protected, not punished, and where the machinery of democratic life actively defends that principle.

This submission is made by a coalition of Australian civil society organisations spanning community philanthropy, national collaborative research and policy, community leadership, regional civic infrastructure, place-based social innovation, and early childhood education. Several work in regional and rural Australia, where the resources, policy attention and cohesion infrastructure available to metropolitan communities are largely absent. Some have spent years building the trust and relational infrastructure across difference that this Commission is being asked to recommend.

Convened by the Menzies Leadership Foundation with the support of the Scanlon Foundation, the organisations contributing to and endorsing this submission are:

- Ballarat Foundation — a leading regional community philanthropic, advocacy and community leadership organisation, supporting responses to social needs across central Victoria.
- Collaboration for Impact — a national not-for-profit organisation that seeks to make bridging and belonging for all central to how we live and lead in Australia.
- The Ethics Centre — a not-for-profit organisation developing and delivering innovative programs, services and experiences, designed to bring ethics to the centre of personal and professional life.
- Global Access Partners — a nonprofit independent institute for active policy that initiates and facilitates collaboration between government, industry, academia and civil society on complex economic, governance and social challenges and the implementation of practical solutions.
- Welcoming Australia — a national not-for-profit organisation and movement advancing communities where everyone belongs, thrives and shapes our shared future.

- Menzies Leadership Foundation — a non-partisan philanthropic foundation and system entrepreneur that encourages Australians to reflect on leadership, build their leadership capability and act collectively for the greater good.

We do not claim to speak for the Jewish community. We are here because social cohesion is a shared responsibility, and because organisations that work in Australian communities have both standing and obligation to respond when the evidence is this clear.

Our organisations have direct experience delivering the programs, building the relationships, and working in the communities that the Commission's recommendations will need to reach. We come to this submission not only with a view on what must change but with evidence of what works, grounded in practice rather than theory.

2. The State of Social Cohesion in Australia

Responds to: ToR 1 (Nature and prevalence of antisemitism), ToR 2 (Key drivers), ToR 7 (Impact on daily life of Jewish Australians), ToR 8 (Bondi attack)

Australia has long traded on a reputation for managing diversity well – a reputation that rests on contested foundations. A multicultural story built on colonial structures that have never been fully reckoned with, and the unresolved status of Indigenous Australians in our nation, has always complicated that self-image. The evidence before this Commission suggests that even setting those foundations aside, the reputation no longer reflects reality: the conditions that allowed Australia to describe itself as a successful diverse society are under serious and worsening stress.

Antisemitic incidents in Australia have risen sharply and consistently, with the period following October 2023 producing the highest recorded incident levels since monitoring began. Jewish Australians are living under conditions that no community in a functioning democracy should face: children afraid to wear school uniforms in public, guards required outside schools and synagogues, communal events withheld from public listing until hours before they occur for security reasons. This coalition does not seek to speak to those experiences in place of those who have lived them, and we acknowledge the testimony before the Commission from directly affected individuals and communities. We do so because this is evidence that demands a response beyond the directly affected community, and because the conditions it describes are not incidental. They are the visible surface of a deeper structural failure.

The terrorist attack at Bondi on 14 December 2025 marked a catastrophic escalation. It demonstrated the lethal endpoint of a trajectory that did not begin with that attack and will not end with it unless the conditions that produced it are

addressed at the structural level. This coalition's submission is oriented toward that task.

The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion research provides the most rigorous longitudinal national picture available. It shows declining trust, rising polarisation, and increasing identification of race, culture, and religion as fault lines in public debate. These trends predate October 2023, and the events of the past two years have accelerated them.

Antisemitism is the right lens for this Commission, but it is not the only story. The conditions that weaken protections for one minority create the conditions for the erosion of protections for all. What our organisations observe across Australia is not a set of isolated incidents but a broader deterioration in what Australian society tolerates, and it is that deterioration this submission is designed to address.

What our organisations have observed on the ground reinforces what the data shows. Communities across Australia want to act on social cohesion. The will exists at the grassroots, in regional towns and outer suburbs as much as anywhere else. What is absent is the systemic support to channel that will: the infrastructure, the resources, and the sustained national framework that would allow local energy to add up to something more than isolated effort.

