

**MENZIES LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION**

*Fostering outstanding leadership for the greater good*

SUBMISSION TO THE

**Royal Commission on Antisemitism  
and Social Cohesion**

*Conditions for Civility:*

*An Architecture for Repairing Australian Social Cohesion at Scale*

Submitted by:

**Peter Jopling AM KC, Chair**

**Liz Gillies, Chief Executive Officer**

Menzies Leadership Foundation

12<sup>th</sup> June 2026

## Table of Contents

Royal Commission Terms of Reference Clause Map.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
1. About the Foundation and the Civility Coalition.....	6
1.1 The Menzies Leadership Foundation.....	6
1.2 The Civility Coalition.....	6
1.3 The Foundation's working hypothesis.....	7
2. The Civility Conditions Framework.....	8
2.1 Structure.....	8
2.2 Why the framework matters for this Royal Commission.....	8
2.3 Principles for scaling nationally.....	9
3. Why Antisemitism Is Every Australian's Responsibility.....	9
3.1 The relevance test: connecting with all Australians such that addressing antisemitism becomes a responsibility for all.....	10
3.2 Architecture for all Australians to appreciate and act on antisemitism.....	11
4. Response to Term of Reference 1: Nature, Prevalence and Drivers.....	12
4.1 The shapeshifting nature of antisemitism.....	12
4.2 Drivers, mapped to the Conditions framework.....	12
5. Response to Terms of Reference 2 and 3.....	13
5.1 Term of Reference 2: Law enforcement, border control, immigration and security.....	13
5.2 Term of Reference 3: The Bondi terrorist attack.....	13
6. Response to Term of Reference 4: Strengthening Social Cohesion (the Foundation's principal contribution).....	14
6.1 The five priority recommendations.....	15
7. The National Civility Endowment: A National Community Foundation.....	18
7.1 Why a national community foundation.....	18
7.2 The proposed architecture: three components.....	19
7.3 What government does, and does not do.....	22
7.4 The case for the form: an exemplar of community-institutional cohesion.....	23
7.5 Relationship to existing arrangements.....	23
8. A Menzies Reflection.....	24
9. The Foundation's Commitment to Service.....	24
10. Conclusion: An Australia Worth Building.....	25

## Royal Commission Terms of Reference Clause Map

Terms of Reference Clause	Relevant sections of this submission
<p>(a) tackling antisemitism by:</p> <p>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;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- p.3 Executive Summary</li> <li>- p.12. Response to ToR 1</li> </ul>
<p>(a) tackling antisemitism by:</p> <p>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;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- p.3 Executive Summary</li> <li>- pp.14-17: Response to ToR 4</li> </ul>
<p>(a) tackling antisemitism by:</p> <p>iii. making recommendations to counteract and prevent manifestations of antisemitism;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- p.3 Executive Summary</li> <li>- pp.14-17: Response to ToR 4</li> </ul>
<p>b) making any recommendations to assist law enforcement, border control, immigration and security agencies to tackle antisemitism, including by:</p> <p>i. improvements to guidance and training within law enforcement, border control, immigration, and security agencies to respond to antisemitic conduct</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- p.13: Response to ToR 2</li> </ul>
<p>c) examine the circumstances surrounding the antisemitic Bondi terrorist attack on 14 December 2025, including:</p> <p>i. lead up to and planning of the attack;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- p.13: Response to ToR 3</li> </ul>
<p>d) make any other recommendations arising out of your inquiry into the matters set out in paragraphs (a) to (c) that would contribute to strengthening social cohesion in Australia and countering the spread of ideologically and religiously motivated extremism in Australia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- p.3 Executive Summary</li> <li>- pp.14-17: Response to ToR 4</li> <li>- pp.18-23: National Endowment</li> </ul>

## Executive Summary

The Menzies Leadership Foundation makes this submission as a non-partisan philanthropic foundation that has, for nearly five decades, championed leadership for the greater good in Australia. Over the past two and a half years, the Foundation has convened the Civility Coalition — a national group of community foundations, multicultural and migration sector peak bodies, ethics and civics organisations, local government, local journalism, and place-based community development organisations, with design and sense-making support from Paper Giant. The Coalition operates three active community pilots in Ballarat, Tasmania, and Mparntwe (Alice Springs). The framework, the architecture, and the convening capacity that this work has produced form the substance of this individual submission.

The Foundation convened members of the Coalition and others to explore a collective understanding of, and recommendations regarding, antisemitism and social cohesion. The results are provided for the Royal Commission's consideration in a separate, joint submission. The Foundation endorses that submission, and here seeks here to extend that collective work in multiple ways.

### The central proposition

Antisemitism in Australia is the responsibility of every Australian. The Commission's response will succeed only if it is framed, designed and resourced as a response to the broader erosion of Australian civility and social cohesion of which antisemitism is the most acute current symptom. The Foundation respectfully submits that one of the most important tasks before this Royal Commission is to make recommendations that connect with all Australians — Jewish Australians, those already working to build social cohesion, the silent majority, and those who are presently neutral — such that addressing antisemitism becomes a responsibility carried by every Australian, with credible ways to act on that responsibility in the places where they live.

### What this submission contributes

A diagnostic framework of sixteen conditions across which civility either flourishes or fails, mapped over four levels of social organisation — personal, interpersonal, community, and systemic. The framework emerged from the work of establishing the Coalition and from structured consultation with Coalition members through 2024 and 2025. On the framework, antisemitism is what emerges in Australia when Civic Trust, Institutional Legitimacy, National Narrative and Skills for Dialogue degrade simultaneously.

Two practical tests for the Commission's recommendations:

- A relevance test: Do the recommendations connect with all Australians such that addressing antisemitism becomes a responsibility for all?, and
- An action test: Do they give Australians, in their everyday lives, a credible way to act?

### Five recommendations, organised by level of impact:

- R1. Personal level: The Commonwealth Government should support a national civic literacy and brave conversations program delivered through Australia's existing schools, TAFEs, universities, workplaces, neighbourhood houses and public libraries.

- R2. Interpersonal level: The Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should re-orient their strategies to strengthen social cohesion to activate ordinary Australians through a population-level mobilisation framework.
- R3. Community level: Building on previous place-based work, the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should coordinate to support place-based civility infrastructure deliverable through eleven trusted community 'engines': community foundations, neighbourhood houses, local government, universities and TAFEs, chambers of commerce, local media, non-profit national intermediaries, interfaith networks; sporting clubs and codes; public libraries; and workplaces and employer peak bodies.
- R4. Systemic: State and Territory Governments facilitate semi-annual convenings of law enforcement and community institutions, to support proactive collaboration.
- R5. Implementation: To support implementation of R1-R4, the Commonwealth Government should engage different sectors including philanthropy to develop and co-fund a National Civility Endowment. One potential option to deliver this effort is a national community foundation, of, by and for the community. This could involve: public seed capital (Commonwealth consolidated revenue) matched by private philanthropy; an independent, community-anchored board; a small national platform that connects rather than centralises; and support for place-based delivery through the eleven 'engines' via the fast-growing movement of 72 active community foundations across Australia.

### **What is distinctive about this submission**

It is offered by a non-partisan philanthropic foundation incorporating members of many faiths and none, in the conviction that the most useful contribution non-Jewish civil society can make to this Royal Commission is to argue for, design and commit to deliver the broader social cohesion architecture without which any narrower response will fail. It is grounded in active community work, not commentary — the three pilots are operational, and the Foundation's commitment to continue and scale them is independent of the Commission's findings. It is built on existing Australian institutions — community foundations, neighbourhood houses, local government, universities and TAFEs, chambers of commerce, local media, faith communities, sporting clubs, public libraries, workplaces, and the cross-cutting bodies that work between them — rather than proposing new ones.

