

Monday, 22 December 2025

FIVE NEXT STEPS TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM AND KEEP PEOPLE SAFE

In the wake of the anti-Semitic terrorist attack in Bondi that claimed 15 innocent lives, and amid a shocking rise in racist and anti-Semitic incidents over the last two years, Victoria's focus is clear: doing whatever we can to prevent extremism, combat anti-Semitism, and keep our state safe, strong, proud and united.

Premier Jacinta Allan today released Victoria's strategy for preventing violent extremism and outlined five short and long-term steps to combat anti-Semitism and protect public safety, including stronger rules for hate speech, protests and weapons, and a community-based approach to stop violent political extremism early.

It builds on the Australian-first anti-hate reforms Victoria delivered over the last year, including the nation's strongest anti-vilification laws, banning terrorist flags in public, protecting people who are worshipping, and a social cohesion 'values commitment' that organisations must sign to receive and keep government grants.

The attack in Bondi was an attack on Jews, and in turn, an attack on Australia's way of life. Combating anti-Semitism is about protecting Jewish Victorians and supporting our whole society. These protections in the law belong to every Victorian, and they will keep everyone safe, whoever they pray to, whoever they are.

Step 1 – Stronger hate speech laws with social media companies on notice

Victoria's anti-vilification laws introduced this year are Australia's strongest. They include both a criminal regime to penalise the worst conduct, and a civil scheme for individuals and organisations to seek redress in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) if they feel they have been vilified by someone's words or actions.

We will take further action – online. Under Victoria's civil anti-vilification scheme, which starts in 2026, the author or speaker of a vilifying statement generally needs to be identifiable. This could protect cowards who hide behind anonymous profiles to spread hate and stoke fear.

Victoria will spearhead new laws to hold social media companies and their anonymous users to account. They could mean if the owner of a social media account can't be identified, then the platform could be liable for a civil claim determination – which could include high financial penalties and demands to remove the offending content.

As well as established social media platforms, this reform could also cover chat forums including comment sections on newspaper websites. Major platforms could also be compelled to provide identifying details. We will commission a respected jurist to examine the options for change within the constitutional framework.

Victoria will also fast-track the implementation of our civil anti-vilification scheme to the earliest possible date allowing for recruitment and training of new staff. The civil scheme will now commence in April 2026, not mid-year.

As a further step, we will bring these laws back to Parliament in 2026 to remove the requirement that the Director of Public Prosecutions consent to police prosecutions for criminal vilification. This restores the framework originally proposed in the Bill before it was amended in the Legislative Council.

Step 2 – Calm on our streets following acts of terror

We will introduce new special police powers to allow the Chief Commissioner of Police to stop or move on a public protest within a certain time following a designated terrorist event – similar to targeted new laws proposed in NSW.

Our Government defends the right to protest and we won't allow a return of undemocratic laws that aim to reduce the power of workers. But community safety must be paramount, especially when tensions are high. That's why we introduced offences to protect people who are worshipping. That's why we'll take further action.

Victorian laws and systems are different to those in New South Wales, so the intent will be the same, but the legislative approach won't. The Solicitor-General will examine the appropriate pathway for Victoria to deliver this change. Their work will be completed in January 2026.

Step 3 – Playing our part to toughen Australia's gun laws

After leading the world for three decades, Australia cannot become complacent on guns. At National Cabinet, Victoria alongside other states committed to strengthen gun laws and develop options to limit open-ended firearms licencing, allow the additional use of criminal intelligence to underpin firearms licencing – and more.

We will commission a review by former Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Mr Ken Lay AO APM. Mr Lay will look at Victoria's current laws, the proposed New South Wales legislation, and consult with Victoria Police and community groups to support the national approach and bring our gun laws up to date with the risks of today.

Step 4 – Taking a prevention approach to stop political extremism early

Violent political extremists are people motivated by far-right, far-left, political, religious or other ideological beliefs who justify violence as a means for change.

Victoria will appoint a Commissioner to implement the state's new *Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism 2025-28* and drive a new community-led focus to stop hate at the source.

Released today, our evidence-based strategy found that community initiatives – such as outreach and education programs to support schools, clubs and places of worship – are the bedrock to prevent the emergence of all kinds of violent political extremism.

Above all, the new Commissioner will ensure a community prevention approach is in place alongside traditional targeted interventions to combat extremism. That means stronger partnerships with community groups and services, and new programs that reduce division and support cohesion.

The strategy sets out evidence-based goals to guide the Government's approach over the next three years and identifies 31 key drivers and vulnerabilities leading to radicalisation. To read the strategy, visit vic.gov.au/victorian-government-efforts-prevent-and-counter-violent-extremism.

Step 5 – Taking long-term accountability for the pathway to normal

Anti-Semitism is the oldest and most pervasive form of extremism, and we fight it with firm anti-hate principles and laws, recognition of Jewish life and culture, and a profound commitment to education and prevention.

We will maintain that fight both through our actions, and by working with the Jewish community in practical forums we have established, such as the *Local Escalation and Help* group (LEAH).

Our ultimate long-term goal is a return to a sense of normality for members of Victoria's Jewish community. They deserve to live their lives in peace and dignity without having to constantly defend their family, identity, dress, homes, businesses, schools and shules from the harassment and violence that has spiralled since 2023.

Victoria will convene a council of eminent Victorians to develop a set of big, simple and measurable long-term goals. These goals will guide the long-term work of government, community and the private sector on the 'pathway to normal'. Government will be accountable to meeting the goals – we must track them regularly, proudly and publicly.

Victoria is also implementing the recommendations of the Special Envoy's Plan to Combat Anti-Semitism. We adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, mandated Holocaust teaching in government schools, progressed significant law reform addressing anti-Semitism, are funding VEOHRC to help workplaces fight hate, and more.

We will go further. Victoria commits to working with the state's cultural institutions to educate them about anti-Semitism and establish agreed guidelines for festivals and arts organisations to respond to anti-Semitic incidents.

With this commitment, Victoria is delivering all the Special Envoy's recommendations and actions relevant to states.

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Quotes attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

“As a Government, we feel a profound sense of duty to stand with the Jewish community in its darkest hour. We are acting to stop hate and anti-Semitism everywhere.”

“Stronger hate laws, stopping protests after terror, action on guns, preventing extremism early – these protections support the Jewish community and our way of life. They belong to every Victorian and keep everyone safe.”

“We also need a long-term path to normal, with big, clear goals to reduce hate and elevate visible Jewish participation in society – goals that are up in lights for everyone in the state to see, own and be a part of.”

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny

“We have introduced the strongest anti-vilification laws in Australia and in 2026 they are in full effect.”

“These are our next steps but not our last – there will be much more to do to in the long-term effort to combat anti-Semitism and hate, and restore a sense of dignity and normality for Jewish families in Victoria.”