3. The Conditions for Social Fracture

Responds to: ToR 2 (Key drivers of antisemitism and social fracture), ToR 3 (Extremism and radicalisation), addressed here through the upstream conditions for social fracture

The conditions that produce social fracture are not reducible to a single cause. They form a cluster of interacting factors, each reinforcing the others, and any response that addresses only one will leave the rest intact. Five are particularly visible in the evidence from our organisations' work in community and other settings across Australia.

3.1 The retraction of civic leadership

The retraction of civic leadership, where those in authority are less consistently willing to model respectful engagement across difference, acts as an aggravating condition that accelerates the other four. It is addressed in this submission not through a standalone recommendation but through the institutional accountability that Recommendations 1 and 2 are designed to create.

3.2 The normalisation of hostility in everyday settings

The shift in what Australians feel permitted to say, tolerate, and treat as acceptable humour is visible in workplaces, community spaces, and online environments alike. This is a cultural phenomenon, not primarily a digital one. Online platforms accelerate it: the systems that determine what content people see are designed to

surface material that provokes strong reactions, and what circulates online seeps into offline conversation and conduct. Incident data and attitude surveys alone do not capture this shift, which is why Recommendation 2 calls for measurement of both attitudes and behaviours and the relationship between them. There is also a role for media professionals: a voluntary commitment by journalists, editors and broadcasters to consider the social cohesion implications of their coverage could be pursued without waiting for legislation, and could shift public discourse in ways that regulation alone cannot achieve.

3.3 The pressure of international events on communities without relational foundations

When international events generate intense domestic tension, communities with existing cross-cultural relationships have the foundation to hold difficult conversations without fracture. Communities without those foundations do not. The events following October 2023 made this visible across Australia. This submission does not engage with the events themselves or the politics surrounding them; what it observes is that the communities best able to navigate the resulting tensions were those where sustained investment in relational infrastructure had already built the trust needed to absorb them.

3.4 The hollowing out of shared civic life

Australians across generations once encountered each other across lines of difference through shared civic institutions: local media, neighbourhood organisations, service clubs, faith communities in civic roles, and the informal settings of community life. Many of these institutions have weakened or disappeared, and little has been built to replace them. In regional and rural communities this hollowing out is particularly acute, compounded by the retreat of local media diversity and limited access to cohesion infrastructure. The displacement of face-to-face community life by algorithmically mediated online environments has not filled this gap; it has deepened it. The conditions for social fracture grow strongest where the settings for ordinary cross-cultural contact have been allowed to disappear. Rebuilding them is precisely what Recommendations 4 and 5 are designed to support: recognising and resourcing the civil society organisations that maintain or recreate those settings, and targeting investment in the communities where they are most absent.

3.5 The weaponisation of information through social media

The rapid proliferation of misinformation via social media has introduced a qualitatively new condition for social fracture, one that interacts with and accelerates each of the conditions described above. The capacity to produce and distribute convincing false content at scale, targeted at specific communities and timed to moments of existing tension, has fundamentally altered the information environment in which social cohesion either holds or breaks. Where earlier forms of

misinformation spread through human networks at human speed, AI-generated content can flood community information environments faster than trust-based corrective mechanisms can respond. The damage is not primarily epistemic; it is relational. When community members cannot agree on what is true about each other, the shared factual ground that makes respectful disagreement possible is eroded, and the conditions for hostility and fracture are created without any direct contact between the groups involved.

This is consistent with the established evidence on intergroup contact: communities with stronger cross-cultural relationships are less susceptible to hostile narratives about other groups because familiarity and trust reduce the conditions in which those narratives take hold. The same mechanism applies to AI-generated misinformation, which depends on the absence of those relationships to be effective. This is the mechanism through which this condition connects directly to the recommendations. Recommendation 2's measurement framework, extended to track behavioural signals alongside attitudes, is the tool by which AI-amplified misinformation can be detected as it moves through community information environments, before it reaches incident level. Recommendations 4 and 5, by sustaining and extending the civil society organisations that build cross-cultural relationships at the community level, invest in precisely the relational resilience that reduces the susceptibility of communities to misinformation-driven fracture. The response to AI-generated and other misinformation that this submission supports is not primarily regulatory; it is infrastructural. Building the relational conditions in which misinformation is less effective is both more durable and more within the reach of the civil society architecture this submission proposes.