### **The Foundation's commitment**

The Foundation, through the Coalition, offers itself to the Commission as a willing partner in service of the recommendations the Commissioner ultimately makes — whatever those recommendations are, and whether or not they reflect the architecture proposed in this submission. The Coalition's existing assets are offered as a resource to the Commission during the inquiry phase, and to the Commonwealth during implementation, in whatever form is most useful.

The Foundation thanks the Commissioner, the Hon Virginia Bell AC SC, and the staff of the Royal Commission for the seriousness with which they have approached their task. The Foundation's representatives stand ready to appear before the Royal Commission or assist with implementation in any capacity that would be useful.

## 1. About the Foundation and the Civility Coalition

### 1.1 The Menzies Leadership Foundation

The Menzies Leadership Foundation (the Foundation) is a 48-year-old, non-partisan philanthropic foundation, established as a legacy project for Sir Robert Menzies. We take Sir Robert Menzies' qualities, values and principles — service to the community, regard for all Australians — and apply a contemporary lens to them in service of fostering outstanding leadership for the greater good. The Foundation operates as a system entrepreneur: we run incubators that address leadership challenges, we draw on the rigour and research of academic partners, and we contribute the resulting insights into the national leadership discourse. One of our principal areas of focus is citizen leadership and community resilience, of which civility and social cohesion form the central sandbox.

### 1.2 The Civility Coalition

The Civility Coalition (the Coalition) is a national coalition of organisations convened by the Foundation, in response to the events of October 2023 and the deepening fractures in Australian public life that those events both exposed and accelerated. Their work will culminate in strategies to reimagine civility across Australia, overseen by a National Civility Taskforce chaired by General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK AC (Mil) CVO MC (Ret).

The Coalition's working hypothesis is that the experience of the Jewish Australian community has been the canary in the coal mine for a broader fracture in Australian civility — a fracture that pertains to every Australian who has ever felt that they belonged less because of who they are.

The Foundation uses the term 'civility' deliberately, and it seeks to 'reimagine' it rather than 'revive' it. To revive would be to import a model — politeness and decorum — that is ineffective in the conditions of contemporary social media. To reimagine is to keep the heart of the idea — regard for the other person, capacity for disagreement without dehumanisation, the recognition that we share a country with people who do not share our views — and to translate it into a contemporary form.

#### *Coalition members and pilots*

Coalition members at the time of this submission include the Foundation (convening), Paper Giant (design and sense-making partner), the Ballarat Foundation, Collaboration for Impact, the Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation, Welcoming Australia, the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, The Ethics Centre, the Local & Independent News Association, the Municipal Association of Victoria, PLACE Australia, Purpose Made (evaluation lead), and broadcaster Russel Howcroft. The Commonwealth Office for Social Cohesion participates as an observer.

The Foundation convened members of the Coalition and others to explore a collective understanding of, and recommendations regarding, antisemitism and social cohesion. The results are provided for the Royal Commission's consideration in a separate, joint submission. The Foundation endorses that submission, and here seeks here to extend that collective work in multiple ways.

For transparency, in preparing this submission the Foundation consulted with Jewish Australians and organisations connected to the Jewish Australian community, including Naomi Levin (Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria), Arnold Bloch Leibler, and several other philanthropic foundations. The submission is intended to complement, not duplicate, the evidence

those organisations are placing before the Commission. The Foundation is conscious that this consultation is far from exhaustive, and we make this submission with humility about the limits of our standing to speak to the Jewish Australian community's experience. The Commission will hear from the principal Jewish community representative bodies — the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the State and Territory Jewish Community Councils, the Zionist Federation of Australia, and others — in their own voices. We do not seek to speak on their behalf.

The Coalition operates three active community pilots: Ballarat (Victoria), led by Ellen Jackson at the Ballarat Foundation, using a strengths-based, human learning systems approach; Tasmania, led by Anna Powell at Collaboration for Impact, building on existing community development infrastructure; and Mparntwe Alice Springs (Northern Territory), led by John Huigen at the Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation, exploring the potential for media to act as an engine for welcoming, belonging and living well together. Each pilot is operational, each is an explicit test of named cells on the Civility Conditions framework, and evaluation is led by Purpose Made.

The Foundation acknowledges that the Coalition and its pilots are at a relatively early stage of development. The propositions and recommendations advanced in this submission are accordingly offered as emerging insights from work in progress, not as conclusions from completed work. To be specific about what the Foundation does not yet know: the three pilots have not yet published full evaluation findings; the Conditions framework remains a working hypothesis being tested rather than a validated theory; and the proposed architecture set out in this submission has not yet been modelled, costed and stress-tested against the institutional realities of the Australian Commonwealth, the States and Territories, or the philanthropic sector at scale. The Foundation offers the analysis and the architecture in the conviction that they are the most useful contribution we can make to the Commission's deliberations, and in full acknowledgement that further design, evaluation and consultation work is required before any element of the architecture could be implemented.

### 1.3 The Foundation's working hypothesis

*Australian social cohesion is further unravelling because the institutions and the people who could repair it are working in silos. Repair requires coordinated action across the system — unlocking the capability of the institutions that touch every Australian community (the engines), and activating the everyday Australians whose individual choices, in aggregate, determine whether elite-level commitments translate into lived reality, in deliberate partnership.*

Our model rests on three propositions. First, the institutions that already reach into every Australian community are the only delivery infrastructure capable of operating at the scale and granularity required to repair social cohesion — we call these the 'engines.' Second, the actual work of civility happens in the everyday acts of ordinary Australians who have been activated to do it. (The Foundation's internal shorthand has called these activated citizens 'the armies'; we use the term within the Coalition for its compactness, while recognising that, for some readers, the metaphor's connotations are a poor fit for work that is, fundamentally, about regard for one another. The substance is the citizens, not the metaphor.) Third, the engines and the activated citizens are presently disconnected from one another in ways that mean even well-resourced individual interventions do not aggregate — via a concerted social cohesion 'movement' — into the population-level effect the country requires.

The Foundation's submission is therefore directed not at any single intervention but at the architecture that would allow coordinated action to occur at scale. The National Civility Endowment proposed in Section 7 — structured as a national community foundation, of, by and for the community — is its institutional expression. The Civility Conditions framework set out in Section 2 is its analytical expression. The five priority recommendations in Section 6 are the first set of interventions the architecture would deliver.

## 2. The Civility Conditions Framework

The analytical spine of this submission is the Civility Conditions framework, developed by the Foundation in partnership with Paper Giant and the member organisations of the Coalition. The framework emerged from the work of establishing the Coalition itself and from a structured interview process undertaken with Coalition members through 2024 and 2025.

*Civility is not a behaviour you can demand; it is what emerges when specific conditions are in place.*

### 2.1 Structure

The framework identifies four families of conditions — Capacity, Capability, Trust & Receptivity, and Belonging — each operating across four levels of social organisation: Personal, Interpersonal, Community, and Systemic. The result is a 4x4 matrix of sixteen named conditions reproduced below.

