



Beyond Blue submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

June 2026

Introduction

- **Safety and belonging are essential foundations for good mental health and wellbeing. Antisemitism, hate and discrimination undermine these foundations, cause harm to people and society, and have no place in Australia.** Addressing antisemitism, hate and discrimination is a shared responsibility across governments, business and industry, health and community services, workplaces, education settings and community organisations, and benefits the whole of society.
- Beyond Blue condemns the terrorist attack on 14 December 2025 at Bondi Beach. The event had an immediate and direct effect on the Jewish community, individuals, families and first responders who were there, but will have a profound and lasting impact too.
- We welcomed the Australian Government's investment in targeted mental health services following the attack, including for the Beyond Blue Support Service, to ensure the community was able to access immediate support. Beyond Blue has actively supported the response, from the night of the event and since, through our free, 24/7 counselling, advice and referral service, our online peer-to-peer forums, digital resources, and public commentary and communications. We continue to contribute to the longer-term response as members of the Mental Health and Mental Wellbeing Subcommittees.
- While the interim report focuses on public safety and national security findings that require urgent action, we recommend the final report adopt a holistic review of the impacts of antisemitism, including its devastating impact on mental health and wellbeing.

This submission has been informed by Beyond Blue's expertise as the national depression and anxiety initiative and our understanding of the health, social and economic determinants that influence mental health, wellbeing and suicidality. This includes the harmful effects of discrimination, hate, fear, loneliness and isolation but also the factors that protect our mental health and wellbeing – community, connection, and belonging.

Our submission is also informed by what we have seen and heard about people's experiences through our services, supports and communication channels.

It includes the experiences and insights of three Beyond Blue community Speakers who are Jewish. Through detailed interviews,¹ they offered their own experiences and perspectives on the mental health impacts of antisemitism on Jewish people in Australia. Their direct quotes are throughout this submission, in blue text, and we sincerely thank them.

Recommendations

The Royal Commission's final report should recommend that the Australian Government:

1. Build on the findings of the Royal Commission and existing evidence and fund co-designed research with Jewish communities to better understand antisemitism in Australia, including its mental health impacts, appropriate therapeutic responses and protective factors, to inform a comprehensive public health response.
2. Commit to the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Anti-Racism Framework – including dedicated approaches to tackle antisemitism within it – with adequate funding and clear accountability for implementation.
3. Identify mental health services and supports that can be rapidly adapted, resourced and coordinated to respond to major incidents, including terrorist attacks.

The impact of antisemitism on mental health and wellbeing

"How do you explain this to your children? How do you tell them that this is simply because of who you were born as, that people are going to judge you or discriminate against you?"

"That type of fear eats at your soul. It eats at your very being, and it affects your mental health. And even if you're a healthy person, mentally speaking, that underlying fear eats away at you. It eats away at who you are."

"I think 'I'm fine', but then I just burst into tears at my desk at work. I don't feel safe here."

- Antisemitism in Australia takes many forms – from prejudice, exclusion and discrimination, through to threats and acts of violence directed at Jewish people, places of worship and community institutions.² Since 7 October 2023, there has been a sharp rise in antisemitism in Australia,³ and increasing negative attitudes towards Jewish people.⁴ The community members we interviewed identified that **antisemitism is not being experienced as a series of isolated incidents, but an ongoing and intensifying presence that is having a harmful impact on the safety, wellbeing and mental health of Jewish communities.**
- Our consultations with community members identified that the rise of antisemitism has eroded their sense of safety, increased isolation, and limited their involvement in both the community and in things that they used to enjoy. Community members described witnessing, in person or in the media, visible and normalised antisemitic behaviour in public settings, which they associated with increased fear and a diminished sense of belonging. For some, this has led to changing or concealing signs of their Jewish identity to reduce the risk of hostility or harm.

"I've never experienced any antisemitism until after the 7th of October. It's so toxic that I've had to completely withdraw from stuff that I used to enjoy."