3.6 The Structural gap

Underlying all five of these conditions is a single structural absence: the local civic infrastructure that builds connection and mutual understanding before it is needed. Cohesion is not produced in crisis; it is drawn on in crisis, from reserves built through sustained investment in relationships, institutions and shared civic life. Where those reserves have been allowed to deplete, the conditions for social fracture have been able to take hold. This is the structural failure that Recommendations 1 through 5 are designed to address.

4. Where the Current System Falls Short

Responds to: ToR 4 (Opportunities to enhance government responses)

4.1 The Definitional Vacuum

One of the most significant barriers to effective action on social cohesion in Australia is definitional. Without a shared definition adopted across levels of government,

every element of the national response is undermined: architecture lacks a shared foundation, measurement produces incomparable data, and funding operates without a common framework of intent. This is a structural problem, and it directly undermines the government's capacity to respond to antisemitism with the coordination the evidence demands.

Working definitions exist. The OECD framework and the Scanlon Foundation's five-domain model are the most widely cited. The Australian Resilient Democracy Network has recently proposed definitions for social cohesion and a cohesive society. Organisations within this coalition operationalise social cohesion through the lived experience of belonging and mutual respect, and through the civic relationships and cooperation that enable diverse communities to navigate shared challenges together. These definitions are compatible, and the Commission has the opportunity and the mandate to consolidate them into a nationally agreed shared definition that is legible across levels of government and operational at the community level.

A nationally shared definition would give every institution, every funder, and every civil society organisation working in this space a common reference point. It makes it possible to measure the same thing, fund toward the same goal, and hold the same institutions accountable. Without it, the architecture Recommendation 1 proposes has no shared foundation to build on.

4.2 The Measurement Gap

The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion survey is the strongest existing instrument available and the right foundation on which to build. It is longitudinal, community-grounded, and has produced the most rigorous national picture of social cohesion trends available to policymakers. The Australian Resilient Democracy Network proposes further, sensible measures.

A properly resourced national framework building on that work would extend its reach in several directions: deeper geographic coverage into regional, rural and remote communities; measurement of behaviours alongside attitudes; mechanisms to detect the large disengaged population that no survey instrument operating at current scale and resourcing is designed to reach; and a defined accountability mechanism that connects findings to policy decisions on a recurring basis. Together these extensions are the case for the national investment and commitment that would allow that work to do what a national framework requires.

Extending the framework to track behaviours alongside attitudes would significantly strengthen its early warning capability. Beliefs and behaviours are interlinked in ways that attitude surveys alone cannot fully capture. Someone who would not express an antisemitic view in a survey may still laugh at an antisemitic joke, share hostile content online, or tolerate it in their social environment without challenge. The behavioural signals that indicate how far normalisation has progressed, and how close a community is to the threshold at which attitudes translate into action, are where early warning capability lives. A national framework that tracks both attitudes

and behaviours and crucially the relationship between them: how shifts in what people say and tolerate in everyday settings precede and predict changes in incident rates, institutional trust, and community safety, would provide a qualitatively different level of policy intelligence.

Extending geographic reach into regional, rural and remote Australia would address a significant limitation in the current national picture. These communities are underrepresented in existing data, and the absence of diverse voices in regional reporting compounds this: the experiences of multicultural communities in non-metropolitan settings are largely invisible to policymakers. A national framework with the resourcing to see these communities, not just count them, would change the quality of investment decisions in the areas where cohesion infrastructure is most needed.

Developing mechanisms to detect the large population of disengaged, conflict-avoidant Australians who do not appear in incident data and are not captured by surveys that depend on active engagement would address a blind spot that no current instrument is resourced to reach. Disengaged Australians are not simply absent from the problem: their withdrawal from civic life creates the conditions in which polarisation accelerates and extremism finds traction. Understanding this population is essential for designing the upstream prevention responses that Recommendations 3, 4 and 5 propose.

4.3 The Institutional Architecture Failure

Australia has stated, repeatedly and at the highest level, its commitment to combating antisemitism and protecting social cohesion. What has been absent is any institution with the structural authority to act on those commitments in a coordinated way.