**Civility Opportunity Areas: Conditions × Scales**

	Personal	Interpersonal	Community	Systemic
Capacity	<b>Time, energy &amp; headspace</b> Personal resources to engage with difference. Economic stress and survival mode erode this capacity.	<b>Relational investment</b> Investing in relationships beyond immediate circle. Building bridges requires surplus capacity.	<b>Connective infrastructure</b> The physical and social infrastructure that enables encounter across difference.	<b>Structural enablers</b> Funding, policy, institutional support that creates capacity for civility work.
Capability	<b>Skills for dialogue</b> Listening across difference, managing emotional reactions, engaging with challenging views.	<b>Brave conversations</b> Navigating difficult conversations without defaulting to avoidance or aggression.	<b>Facilitated processes</b> Facilitation, dialogue and conflict resolution that build collective capability.	<b>Institutional practice</b> Whether institutions model and teach the capabilities they want to see in communities.
Trust & Receptivity	<b>Openness to others</b> Whether past experiences of exclusion or harm have closed down openness to difference.	<b>Relational trust</b> Trust between people from different backgrounds. Built slowly, destroyed quickly.	<b>Civic trust</b> Trust in community institutions — local government, media — enough to participate in civic life.	<b>Institutional legitimacy</b> Whether national institutions have the legitimacy to convene and lead on social cohesion.
Belonging	<b>Sense of place</b> Whether individuals feel they belong in their community and have a stake in its future.	<b>Recognition &amp; inclusion</b> Whether people feel seen and valued across lines of difference.	<b>Shared identity</b> A community identity inclusive enough for diverse people to see themselves in it.	<b>National narrative</b> A national story about who 'we' are that creates space for everyone.

Source: Civility Coalition working platform, with design and sense-making by Paper Giant.

### 2.2 Why the framework matters for this Royal Commission

The framework is diagnostic rather than prescriptive: it tells the Commission what is broken, in named terms, before any recommendation is made. It is multi-level: it connects individual experience to systemic conditions in a way that resists treating either in isolation. It is published, with documented

status flags for the interventions associated with each cell — making it immediately auditable by the Commission and external observers.

In this framework, antisemitism is what emerges in Australia today when Civic Trust and Institutional Legitimacy at the systemic level erode alongside Connective Infrastructure at the community level, Skills for Brave Conversations at the interpersonal level, and the Capacity for civility at the personal level. The same diagnosis applies, with different specifics, to attacks on First Nations Australians, misogynist violence, anti-Asian harassment, Islamophobia, and the broader breakdown of public discourse.

### 2.3 Principles for scaling nationally

The Coalition has articulated four principles, drawn from its working platform, that should guide the design of any national mechanism intended to operate across the matrix:

- Strengthens more than one condition. A mechanism worth pursuing targets multiple conditions, not a single intervention point.
- Amplifies work that is already happening. A mechanism connects, scales or resources existing activity — it should not add a new delivery layer on top of existing work.
- Reaches people through infrastructure that is already trusted. Mechanisms travel through the engines because that is where reach and trust already exist.
- Belongs to more than one organisation. Shared ownership distinguishes a national mechanism from an organisational programme seeking endorsement.

These four principles are the design DNA of the National Civility Endowment proposed in Section 7.

## 3. Why Antisemitism Is Every Australian's Responsibility

It is a feature of antisemitism throughout history that its targets have been left to defend themselves. This Royal Commission will, rightly, hear at length from Jewish Australians about what they have endured. The Foundation's submission rests on a different proposition: that the Australian response cannot be left to the Jewish community alone, and that the failure of the broader Australian community to speak in proportion to the threat is itself one of the conditions that allow antisemitism to escalate.

*Antisemitism begins with Jews, but it never ends with them. Wherever in modern history a society has tolerated a sustained campaign of hatred against its Jewish minority, it has lost something of itself in the process — its civility, its rule of law, its self-understanding as a tolerant nation.*

The Foundation is conscious that a submission framed around social cohesion and civility, rather than narrowly around antisemitism, can be misread — including by people of goodwill — as softening or generalising the question. That is not the intent, and it is not what the analysis supports. A response that treats antisemitism as a stand-alone Jewish problem will be funded, debated and forgotten as a Jewish problem. A response that locates antisemitism within the architecture of Australian civility will, paradoxically, do more for Jewish Australians, because it will be carried by a constituency wide enough to produce changes that endure. This submission argues for the broader framing precisely because it

is the more effective response to antisemitism, not in spite of that fact, and not because antisemitism is one issue among many.

### **3.1 The relevance test: connecting with all Australians such that addressing antisemitism becomes a responsibility for all**

The central premise on which this submission rests is the relevance test: that the Commission's recommendations should be cognizant of the importance of connecting with all Australians — in the full diversity of their present orientations. This will allow antisemitism to become a responsibility carried by every Australian, in every community, in their everyday lives. The relevance test is, in this sense, both a communications discipline and a substantive moral claim. The two are inseparable. A recommendation that does not connect with all Australians cannot, by definition, establish shared responsibility. And a recommendation that establishes shared responsibility without giving each Australian a credible way to act fails the action test in the next breath.

#### **Five Audiences**

Australians, in this submission's framing, are not a single homogeneous audience. The Foundation has come to recognise, through the Coalition's work and validated by our wider consultations, that the recommendations of this Royal Commission will need to engage at least five audiences.

- i. Jewish Australians — whose experience the Royal Commission must hold at its centre and whose continued safety, belonging and full inclusion in Australian life is the first test by which the success of any recommendation will be judged.
- ii. Those already actively working to build social cohesion — across community foundations, civil society, faith communities, education, the arts, local media, and government — whose existing work must be amplified, connected and resourced rather than duplicated or replaced.
- iii. The silent majority — the very large group of Australians who do not hold antisemitic views, would condemn antisemitic conduct if asked, but who do not yet, in their everyday lives, treat antisemitism as their problem to solve. They may be disengaged due to considering themselves personally untouched by antisemitism, or they may be overwhelmed by the surrounding political and international context they feel too complex to engage with. The challenge here is establishing personal relevance and providing credible local pathways to act that do not require the resolution of foreign-policy questions.
- iv. The neutral — a smaller group, but a real one, who have decided to avoid the issue on the basis that the surrounding political and international context is too complex or contested to engage with. The challenge here is honesty: in conditions of escalating violence against an Australian minority, neutrality is not a neutral act.
- v. The actively antisemitic — a smaller group again, but whose conduct produces the incidents the Commission is examining and whose threat to Jewish Australians is real, immediate and unresolved.

Any successful response to antisemitism in Australia will have to navigate these audiences, and their distinct behavioural states, if an acknowledgement of shared responsibility is to translate into action.

The principal audience for the architecture set out in this submission is the silent majority and broader population whose disengagement provides the social licence within which the actively antisemitic operate. This audience is not activated by exhortation. It can be engaged by the Royal Commission first establishing the moral truth that antisemitism is everyone's responsibility, and then with recommendations that, when implemented, give people credible, personally relevant pathways to act on that responsibility in the places where they live.

The fifth audience – the actively antisemitic themselves — should be engaged, we submit, through deradicalisation, enforcement, and prosecution — requires, we submit, the consistent, well-resourced application of existing law, supported by the social licence that the broader population provides when the first three states are activated.

### **3.2 Architecture for all Australians to appreciate and act on antisemitism**

The Foundation submits that one of the most important tasks before this Royal Commission is to ensure that all Australians appreciate and act in mitigating the impact of antisemitism. This is a task the Royal Commission is uniquely placed to undertake.

No Jewish community organisation can credibly establish that antisemitism is everyone's responsibility — the institution itself implies the opposite. No government department can credibly do so either — the proposition is too easily read as a political position rather than a moral truth. A Royal Commission, with its non-partisan authority and its national reach, can make the proposition stick. The Foundation respectfully submits that doing so — by recommendations that connect with each of the audiences named above and turn shared concern into shared responsibility — should be one of the Commission's stated objectives.

From the relevance test, every other recommendation in this submission follows. If the recommendations are to connect with all Australians such that addressing antisemitism becomes a responsibility for all, then the architecture of the response must reach into every Australian community through institutions that each of these audiences already trusts.