"You fear somebody saying something, you fear somebody maybe striking you from behind, attacking you from the front, scraping your car. So when it comes to mental health, the real issue is the increase in anxiety, which has been driven by fear."

"We always thought this was the safe haven. This was the place where we're free... I never thought I'd be afraid to cover up my identity in my own city."

- **Antisemitism, hate and discrimination are not only matters of belonging, safety and equality, but critical determinants of mental health and wellbeing.** The mental health impacts of racism and discrimination are well-established, with racism significantly associated with increased depression, anxiety and psychological distress.⁵⁻⁶ These impacts also carry substantial economic costs, with the mental health impacts of racial discrimination estimated to cost the Australian economy \$37.9 billion per annum.⁷

- The community members we interviewed described that **the sustained exposure to experiences of antisemitism has raised people’s baseline anxiety and distress**. It was recognised that while all Jewish people are impacted, antisemitism has exacerbated symptoms for people with pre-existing mental health challenges.
- As identified in other reports,⁸ these community members also described how antisemitic events activate intergenerational trauma. Recent evidence indicates that experiences of antisemitism for children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors was associated with higher psychological distress and probable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁹

“There’s definitely a rise in anxiety, stress, insomnia. It’s all a lot of us talk about. I’m sure there’s more help seeking behaviour. I know I’ve had to.”

“It can actually bring to the surface mental health conditions that have been well managed before. And suddenly people who may be managing their anxiety suddenly becomes unmanageable.”

“My grandparents were Holocaust survivors that came to Australia to get away from antisemitism in Europe, and it’s followed us because of the internet, social media — it just made it explode. It’s been pretty awful. I think the mental health of a lot of people in the Jewish community has been really like tested. It’s been really, really stressful. I’ve had to step up my mental health plan.”

- These interviews also identified some **protective factors and support within faith, culture and community**. It was noted that it was helpful to have regular check-ins with other Jewish people, as people who understand their experience without explanation. Check-ins and visible support from non-Jewish peers were also described as meaningful at reducing experiences of isolation.

“I feel like the community has been amazingly supportive of each other, and I feel like we’re like more connected. That’s an amazing protective factor.”

“I think that the value of the tribe is that we’re stronger together than individually living in fear. I think that collective sharing, mourning, grieving, rejoicing, allows for common experience. And I think that’s what helps us survive all of this, because unfortunately, it’s not going to change anytime soon.”

- There is a need for research that better understands the characteristics, causes and consequences of antisemitism.¹⁰ The priorities, focus and method for this research must be co-designed with the Jewish community, and include a thorough understanding of the mental health impacts of antisemitism, the groups and settings that are particularly impacted, effective responses, and protective factors.

Recommendation 1: Build on the findings of the Royal Commission and existing evidence and fund co-designed research with Jewish communities to better understand antisemitism in Australia, including its mental health impacts, appropriate therapeutic responses, and protective factors, to inform a comprehensive public health response.

The role of mental health supports

“I personally haven’t used any of the Jewish support services, but I know a lot of people might feel like they’ve got no other choice.”

“You can’t feel safe — what is therapy going to do about that? You can discuss the difficulty and the anxiety and the insomnia... but how’s therapy going to help? ... What we actually need is understanding, solidarity. They’re not pre-existing mental health issues. They’re attacks on identity.”

- For the community members we spoke to, the role of mental health services and supports may be limited, as people were primarily concerned about addressing the ongoing threat rather than its

associated mental health impact. **Consultations identified that mental health services could explore facilitating shared spaces and therapeutic discussions about the experiences of antisemitism, designed to meet the needs of Jewish people, with pathways to trusted services.** There may be further opportunities to develop a pilot program or capacity building for the mental health workforce through an antisemitism and mental health advisory group or taskforce.¹¹

“It’s not about labelling it under mental health or illness... This is actually a very unique problem that we’re facing.”