Responsibility for social cohesion is distributed across numerous distinct bodies at Commonwealth level alone, including the Department of Home Affairs, the Attorney-General's Department, the Australian Human Rights Commission, and the eSafety Commissioner, alongside state and territory agencies, education departments, and police. The Office for Social Cohesion and the Secretaries Group on social cohesion have important coordinating roles. However, no entity has the mandate, budget, or convening authority to act as system owner. The Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism has a coordinating brief, but no statutory powers and no operational infrastructure.

The consequence of the current disparate structure is visible in how incidents are handled. When an antisemitic incident occurs in a school, a university, a workplace, a community organisation, a public space, or online, there is no consistent answer to five basic questions: which body owns the response; what is the obligation of the institution where the incident occurred; how is the affected community supported; where is the incident recorded; and what feedback loop exists between incidents and policy. None of these settings currently operates under clear obligations about how

to respond, what to record, or how to connect their response to the national picture. A swastika in a university lecture theatre, on a synagogue wall, and on a residential street is experienced by the affected community as one continuous phenomenon. The state experiences it as three unrelated incidents handled by three bodies that share no data, coordinate no response, and learn nothing from each other.

National Cabinet's January 2025 commitment to establish a national database to track antisemitic incidents is a welcome and important step. The question now is whether it will be built with the taxonomy, resourcing and institutional connections required to do what the commitment promises, let alone also deliver on social cohesion more widely. A database that captures incident data without connecting it to coordinated response, clear institutional obligations, and a learning function that drives policy is a record, not a system. The Special Envoy's 49 recommendations, published in July 2025, identify many of the gaps that remain. What is needed now is the architecture to act on them in a coordinated and sustained way. That is what Recommendation 1 is designed to provide: a national coordination and accountability framework that ensures what happens in every institutional setting connects to a coherent national response.

5. Civil Society as the Foundation of Prevention

Responds to: ToR 5 (Leading practice approaches to de-radicalisation and strengthening social cohesion), ToR 6 (Recommendations to counteract and prevent antisemitism)

The Commission has already received substantial evidence of what has failed. This section describes what works, where investment is missing, and what adequate resourcing would make possible. It is the evidence base for Recommendations 3, 4 and 5.

Civil society organisations in Australia have long been a key infrastructure through which social cohesion is built and maintained. The trust built at the local level, the relationships sustained between people who would not otherwise meet, the programs operating in the spaces where communities actually live: these are not supplements to government programs. They are the foundation on which any effective national response must be built. The preventive, relationship-building function of civil society happens across an enormous range of existing settings: in playgroups and neighbourhood houses, sports clubs and arts organisations, men's sheds and libraries, neighbourhood watch networks and faith communities, in leadership programs and civility exchanges, in community foundations and facilitated dialogue processes. These settings are doing that work now, and have been for decades. What the current system fails to provide is the national framework to connect them, the sustained resourcing to allow them to operate at scale, and the structural recognition that would make their contribution a durable part of Australia's response rather than a contingent one.

None of it can be standardised from the centre, replicated through crisis response, or built within short funding cycles. What is missing is not the work. It is the national framework that connects it, resources it, and gives it the structural recognition that would allow it to operate with the reach and continuity the challenge requires.

5.1 The Evidence for Prevention

Structured, facilitated small-group dialogue processes and other contact based interventions are among the most consistently effective tools available for building social cohesion and reducing the conditions for radicalisation. Evidence from deliberative engagement programs in Australia shows measurable increases in institutional trust and social cohesion following sustained structured engagement. What makes these processes work is not the format but the conditions: repeated participation, trusted facilitation, genuine diversity of participants, and a timeframe long enough for relationships to form. These conditions cannot be created within a one-off intervention. This is why Recommendation 3's shift to long-term pooled funding is essential to realising the benefits the evidence shows are available.

Early childhood education settings are high-leverage, under-utilised infrastructure for social cohesion and upstream prevention. The evidence is strong that these environments are especially effective because they engage the whole family rather than targeting adults in isolation. At their best, early childhood settings simultaneously support children's development and language acquisition, build trust between families and institutions, create informal social connections across cultural groups, and introduce families to civic norms, legal expectations, and the shared values of Australian democratic life. For newly arrived families in particular, these settings are often the first sustained point of contact with Australian society, making them a particularly high-value investment for any strategy aimed at preventing the conditions in which antisemitism and other forms of group hatred take hold. They succeed because they operationalise integration through repeated participation and trusted relationships, not through messaging. They are relatively cost-effective because they already exist, operate locally, and reach families during formative years. They are currently not funded or recognised as social cohesion infrastructure. That is the gap Recommendation 5 is designed to close.