Recommendations must be designed to give every Australian a credible way to act — in the places where they live, with the people they already know, through community foundations, neighbourhood houses, local government, sporting clubs, faith communities, public libraries and the other engines with which they already engage. The eleven delivery engines, the five priority recommendations, and the National Civility Endowment proposed in Section 7 are, at their core, an attempt to operationalise the relevance test by turning latent concern into the lived practice of shared responsibility.

The neighbour who paints over the graffiti, the teacher who interrupts the playground slur, the football coach who pulls a player aside, the local journalist who covers the synagogue vigil with the same care given to any other community story, the community-foundation board member who funds an interfaith dialogue, the workplace colleague who speaks up at the staff-room table — these are the everyday acts in which the country's response to antisemitism actually consists. They are Australians, from across the audiences described above, taking up shared responsibility.

The Foundation respectfully submits that the Royal Commission should not simply commend such acts. It should name them as the work of citizens, make the case that they are the responsibility of every Australian, and re-commend the architecture that will enable such acts at scale.

## 4. Response to Term of Reference 1: Nature, Prevalence and Drivers

The Foundation's contribution under the first Term of Reference is grounded in the work of the Foundation over the past two and a half years — the convening of the Coalition, the structured interview process that produced the Conditions framework, and the three operational pilots.

### 4.1 The shapeshifting nature of antisemitism

Antisemitism is distinctive in that it does not maintain a stable form. Across centuries it has presented as blood libel, religious denunciation, as racial pseudo-science, as conspiracy theory about finance and media, as Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Each form has been disowned by mainstream society in time, but the underlying hatred has migrated to a new vocabulary.

In contemporary Australia, the dominant form is the use of the word 'Zio' and its cognates as a vehicle for hostility directed at Jewish Australians as a group. The starting point, in the Foundation's submission, is a simple one: Jewish Australians are not responsible for the actions of the State of Israel. They are Australian citizens, with the same rights, responsibilities and entitlements to safety as any other Australian. The use of language that holds them collectively answerable for decisions taken by a foreign government — whatever view one takes of those decisions — is a category error that produces real harm to real Australians. The Foundation does not enter the question of which formal definition of antisemitism the Commission should adopt; that is a matter on which the Commission will hear from those with deeper standing and expertise. We observe only that, although they differ in their guidance on what is and is not permissible, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, and the Universities Australia definition of antisemitism each provide a framework for naming this conduct for what it is. The Coalition's Shared Definitions Framework, in development, will provide complementary working definitions for civility, social cohesion, belonging and inclusion.

### 4.2 Drivers, mapped to the Conditions framework

The Foundation's diagnosis is that the principal drivers of antisemitic conduct in contemporary Australia are the simultaneous degradation of Civic Trust at the community level, Institutional Legitimacy and National Narrative at the systemic level, and Skills for Dialogue at the personal and interpersonal levels. These conditions interact. Their simultaneous degradation, rather than any single driver, is what produces the present moment. Responses focused only on one driver — only on platform regulation, or only on de-radicalisation, or only on counter-speech — will be insufficient. Each addresses one cell on a sixteen-cell matrix.

On platform regulation specifically, the Coalition's analysis is that platform regulation — while necessary — is an insufficient response, because the underlying problem is the hollowing-out of the local media infrastructure that platforms have replaced. The Coalition's framework documents nine active or in-development interventions targeting Local Media as a delivery engine, including local news sustainability models, civic journalism training, hyperlocal reporting networks, and digital literacy in communities.

## 5. Response to Terms of Reference 2 and 3

### 5.1 Term of Reference 2: Law enforcement, border control, immigration and security

The Foundation makes its submissions under the second Term of Reference with a particular kind of humility. The Foundation is not a law enforcement organisation, and the Coalition is not an immigration or security policy organisation. We do not hold expertise on the operational settings of those agencies, and we do not propose to offer advice on those settings.

What the Foundation can offer is the substantive observation that, in every site, every engine, and every conversation in which the Coalition has worked, the same pattern has surfaced: the institutions of the Australian state and the institutions of Australian community life are operating in silos that the underlying problem does not respect. The Foundation's submission is that the most useful contribution the Royal Commission could make under this Term of Reference is to recommend the building of joined-up, collaborative, proactive arrangements between law enforcement, border control, immigration and security agencies on the one hand, and the eleven community engines and place-based partners working alongside them on the other. The orientation should be deliberately proactive: directed at the conditions that produce hate-motivated conduct in the first place, rather than at the management of incidents once they have occurred.

*How could Australian law enforcement work more proactively to encourage social cohesion, rather than reacting to the consequences of its absence?*

On border control and immigration, the Foundation's only observation is one of consistency. The Commonwealth has, in recent years, refused entry to a number of foreign nationals on the grounds that their public statements would be likely to incite discord in Australia. The principles applied in those cases should be applied consistently to applicants whose public record includes the incitement of antisemitic violence, irrespective of the political or religious framing of that incitement.

### 5.2 Term of Reference 3: The Bondi terrorist attack

The third Term of Reference requires the Commissioner to examine the circumstances surrounding the antisemitic terrorist attack at Bondi Beach on 14 December 2025. The Foundation does not have, and does not pretend to have, evidence to offer on the operational facts of the attack. Our submission under this Term of Reference is confined to the contextual question.

It is now a matter of public record that warnings about the trajectory of antisemitic conduct in Australia were issued, repeatedly, by Jewish community organisations, including in successive Antisemitism in Australia reports of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, and by the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, in the period between October 2023 and December 2025. The attack on the Hanukkah celebration was the violent realisation of a risk that had been documented — with the ECAJ recording its highest annual incident count on record in the year preceding the attack — and that had not been met with a response of commensurate seriousness from the broader Australian community.

The Foundation makes this point with regret rather than recrimination. The honest assessment is that the Foundation's response, the Coalition's response, and the response of non-Jewish Australian civil society more broadly, were inadequate to the scale of what was unfolding. The Foundation's

commitment to the architecture proposed in this submission is, in part, an institutional response to that acknowledgement.

In the Conditions framework, the conditions for the Bondi attack were created by the cumulative degradation of two systemic-level cells over the preceding two years — Institutional Legitimacy (the legitimacy of national institutions to convene and lead on social cohesion) and National Narrative (the inclusivity of the Australian story for Jewish Australians and others). Closing this permission structure is not principally a task for the security services. It is a task for every Australian institution with a public voice, working at scale, with an architecture capable of coordinating its work. That architecture does not currently exist. Section 7 proposes its construction.

The response of the Australian public in the days and weeks after Bondi demonstrated that the latent capacity for shared responsibility across the Australian community is real. Vigils were held in every capital city. Non-Jewish Australians attended synagogues in numbers not previously seen. Muslim community leaders condemned the attack in unequivocal terms; faith leaders of every tradition spoke out together. The Foundation acknowledges that Muslim Australians and other faith communities have themselves been the targets of hate-motivated conduct in this period — the architecture proposed in this submission is in service of their safety as well, and the Foundation does not invoke the post-Bondi response as evidence of one community speaking on behalf of, or for, another. The challenge before the Royal Commission, and before the country, is to ensure that the response after Bondi endures; that the responsibility taken up by many Australians becomes a sustained practice carried by all.

## **6. Response to Term of Reference 4: Strengthening Social Cohesion (the Foundation's principal contribution)**

The fourth Term of Reference, which asks the Commissioner to make recommendations for strengthening social cohesion in Australia and countering the spread of ideologically and religiously motivated extremism, is the area in which the Foundation's contribution is most direct and where we have invested the deepest organisational effort. Our recommendations under this head are organised around the four levels of the Civility Conditions framework — personal, interpersonal, community, and systemic — and are accompanied by a fifth recommendation addressing the implementation architecture required to deliver them.