Place-based approaches that strengthen local relationships and networks are consistently recognised in the research as critical to democratic resilience and social cohesion. Community-level infrastructure works when it is locally owned, contextually grounded, and sustained over the long term. Evidence from place-based initiatives in Australia shows that outcomes improve substantially when communities are supported through sustained backbone investment and flexible long-term funding rather than isolated programs. The most important factor is not the specific program but the conditions: trusted local organisations with existing relationships, the flexibility to respond to community needs as they emerge, and the time to build the relational infrastructure that makes communities resilient before crisis arrives.

Cross-sector collaboration is one of the most consistently effective models in the evidence base. Processes that bring government, business, philanthropy, research institutions and civil society together outside formal bureaucratic structures build the civic relationships and institutional trust that underpin cohesion in ways that single-sector approaches cannot. No single organisation or sector can own this challenge: the infrastructure that works is distributed, collaborative, and sustained across sectors over time. Facilitated civility exchange programs that create structured opportunities for respectful disagreement across difference build the practical capacity of communities to work through contested issues without fracture. Community leadership programs with alumni networks spanning regional and rural Australia represent exactly the kind of distributed cross-sector civic infrastructure that, properly supported and connected, could anchor a national prevention effort.

5.2 The Investment Gap

The relational, civic and community infrastructure that reduces the conditions in which prejudice grows is chronically underfunded. Current funding structures reward short-term service delivery and crisis response, not prevention. When programs end at the conclusion of a grant cycle, the trust and relationships built do not carry over. That loss is largely invisible to those who made the decision to end the funding.

Regional, rural and remote communities deserve specific attention here. Civil society organisations doing this work in those communities do so with fewer resources, less policy attention, and weaker connections to national frameworks than their metropolitan counterparts. These are often the communities where the conditions for social fracture are most acute and the infrastructure to address them most absent. Recommendation 5 is designed to close that gap.

The infrastructure to do this work already exists in organisations across the country. What is needed is sustained resourcing, better connection between those organisations, and an accountability framework that lets communities own their response. That is what Recommendation 4 proposes.

6. Recommendations

Australia has long described itself as a successful multicultural society. Civil society organisations across this country have spent decades doing the hard work of making that description real, building trust across difference at the local level with limited resources and without consistent national support. The evidence before this Commission suggests that a national architecture is required to sustain and scale this work.

The five recommendations that follow address this structural gap, not through a centralised or one-size-fits-all national approach, but by building the coordination,

accountability and resourcing framework that allows locally-owned work to operate with the reach and accountability the challenge requires.

Recommendation 1: Establish a national social cohesion architecture

Establish a national social cohesion architecture with clear accountability to government and Parliament, grounded in civil society and community ownership, anchored by a nationally shared definition of social cohesion adopted across all levels of government.

Responds to: ToR 4, ToR 6

The system failures documented in Section 4 share a common root: no institution has the authority, mandate or infrastructure to act as system owner for social cohesion in Australia. This recommendation addresses that directly. The connection to the conditions in Section 3 is structural: normalisation of hostility spreads in part because no institution has the mandate to track it, name it, and coordinate a response across the settings where it occurs. The pressure of international events fractures communities without relational foundations in part because no architecture exists to direct urgent support to those communities when tensions spike. The hollowing out of civic life deepens because civil society organisations doing preventive work operate without a national framework to connect them or hold their impact visible to government. The national architecture proposed here acts on each of these gaps: it is a coordination, accountability and resourcing framework that enables locally-owned delivery to operate at national scale. It should include a statutory incident reporting and coordination function with a clear mandate to coordinate response across jurisdictions; a standardised incident taxonomy adopted across Commonwealth and state agencies, universities, schools and major platforms; statutory obligations on host institutions to report incidents and respond to a defined standard; and an independent learning function tasked with publishing pattern analysis and policy recommendations on a recurring basis. Accountability to Parliament rather than solely to government is essential to protect this architecture from the instability of funding and political cycles. Civil society and community ownership of delivery is essential to ensure it remains locally responsive rather than centrally imposed.

Recommendation 2: Implement a national measurement framework

Implement a national measurement framework, independently operated, longitudinal, and built on existing community-grounded instruments, tracking both attitudes and behaviours and the relationship between them, with findings linked to a defined accountability mechanism that directly drives policy and investment decisions on a recurring basis.

Responds to: ToR 4, ToR 6

As Section 4 argues, attitude measurement alone is insufficient. The connection to the conditions in Section 3 is direct: the normalisation of hostility in everyday settings is precisely the kind of shift that attitude surveys miss, because it lives in what people tolerate and repeat rather than what they will openly endorse. A measurement framework that tracks behaviours alongside attitudes can detect this normalisation process earlier, before it translates into incident data. The hollowing out of civic life similarly produces a disengaged population that neither participates in civic institutions nor appears in incident statistics, yet whose withdrawal creates the conditions in which polarisation accelerates. Measurement that is designed to see this population, not just the visible and the engaged, gives the policy system early warning it currently lacks. The early warning signals of a deteriorating social cohesion environment live in the relationship between what people believe, what they say, what they tolerate, and what they do. A national framework must track all of these dimensions and their interaction, and must be linked to a defined accountability mechanism so that what the data shows produces decisions, not just reports. Measuring social cohesion behaviourally at national scale is a genuinely complex undertaking with no simple off-the-shelf solution; this is precisely why the recommendation builds on existing instruments rather than proposing a new framework from scratch, and why independent operation and a defined accountability mechanism are essential safeguards against the measurement effort becoming an end in itself.

The Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion survey, together with the Australian Resilient Democracy Network's proposals for further measurement, provide a strong foundation. Any measurement framework must be designed to see regional, rural and remote communities, not just count them, and must include mechanisms to detect the disengaged population that current instruments miss.

Recommendation 3: Introduce long-term pooled funding

Introduce long-term pooled funding for civil society cohesion work, replacing project-based grants with multi-year investment tied to outcomes rather than outputs.

Responds to: ToR 5, ToR 6

Long-term in this context means investment sustained beyond electoral and budget cycles, with funding horizons that allow communities and organisations to plan, build relationships, and demonstrate impact over time rather than scrambling to renew at each grant round.

Pooled funding means a shared investment vehicle with contributions from government, philanthropy and others, governed collectively rather than administered as parallel single-funder grants. This reduces duplication, creates incentives for collaboration rather than competition between organisations, and allows a portfolio of community-level work to be managed strategically rather than funded piecemeal.

The conditions identified in Section 3 share a common feature: they worsen when the civic infrastructure that counters them is absent, and they improve when that

infrastructure is maintained and trusted over time. The hollowing out of shared civic life is not reversed by a one-off program; it requires organisations with longevity, community roots, and the flexibility to respond to emerging tensions before they become crises. Communities under pressure from international events can only draw on relational foundations that were built before the pressure arrived. The normalisation of hostility is slowed by repeated facilitated contact across difference, not by a single intervention. Each of these mechanisms requires time, continuity, and trust that cannot be created within a short funding cycle and is destroyed when programs end abruptly. The evidence from place-based initiatives in Australia and internationally confirms this: complex social challenges require deep relational work, local capability, and institutional trust that short funding cycles structurally prevent. This recommendation changes that structural constraint directly.

Long-term pooled funding enables communities to build shared ownership, adaptive capability and enduring partnerships. In practice, this means a strategy of finding what already works, connecting it to a broader system, and amplifying it rather than funding new isolated programs from the centre. The evidence does not support centralised single-entity solutions: investment in multiple trusted collaborations and distributed civic infrastructures, each grounded in their specific community context, is what produces durable outcomes.

It also means distinguishing between pilots and demonstration initiatives: pilots are often transactional and disconnected from broader systems change; demonstrations are designed to show what belonging-oriented, community-led infrastructure looks like in practice, prove its value, and expose the conditions required for it to succeed.

Recommendation 4: Recognise and resource civil society as primary delivery infrastructure

Recognise and resource civil society as the primary delivery infrastructure within the national cohesion architecture, connecting and building on what already exists, with structured relationships and mutual accountability between government and civil society partners.

Responds to: ToR 4, ToR 5, ToR 6

Section 5 sets out why civil society is where effective social cohesion work happens, and this recommendation is about giving that reality structural recognition. It starts from what already exists: organisations across the country with established relationships, local knowledge, and community trust.