The Foundation has reduced its recommendations to five priority recommendations, each paired with named institutional partners and the Foundation's stated role in delivery. The Foundation hopes this will aid the Royal Commission in identifying a small number of specific recommendations that can be properly owned and resourced, in contrast to some previous Australian Royal Commissions that produced large numbers of broadly-stated recommendations that remain unimplemented.

A note on the suggested partners named in the recommendations that follow. Other than for the Coalition members listed in Section 1.2, the Foundation has not consulted with the bodies named as suggested partners in this section, and it does not speak on their behalf. They are named as potential institutional homes from which this work could be delivered — the natural counterparties for each recommendation — and whose engagement the Foundation would seek as the proposal develops. Their inclusion here is a description of relevance, not a representation of agreement.

## 6.1 The five priority recommendations

---

### **RECOMMENDATION 1 Personal level — National civic literacy and brave conversations program**

That the Commonwealth, working through the National Civility Endowment proposed at Recommendation 5, fund a national civic literacy and brave conversations program — accessible, scalable, evidence-based, and delivered through Australia's existing schools, TAFEs, universities, workplaces, neighbourhood houses and public libraries — to build, at population scale, the personal-level capabilities required for civility. The program is the population-level analogue to public health campaigns on smoking, road safety and skin cancer, which have shifted Australian behaviour at scale across four decades.

**Conditions framework targets:** Skills for dialogue (Personal); Brave conversations (Interpersonal)

**Suggested partners:** Within the Coalition: The Ethics Centre, the Local & Independent News Association, Welcoming Australia, FECCA, PLACE Australia. Beyond the Coalition: education sector peak bodies (AEU, ISCA, NCEC, TAFE Directors); ACARA for curriculum integration; Adult Learning Australia and the neighbourhood house network for adult learning delivery; the Australian Library and Information Association

**Foundation and Coalition role:** Convening, evaluation through Purpose Made, integration with the active Ballarat, Tasmania and Mparntwe pilots

---

### **RECOMMENDATION 2 Interpersonal level — Activate the silent majority through the 5 Levers of Purpose**

That the Commission's recommendations include a population-level mobilisation framework that gives ordinary Australians a recognisable, repeatable practice for what civility requires of them in the moment when it is most needed. The Foundation offers the 5 Levers of Purpose as one such candidate. This framework arises from a six-year collaboration between the Foundation and The Ethics Centre, and draws on the Ethics Centre's 'five foundations of applied ethics'.

The 5 Levers ask every Australian, when encountering antisemitic or other hate-motivated conduct: are you aware of what is happening; are you influential in the situation; are you courageous enough to act; are you cultivating the wisdom to understand what is required; are you imaginative in how you respond? They are not a substitute for the Conditions framework but its mobilisation companion. Together they fuel the model described at Section 1.3 — the engines of community institutions and the activated citizens whose everyday acts repair the social fabric, working in coordination.

**Conditions framework targets:** Skills for dialogue and Openness to others (Personal); Brave conversations and Recognition & inclusion (Interpersonal)

**Suggested partners:** Within the Coalition: Welcoming Australia, The Ethics Centre, broadcaster Russel Howcroft and creative communications partners, the Local & Independent News Association, the Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation. Beyond the Coalition: the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute (baseline and longitudinal measurement); the Australian Multicultural Foundation; the major sporting codes; faith and interfaith bodies; public and commercial media broadcasters; social media influencers

**Foundation and Coalition role:** Curation of the framework, partnership with broadcast partners, integration with the existing Coalition pilots

---

**RECOMMENDATION 3 Community level — Place-based civility infrastructure through eleven delivery engines**

That the Commission recommend the resourcing, at scale, of place-based civility infrastructure delivered through eleven existing community engines. This could leverage different Governments' existing investments in place-based strategies. The Coalition's published Territory × Engine matrix names seven engines: community foundations, neighbourhood houses, local government, universities and TAFEs, chambers of commerce, local media, and cross-cutting partners. The Foundation recommends the Commission consider four further engines essential to a complete architecture: faith communities and interfaith networks; sporting clubs and codes; public libraries; and workplaces and employer peak bodies. Funding flows through the National Civility Endowment proposed at Recommendation 5, on the donut principle: a strong universal frame at the national level, with hyperlocal expression in each place.

The Coalition's three pilots demonstrate the proof of concept. The Ballarat pilot demonstrates the community foundation as a delivery engine. The Tasmania pilot demonstrates the place-based collective impact backbone model. The Mparntwe pilot demonstrates the use of local media as an engine for welcoming, belonging and living well together.

**Conditions framework targets:** Connective infrastructure (Community); Civic trust (Community); Sense of place (Personal); Recognition & inclusion (Interpersonal); Shared identity (Community)

**Suggested partners:** Within the Coalition: the Ballarat Foundation, Collaboration for Impact and the Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation as place-based pilot leads; the Municipal Association of Victoria; the Local & Independent News Association; PLACE Australia; FECCA; Welcoming Australia; Paper Giant. Beyond the Coalition (whose engagement the Foundation would seek): Community Foundations Australia and the broader Australian community foundation network; the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA); the neighbourhood house national network; the Regional Universities Network; the Australian Library and Information Association; the major sporting codes and their community foundations; faith and interfaith bodies; the Diversity Council Australia

**Foundation and Coalition role:** Continued convening of the Coalition, integration with the Conditions framework, and active operational delivery through the existing pilots regardless of the timing of the Endowment's establishment

---

**RECOMMENDATION 4 Systemic level — Joined-up, proactive collaboration between law enforcement and the engines**

That the Commission recommend the building of joined-up, collaborative and proactive arrangements between law enforcement, border control, immigration and security agencies on the one hand, and the eleven community engines and place-based partners on the other. The orientation should be deliberately proactive: directed at the conditions that produce hate-motivated conduct in the first place, rather than confined to the management of incidents once they have occurred. The Foundation makes this recommendation as the substantive contribution we are best placed to offer under the second Term of Reference. Detailed operational design is properly a matter for the Commission's expert evidence on enforcement and security; we propose that the Royal Commission's recommendations under this head treat enforcement, border control, immigration and security agencies as participants in the broader social cohesion architecture proposed in this submission, rather than as a separate track of work.

As one supporting element of this proactive architecture, there is a clear case for investment in the professional education of front-line police, prosecutors and the judiciary on antisemitism and hate-motivated conduct, which the Commission could usefully recommend as a discrete component of the broader joined-up approach.

**Conditions framework targets:** Institutional practice (Systemic); Institutional legitimacy (Systemic); Civic trust (Community)

**Suggested partners:** Within the Coalition: The Ethics Centre, Coalition pilot sites in Ballarat, Tasmania and Mparntwe, MAV, Purpose Made. Beyond the Coalition: the Australian Federal Police and State and Territory police services; the Council of Attorneys-General; the Australian Institute of Police Management; the National Judicial College of Australia; State and Territory Directors of Public Prosecutions; community legal centres; the Office for Social Cohesion as the Commonwealth-side coordinating counterpart

**Foundation and Coalition role:** The Coalition's three pilot sites can serve as proof-of-concept locations for joined-up arrangements; The Ethics Centre can contribute to professional education design; Purpose Made can support evaluation

## **RECOMMENDATION 5 Implementation architecture — The National Civility Endowment as a national community foundation**

That the Commonwealth establish a National Civility Endowment, structured as a national community foundation — of, by and for the community — that supports, connects and amplifies the burgeoning movement of place-based community foundations and the eleven delivery engines through which Australian community life is expressed. The Endowment is endowed at establishment by the Commonwealth, with matching philanthropic capital, and is governed by a board drawn from the community foundation movement and the broader community sector it serves. Government and philanthropy fund the architecture; community delivers the work; local responses aggregate into a national movement.