Structural recognition means those organisations have defined roles within a national framework, with relationships to government that are sustained rather than rebuilt from scratch with each grant round, and accountability that runs both ways. Government provides the resourcing and the framework; civil society delivers within it and is answerable for the results. The current model produces the opposite: organisations engaged project by project, relationships that dissolve when funding ends, and no shared memory of what worked or why.

Recommendation 5: Fund community-level cohesion infrastructure in geographic and demographic gaps

Fund community-level cohesion infrastructure in the geographic and demographic gaps where it is currently absent, prioritising prevention and relationship-building over crisis response.

Responds to: ToR 5, ToR 6

The geographic and demographic gaps this recommendation addresses are found wherever preventive cohesion infrastructure is absent and the conditions for social fracture are present. Two areas warrant early attention. Early childhood education settings represent high-leverage, cost-effective infrastructure that already exists in communities, is already trusted, and currently receives no recognition or funding as a social cohesion channel. Section 5 sets out the evidence for why investment here produces long-term impact. Regional, rural and remote communities represent the clearest geographic gap, where cohesion infrastructure is most absent, policy attention lowest, and the vulnerabilities documented in Sections 2 and 3 most concentrated. These are not the only gaps, but they are the most visible starting points for targeted investment.

7. Conclusion

The evidence before this Commission points in one direction. Antisemitism in Australia is severe and worsening. Its drivers are structural and interacting. The current system lacks the architecture capable of addressing them with the coordination and sustained investment the evidence demands. Civil society has the infrastructure, the evidence base and the community trust to deliver prevention at scale, but without the resourcing and recognition to do so. The Commission has the mandate to change that.

The five recommendations are the minimum architecture required. Recommendation 1 provides the institutional infrastructure without which every other commitment remains a statement of intent. Without Recommendation 2, the system has no means to learn from what is happening or self-correct when it is failing. Without Recommendation 3, sustained prevention work is structurally impossible regardless of will or intent. Recommendation 4 gives civil society the structural recognition it needs to function as primary infrastructure rather than a contingent delivery partner. Recommendation 5 ensures the architecture reaches the communities most at risk, not only those most visible to existing frameworks.

The terrorist attack at Bondi on 14 December 2025 showed what happens when the conditions for social fracture are allowed to deepen without a sustained and coordinated response. The organisations that have contributed to this submission are already doing the preventive work this Commission is being asked to recommend. We are asking the Commission to ensure that work is matched by the

institutional and financial architecture that would allow it to succeed as the evidence shows is possible.

We are committed to working constructively with government on implementation and are available to provide further evidence and input as the Commission's recommendations are developed into policy.

Submitted respectfully,

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Appendix: Mapping to Terms of Reference and Conditions

Table 1 below maps each section and recommendation of this submission to the relevant terms of reference of the Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion. This submission focuses primarily on ToRs 2, 4, 5 and 6. ToRs 1, 7 and 8 are addressed where the coalition has direct evidence to contribute. On ToR 3, this submission addresses upstream prevention; security and law enforcement responses are addressed elsewhere in the Commission’s evidence.

Submission section / recommendation	Terms of Reference	How it responds
2. The State of Social Cohesion in Australia	ToR 1, 7, 8	Establishes the state of social cohesion in Australia using longitudinal data and ground-level observation, documents the scale and trajectory of antisemitism, acknowledges the lived impact on Jewish Australians, and addresses the Bondi attack as the context for the coalition’s response.
3. The Conditions for Social Fracture	ToR 2, 3	Addresses the five conditions for social fracture identified by coalition organisations: the retraction of civic leadership (reframed as an aggravating condition that accelerates the other four rather than a freestanding cause), the normalisation of hostility in everyday settings, the pressure of international events on communities without relational foundations, the hollowing out of shared civic life, and the weaponisation of information through AI-generated misinformation. Establishes the case for the structural and civil society infrastructure responses proposed in Recommendations 1 through 5.
4. Where the Current System Falls Short	ToR 4	Documents the definitional vacuum, measurement gap, and institutional architecture failure, and identifies the opportunities for government response.
5. Civil Society as the Foundation of Prevention	ToR 5, 6	Sets out leading practice evidence for social cohesion and de-radicalisation, including cross-sector collaboration, facilitated dialogue, civility exchange programs, early childhood education settings, and place-based approaches. Identifies investment gaps and provides the evidence base for Recommendations 2, 3, 4 and 5.
Recommendation 1: National social cohesion architecture	ToR 4, 6	Directly addresses the opportunity to enhance government response through a new institutional architecture with civil society ownership and parliamentary accountability.

Submission section / recommendation	Terms of Reference	How it responds
Recommendation 2: National measurement framework	ToR 4, 6	Addresses the measurement gap, with specific attention to tracking both attitudes and behaviours and building an accountability mechanism.
Recommendation 3: Long-term pooled funding	ToR 5, 6	Addresses the funding precondition for leading practice prevention work, proposing a shift from short-term project grants to long-term pooled investment, with a find-connect-amplify approach and demonstration initiatives rather than isolated pilots.
Recommendation 4: Recognise and resource civil society	ToR 4, 5, 6	Converts the evidence for civil society as primary infrastructure into structural recognition and mutual accountability.
Recommendation 5: Fund community-level infrastructure	ToR 5, 6	Targets investment in ECE settings and regional/rural communities as high-leverage, evidence-based prevention infrastructure.

Table 1. Map of Terms of Reference

Table 2 below connects each condition identified in Section 3, recommendations, and the mechanism through which each recommendation changes the condition. This crosswalk supplements the Terms of Reference mapping above by showing the internal logical structure of the submission: how the diagnostic analysis connects to the proposed structural responses.

Condition	Responding Recommendations	Mechanism: how the recommendation acts on the condition
The retraction of civic leadership (aggravating condition)	Recs 1, 2, 4	Treated as an aggravating condition rather than a freestanding structural cause. The submission addresses the conditions civic leadership should be defending but increasingly is not: Rec 1 creates institutional accountability that does not depend on individual civic leadership; Rec 2 makes the deterioration visible, reducing the capacity to ignore it; Rec 4 recognises civil society organisations as the distributed civic leadership infrastructure that remains active where political leadership has retreated.
The normalisation of hostility in everyday settings	Recs 1, 2, 3, 4	Rec 2 tracks the behavioural shift (what people tolerate and repeat) that attitude surveys alone miss, providing early warning before normalisation reaches incident-level expression. Rec 1 creates institutional obligations on host settings (workplaces, universities, schools) to respond to incidents rather than ignore them, reducing the

Condition	Responding Recommendations	Mechanism: how the recommendation acts on the condition
		tolerance that normalisation depends on. Recs 3 and 4 sustain the facilitated dialogue and contact programs that are the most consistently evidence-based tool for reversing normalisation at the community level.
The pressure of international events on communities without relational foundations	Recs 3, 4, 5	Communities can only draw on relational foundations that were built before international pressure arrived. Recs 3 and 4 sustain the civil society organisations that build and maintain those foundations, so they are present when needed. Rec 5 closes the geographic gap: communities most likely to lack these foundations are in regional and outer-suburban areas, and they are currently least likely to have infrastructure in place when tension spikes. Targeted investment before crises arrive, not in response to them, is the mechanism this recommendation provides.
The hollowing out of shared civic life	Recs 3, 4, 5	The hollowing out of civic life depletes the local settings where ordinary cross-cultural contact happens. Rec 4 recognises and resources the civil society organisations that maintain those settings: playgroups, neighbourhood houses, sports clubs, dialogue programs and community foundations. Rec 3 gives those organisations the sustained funding they need to remain present and trusted rather than disappearing when a grant cycle ends. Rec 5 targets the communities, particularly regional and rural, where the hollowing out is most advanced and the infrastructure to replace what has been lost is most absent.
The weaponisation of information through social media	Recs 2, 4, 5	Rec 2's behavioural measurement framework detects AI-amplified misinformation as it moves through community information environments, before it reaches incident level. Recs 4 and 5 invest in the civil society organisations that build the cross-cultural relational trust shown to make communities less susceptible to misinformation-driven fracture. The mechanism is infrastructural rather than regulatory: stronger community relationships reduce the effectiveness of misinformation, not through better information alone but through the interpersonal trust that makes hostile narratives about other groups harder to sustain.

Table 2. Map of Conditions, Recommendations and Mechanisms