The Endowment is set out in detail in Section 7 below. It is the architectural recommendation on which the prior four recommendations depend, and it is offered to the Commission as a national-scale expression of the Foundation's working hypothesis: that local civility work, properly resourced and connected, aggregates into the national movement the country requires.

**Conditions framework targets:** Structural enablers (Systemic); Institutional legitimacy (Systemic); and through these, the conditions for all four prior recommendations

**Suggested partners:** Within the Coalition: the Foundation (convening), Paper Giant (design), Purpose Made (evaluation), the Ballarat Foundation and Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation as foundational community-foundation members of the new architecture, and the broader Coalition membership. Beyond the Coalition (whose engagement the Foundation would seek): Community Foundations Australia and the wider network of Australian community foundations — a partnership the Foundation considers central to the proposal and would seek to develop in good faith with Community Foundations Australia (CFAus) and its members; Philanthropy Australia and major Australian philanthropic foundations as potential matching capital partners; Treasury and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for the legislative and endowment design; the Office for Social Cohesion within Home Affairs as the Commonwealth-side counterpart

**Foundation and Coalition role:** The Foundation, through the Coalition, is positioned to assist the Commonwealth in the design and stand-up of the Endowment, and to contribute the Coalition's existing pilots, framework and convening capacity as a foundation for its early work. The Foundation would seek the engagement of CFAus and the broader community foundation movement in shaping the proposal, as we do not speak on behalf of CFAus or its members

## 7. The National Civility Endowment: A National Community Foundation

This section sets out the architecture of the National Civility Endowment proposed as one potential option at Recommendation 5. The proposal, expressed in its simplest form, is that the Endowment be structured as a national community foundation — of, by and for the community — that supports and amplifies the burgeoning movement of place-based community foundations across Australia, and that connects them with the broader set of eleven delivery engines through which civility work reaches every Australian community.

*Of the people, by the people, supported by a national platform that propagates the movement. Local responses to antisemitism, aggregated through trusted community institutions, become the national movement to build social cohesion that the country requires.*

### 7.1 Why a national community foundation

Community-led work on civility and social cohesion requires an architecture that is living rather than ‘another bureaucracy,’ practical rather than performative, and led locally rather than risking institutional capture.

The Foundation has reached the view, drawing on the Coalition's experience and on the trajectory of Australian philanthropy more broadly, that the most appropriate institutional form for the National Civility Endowment is a national community foundation. The reasons are practical, strategic, and substantive.

Practically, the place-based community foundation movement in Australia is in a period of significant growth. Community Foundations Australia (CFAus, the sector's peak body) has confirmed to the Foundation that there are currently 72 active community foundations operating across the country, with further foundations in the process of establishment or registration. Two of these established foundations — the Ballarat Foundation and the Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation — are already members of the Coalition and lead two of its three pilots. The 2024 Productivity Commission inquiry report *Future Foundations for Giving* identified community foundations as central to the future of Australian philanthropy and recommended a suite of regulatory and funding reforms to support their growth. The Albanese Government has acted on those reforms: the Taxation Administration (Community Charity) Guidelines 2025, which took effect in February 2025, established the Community Charity DGR-1 framework, with an initial cohort of community foundations declared as community charities under the new pathway. A National Civility Endowment structured as a national community foundation would arrive in a landscape that is already moving in this direction — it would seek to accelerate and connect an existing movement rather than impose a new institution on top of it. The Foundation does not speak on behalf of CFAus or its member foundations; we name CFAus here as the natural national peak body whose engagement the Foundation would seek as the proposal develops.

Strategically, a national community foundation form is the institutional expression of the Foundation's working hypothesis. The model set out at Section 1.3 is, in its substance, an argument that civility work happens locally and that the role of national architecture is to connect, amplify and resource the local. A national community foundation is exactly that kind of architecture: a national platform whose

authority and resources flow to local community foundations and through them to the engines and the people of each place. It is government and philanthropy reinforcing community, not replacing it.

Substantively, a national community foundation form aligns the institutional design of the Endowment with the moral truth this submission asks the Royal Commission to establish. If antisemitism is the responsibility of every Australian, then the response must be carried by every Australian — not by an arm's-length government program. A community foundation, by definition, is the community speaking back. Its legitimacy is bottom-up rather than top-down. It is owned by the communities it serves rather than appointed over them. That is the right form for an institution whose work depends on Australians taking up shared responsibility for the social fabric.

The Foundation is also conscious that the contemporary Australian philanthropic landscape includes significant disagreement about how to respond to recent events, with some major foundations deepening their engagement with Jewish community organisations and others publicly distancing from them. The Foundation considers this disagreement to be one of the conditions the Endowment must navigate rather than ignore. The Endowment, as a national community foundation, is by design able to hold space for that disagreement — because its governance is community-anchored rather than donor-driven, and because its constituting Act would protect its independence from the preferences of any single foundation, large or small. The matching philanthropic capital is structured so that contributing foundations support the architecture without controlling its work. This is, in our view, both a feature of the proposed design and a precondition for the Endowment's credibility across the philanthropic sector.

It is also important to acknowledge that, while the Australian community foundation movement is well established and growing, it remains modest in scale relative to the national task. The 2024 Productivity Commission report, the 2025 community charity reforms, and the aspirations of the sector itself — expressed through Community Foundations Australia — point to a movement with significant room to grow this decade. The proposed Endowment is intended to be one of several catalysts for that further development, not its sole engine, and is designed to complement rather than displace existing funding flows into the community foundation sector.

*A National Community Foundation for Civility and Social Cohesion would transform what's possible in isolated instances into the probable across Australia. Local responses to antisemitism, expressed through trusted community foundations and aggregated through a national platform, can underpin the national movement to build social cohesion the country requires — of and by the people, supported by a national institution to propagate the movement.*

## **7.2 The proposed architecture: three components**

### ***Component 1: A national community foundation (the systemic layer)***

The Endowment is established by Commonwealth statute as an independent national community foundation, with a one-off endowment from consolidated revenue matched dollar-for-dollar by private philanthropic capital. The matching mechanism is a central design feature. It protects against capture, creates philanthropic accountability that disciplines the work, and signals that civility is a shared national project rather than a government program.

The board is drawn from the community foundation movement and the broader community sector it serves. Inaugural appointments are made through a transparent process that gives weight to the place-based community foundation network, with cross-party parliamentary input and representation from philanthropic, civil society, academic, faith, multicultural, First Nations, and business constituencies. Appointments are for staggered terms, removable only for cause. The national community foundation does not deliver programs. Its functions are to hold and grow the endowment, to make strategic allocation decisions across the components below, to convene the eleven engines and the place-based community foundation network, and to report annually to Parliament — without taking direction from the government of the day.

Australian precedent for this component is more developed than is sometimes appreciated. The 2024 Productivity Commission report recommended exactly this kind of structure in another domain — a foundation provisionally called Indigenous Philanthropy Connections, led and controlled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and funded by an endowment provided by the Australian Government. The Future Fund, established by the Future Fund Act 2006, demonstrates the statutory independent foundation model in financial governance: a Board of Guardians with statutory responsibility for investment decisions, members removable only for cause, and an Investment Mandate set by the responsible Ministers within constraints fixed by the Act. The proposed Endowment combines the Productivity Commission's community-led design logic with the Future Fund's financial and governance independence, and applies that combination to the field of civility and social cohesion. It also benefits from recent experience of government-philanthropic collaboration in the establishment of PLACE Australia in 2024.

On the relationship to First Nations Australians, the Foundation submits two propositions. First, the Endowment proposed in this submission is not a substitute for, and should not be designed as a substitute for, the Indigenous Philanthropy Connections foundation recommended by the Productivity Commission. The two are complementary: Indigenous Philanthropy Connections is, properly, the institution by, for and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; the Endowment proposed here is the broader civility architecture that includes, but is not principally directed at, First Nations issues. Second, First Nations Australians have themselves been the targets of much of the racial hostility the proposed architecture seeks to address — and the Endowment's design and governance must accordingly include genuine First Nations partnership from inception. This means First Nations representation on the inaugural board, formal consultation arrangements with the Coalition of Peaks and other First Nations representative bodies, and an explicit commitment that the Endowment's work in First Nations contexts will be led by First Nations people, not delivered to them. The Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation pilot, led by John Huigen as an intercultural community foundation, is an early instance of the kind of partnership the Foundation considers essential to the architecture's integrity.

### ***Component 2: A national platform that propagates the movement (the connective layer)***

A deliberately small national platform — provisionally, the Civility Coalition Secretariat — funded by the Endowment, whose function is to enable the network of place-based community foundation to work with the other engines, set common standards, share learning across jurisdictions, evaluate impact, and route funding to local delivery partners. The Foundation considers it a real possibility that this platform could be hosted by or co-located with an existing peak body such as CFAus or one of the

national non-profit intermediaries operating in this space, subject to the agreement and design preferences of that body and of the broader sector. The platform's design is modelled on Reconciliation Australia, which was established in 2001 by the statutory Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and operates as a small national coordinating organisation funded by the Commonwealth and by philanthropic partners. It is critically and intentionally undersized — no more than fifteen to twenty staff at maturity — so that it cannot become the answer itself. Its job is to make the engines and the place-based community foundations stronger, not to substitute for them.

The Coalition, in its current form, is positioned to evolve into this national platform. The intellectual infrastructure is already in place: the Conditions framework is published, the Territory × Engine matrix maps documented intervention ideas with status flags, evaluation methodology has been developed by Purpose Made, and three pilots are operational. The Endowment would resource the formalisation, scaling and broader connection of work that is, in significant part, already underway.

### ***Component 3: Local delivery through the place-based community foundations and the eleven engines***

Funding flows from the national community foundation, through the national platform, to the place-based community foundations across Australia and to their partner organisations across the eleven delivery engines. The eleven engines are: community foundations themselves (the established Australian community foundation network, with CFAus as the natural peak body partner whose engagement the Foundation would seek); neighbourhood houses (the national network); local government (delivered through the Municipal Association of Victoria, equivalent State and Territory bodies, and the Australian Local Government Association); universities and TAFEs (including the Regional Universities Network); chambers of commerce; local media (anchored by the Local & Independent News Association); cross-cutting partners (including Welcoming Australia, FECCA, The Ethics Centre, PLACE Australia); faith communities and interfaith networks; sporting clubs and codes; public libraries (delivered through the Australian Library and Information Association); and workplaces and employer peak bodies (delivered through the Diversity Council Australia and major industry peak bodies).

Funding decisions are made against the Civility Conditions framework, with explicit innovation budgets for ideas at the 'new idea' status that are not yet active. The donut principle applies throughout: a single universal frame at the national level, with local variation and expression in each delivery jurisdiction. The Coalition's three pilots — Ballarat, Tasmania, and Mparntwe — are early instances of how this component would operate at scale. Each is led by a community foundation or place-based partner, each is testing named cells on the Conditions framework, and each is producing local insights that, aggregated through the national platform, become evidence for the national movement.

### ***Orientation on scale and cost***

The Foundation does not propose a specific quantum for the founding endowment, which is properly a matter for the design work that would follow the Commission's recommendations and is contingent on Treasury and Finance assessment, on the matched philanthropic capital that can be secured, and on the scale at which the architecture is intended to operate. By way of orientation, however, the Foundation's working assumption is a founding endowment of several tens of millions of dollars, matched by philanthropic capital, would generate annual investment income of a scale commensurate with the population-level work the Endowment is intended to fund. The annual operating cost of the

national coordinating function would be modest — at fifteen to twenty staff at maturity, in the order of single-digit millions per annum — with the great majority of the Endowment's annual disbursements flowing through to local place-based delivery. These figures are offered as orientation only; the Foundation does not propose to specify the quantum in advance of consultation with Treasury, the Department of Finance, and the philanthropic sector.

On the matched philanthropic capital specifically, the Foundation envisages capital that is contributed (transferred to the Endowment as part of its corpus) rather than committed in parallel, with philanthropic representation on the inaugural board reflecting that contribution. The matching mechanism does its design work — protecting against capture, disciplining the work — only if the capital sits within the Endowment's governance, not alongside it.

### **7.3 What government does, and does not do**

The political and institutional integrity of the foundation depends on the precision of the boundary between the roles of the Commonwealth and the foundation. Government provides the founding endowment from consolidated revenue, contingent on matched private philanthropic capital, and facilitates its establishment.

It is important that the foundation is — and is seen to be — independent of the Government of the day. Government should not have the power to appoint executive staff, unilaterally set annual strategic priorities, direct funding decisions, veto partners, approve individual programs or fold the foundation into a department's portfolio. It should not fund the foundation through annual appropriations rather than through the endowment.

One option would be to establish the foundation as an independent statutory entity with its own constituting Act, and annual reports tabled in Parliament. Regardless, the inaugural board should be appointed through a transparent process that gives weight to the place-based community foundation network, to cross-party parliamentary input, and appointments made for staggered terms and removable only for cause.

In this vision, the Government would maintain the APS Secretaries Steering Group (SSG) on Community Cohesion, and the existing Office for Social Cohesion within the Department of Home Affairs as the government-side counterparts for liaison and policy coordination, but without any role running, directing or sitting on the foundation.

The Foundation is conscious that the architecture proposed cannot succeed as a Commonwealth-only initiative. Most of the eleven delivery engines — community foundations, neighbourhood houses, local government, local media, public libraries, sporting clubs, schools and TAFEs, faith communities — sit primarily within State and Territory funding, regulation and operational responsibility. The Foundation respectfully submits that the Commission's recommendations under this head should propose a path through National Cabinet, with corresponding engagement of State and Territory First Ministers, Heads of Treasuries, and the relevant Ministerial Councils, to secure the cross-jurisdictional coordination on which the architecture's success depends. The Endowment's design should make space, from inception, for State and Territory governments to participate in the work — including through co-investment in jurisdiction-specific delivery and through participation in the platform's coordination of cross-jurisdictional learning.

This is, in effect, the donut principle applied to institutional design. Government provides the ‘dough’ — the endowment, the legislation, the institutional legitimacy, the cross-party endorsement — the place-based community foundations and the eleven engines provide the ‘jam’ that varies community by community.

#### **7.4 The case for the form: an exemplar of community-institutional cohesion**

The Foundation submits that a National Civility Endowment structured as a national community foundation is the institutional design most aligned with the moral truth this submission asks the Royal Commission to establish, with the trajectory of Australian philanthropy, with the existing place-based community foundation movement, and with the working hypothesis the Foundation has developed through the Coalition. Mirroring the framing of the Foundation's Civility Initiative — in which the local pilots in Ballarat, Tasmania and Mparntwe are not stand-alone interventions but early instances of a national architecture — the Endowment turns local responses to antisemitism and to the broader breakdown of civility into the building blocks of a national movement to repair Australian social cohesion.

This is, in our submission, an exemplar of what is possible: a national institution that does not substitute for community but expresses it; a national platform that does not centralise but connects; a national movement that is not handed down from Canberra but built up from the places where Australians actually live, and supported by the architecture that makes the building possible. Of and by the people, supported by a national institution to propagate the movement.

#### **7.5 Relationship to existing arrangements**

The Endowment does not displace, and is not in competition with, the existing Office for Social Cohesion within Home Affairs, the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, the Race Discrimination Commissioner, the work of the eSafety Commissioner, or the APS Secretaries Steering Group (SSG) on Community Cohesion. Each has a distinct and necessary function. The Endowment is, rather, the missing piece: the durable, independent, community-led architecture for funding and convening the population-level work that no government department can do from inside the public service. The Office for Social Cohesion's participation in the Coalition as an observer is welcomed by the Coalition and is, in the Foundation's view, the appropriate mode of government engagement with this work.

The relationship to the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism deserves particular attention. The Special Envoy holds a defined remit, focused specifically on antisemitism, with the convening authority of a Commonwealth office and a national voice. The Endowment proposed in this submission has a broader civility focus that includes antisemitism but extends to the architecture of Australian social cohesion more generally. The two are, in the Foundation's submission, complementary rather than overlapping: the Special Envoy provides the focused, authoritative national voice on antisemitism; the Endowment provides the population-level community infrastructure within which that voice can be heard, amplified and acted upon. The Foundation envisages a working partnership between the Endowment and the Special Envoy from inception — with the Endowment supporting the implementation of the Special Envoy's recommendations through the eleven engines, and the Special Envoy bringing the focused antisemitism perspective to the Endowment's broader civility work. The architecture is designed to support the Special Envoy's role, not to substitute for it.

## 8. A Menzies Reflection

The Foundation bears the name of Sir Robert Menzies. We invoke his name not as a partisan act — the Foundation is and has always been non-partisan — but because the Foundation's contemporary work is shaped by the qualities his life in public service exemplified: a deep regard for all Australians, a highly ethical and principled approach to leadership, and an ambition for an Australia founded on opportunity and a fair go for every citizen, regardless of background.

In January 1950, only weeks after Menzies returned to government, his External Affairs Minister Percy Spender attended the meeting of Commonwealth foreign ministers in Colombo at which the Spender Plan (later the Colombo Plan) was agreed. Over the following decade and a half — while the White Australia Policy remained formal Commonwealth law — several thousand students from India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia, Malaya and elsewhere in Asia came to study at Australian universities and technical colleges as Colombo Plan scholars. The Plan was, on its face, a Cold War instrument. Its consequences were larger than its design. It was, in practice, one of the first deliberate cracks in the White Australia Policy, and it produced — quietly, over years — a generation of Australians for whom regard across racial and religious difference was not an abstract proposition but the lived experience of having shared a kitchen table or a tutorial group with someone who was not White.

The question now before this Royal Commission is, in substance, a question about the meaning of the Australian fair go in 2026. The Jewish Australian community has been, for two and a half years, increasingly forced to live behind walls of its own building. The country has not yet made the decision, in the active and substantive form that earlier Australian leaders made it on the questions of their day, to extend the full protection and the full belonging of Australia to its Jewish citizens — and, through them, to every Australian who has ever wondered whether the fair go extends to people who look or pray or speak differently. The architecture proposed in this submission — a national community foundation, of, by and for the community, that aggregates local responses into a national movement — is offered to the Commission as a contemporary expression of those values: a concrete, durable, cross-community decision to enlarge the meaning of 'Australian' by an act of active inclusion.

## 9. The Foundation's Commitment to Service

The Foundation acknowledges that the impact of Royal Commissions can sometimes be diminished by the natural distance between investigation, recommendation and delivery. Bridging that distance is work that is most likely to succeed when the organisations that have contributed to a Commission's deliberations remain engaged through the implementation phase, in service of the changes the country requires.

In that spirit, the Foundation, through the Coalition, offers itself as a willing partner in service of the recommendations the Commissioner ultimately makes — whatever those recommendations are, and whether or not they reflect the architecture proposed in this submission. The Foundation's Civility Initiative will continue, the three pilots will run, the Coalition will expand, and the Conditions framework will be tested and refined as the work matures. The Coalition's existing assets — the framework, the matrix, the evaluation methodology, the working platform, and the convening capacity across the eleven engines and the place-based community foundation network — are offered

as a resource to the Commission during the inquiry phase, and to the Commonwealth during any implementation phase, in whatever form is most useful.

If the Commonwealth Government considers a National Civility Endowment or other architecture at the Commission's recommendation, the Foundation would be very happy to offer its capacities, including by sharing our perspective on its appropriate structure and operations, by convening across philanthropy and the non-profit sector, and by seeding a collective philanthropic contribution to match any Government contribution. The work matters more than the authorship of any particular framework, and the Foundation would consider itself privileged to play a part in it.

The Foundation is also conscious that the Commission may find some elements of the architecture proposed in this submission useful and others less so. We respectfully suggest that the elements have value in their own right, even if the broader architecture is not adopted in the form proposed. The Civility Conditions framework is a published, auditable diagnostic that any institution — public or community — can use to map its own work. The four scaling principles offer a discipline against which any proposed national mechanism can be tested. The five priority recommendations stand independently and could be implemented through existing institutional arrangements if the Endowment is not pursued. The relevance and action tests offer a discipline for any recommendation the Commission considers. We commend the architecture as a coherent whole, but we offer its components in the spirit of useful contribution rather than as a package to be accepted or rejected entire.

## **10. Conclusion: An Australia Worth Building**

The Foundation thanks the Commissioner for the opportunity to make this submission, and the Commonwealth for the seriousness of having established this Royal Commission. We make this submission as one voice among many. We do, however, believe we offer a perspective and an architecture presently under-represented in the national conversation: the perspective of a non-partisan, non-Jewish institution, working through a coalition of organisations across welcoming, belonging, multiculturalism, ethics, civics, local government, local media, and place-based community development sectors, that takes seriously the proposition that the safety of Jewish Australians is the responsibility of the whole country.

It would be easy, in a submission of this kind, to dwell on what has gone wrong in Australia over the past two and a half years. The Foundation has tried, throughout this submission, to be honest about that record — including about the Foundation's own role in the inadequacy of the broader response. But honesty about the present is not the same as pessimism about the future, and the Foundation does not consider this a moment for pessimism.

The Australia the Foundation sees, working with the Coalition's partners across regional Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, is not a country that has lost its capacity for civility. It is a country whose capacity has been temporarily disconnected from the institutions and the conversations through which it might be expressed. The neighbour who painted over the graffiti, the Australians who attended synagogues in numbers not previously seen after Bondi, the faith leaders of every tradition who have spoken out in the period since, the volunteers who staff the neighbourhood houses and the local foundations and the community sporting clubs that hold our suburbs and our regional towns

together — these are the Australia that already exists, in great quantity, and that the architecture proposed in this submission is designed to amplify and to coordinate.

The Australia we hope to see emerge from this Royal Commission is a country in which Jewish Australians can light a Hanukkah candle in a public place without fear; in which a mezuzah on a doorpost or a Star of David on a bus does not require a second thought about safety; in which a Muslim family can walk to a place of worship without security at the door; in which a First Nations Australian, a recent migrant, a longstanding citizen, a young Australian, an old Australian, can all locate themselves in a national story that is wide enough to make space for each of them without erasing any of them. That country is achievable. It is, in many places, already being built. The Foundation is grateful to be part of the work, and offers itself to the Commission, the Commonwealth, and the country in the spirit of that work.

Submitted respectfully,

---

**Peter Jopling AM KC**

Chair

Menzies Leadership Foundation

---

**Liz Gillies**

Chief Executive Officer

Menzies Leadership Foundation

12<sup>th</sup> June 2026

---

**Contact for the purposes of this submission:**

Liz Gillies, Chief Executive Officer, Menzies Leadership Foundation

Email: [liz.gillies@menziesfoundation.org.au](mailto:liz.gillies@menziesfoundation.org.au)

Web: [menziesfoundation.org.au](http://menziesfoundation.org.au)