“There has to be a tailored approach to people who feel the fear and anxiety that arises from essentially racial persecution, because that’s what this is in plain terms.”

“I think if it was tailored or targeted to the community in that way, it might reach more people because they’ll understand that there’s a safe place, there’s empathy there, there’s understanding.”

- Some people in the Jewish community have expressed a hesitancy to seek mental health support due to concerns about antisemitism in healthcare, and in some cases turned to Jewish support services or health professionals where shared understanding and culturally appropriate support felt more certain. Australia’s Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism has identified a framework of solutions including working with the health sector to deliver targeted antisemitism training.¹²

“Sometimes you get paranoid. I have actually read articles where people have been in therapy and their therapist has been antisemitic... It’s not an okay thing to do. They’re coming because they’re vulnerable and you’re letting politics and personal opinions get into it.”

“It does help if the counsellor or the therapist is Jewish because there is an empathy there that you can’t really get otherwise.”

Whole-of-society approaches

- As recognised by Australia’s Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, there is a need for a whole-of-society approach to address antisemitism.¹³ **Addressing the mental health impacts of antisemitism requires whole-of-society action that strengthens social cohesion and reduces antisemitism, racism and discrimination as key drivers of distress.** This requires action from government, education settings, workplaces, health settings and community institutions to reduce and prevent harm, and to provide appropriate responses when antisemitism occurs.
- The National Anti-Racism Framework (NARF) was presented to the Commonwealth Government in 2024. The Commonwealth Government has not adopted or funded the NARF since it was published.
- The NARF is designed as a whole-of-society roadmap, with recommendations spanning law, education, workplaces and the media. It recognises rising antisemitism alongside other forms of racism and significant increases in reported anti-Jewish incidents in Australia.
- Under the NARF, a number of clear opportunities stand out:
 - effective protections against online hate
 - anti-racism strategies and training in workplaces, including responsibility for senior leaders to address discrimination
 - building the capacity of schools to identify, prevent and manage incidents of racism, including through nationally consistent anti-racism curriculum content
 - identifying racism as an urgent national priority
 - mandating cultural safety and anti-racism in health curricula.
- While sharing features of all forms of racism and discrimination, **a whole-of-society approach should recognise and address the distinct experiences and challenges of antisemitism to ensure it meets the needs of Jewish people.**
- The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief has identified that hate speech, such as racism and intolerance, must be addressed to prevent atrocity crimes and terrorism.¹⁴

- A growing body of international evidence demonstrates that racism and discrimination can act as a precursor to violent extremism, both as an ideology in its own right and as a driver of grievance, with the United Nations identifying racism and intolerance as key motivators of extremist violence, and research showing that discrimination and prejudice can contribute to radicalisation pathways.¹⁵⁻¹⁸
- The 2024 Inquiry into Right Wing Extremist Movements in Australia reported on evidence that suggests social isolation, loneliness and disconnection from community can be contributing factors in the radicalisation of individuals.¹⁹
- Social cohesion refers to the social connectedness, solidarity and trust amongst individuals, within and across communities, organisations and society,²⁰ where inequalities and exclusion are reduced.²¹ In New Zealand’s Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019, the report noted the need for government to embrace the opportunities of social cohesion through strong leadership at both ministerial and departmental levels, and recommended that the government develop a social cohesion strategic framework.²² In the strategic framework for social cohesion, tackling all forms of discrimination is one of the key focus areas. Australia has an existing, unimplemented framework to address racism and discrimination, including through targeted initiatives.

Recommendation 2: Commit to the Australian Human Rights Commission’s National Anti-Racism Framework – including dedicated approaches to tackle antisemitism within it – with adequate funding and clear accountability for implementation.

The terrorist attack at Bondi on 14 December 2025

"I've had lots of people checking in, especially after Bondi, but some people have just still said nothing, which I think is sometimes worse. Sometimes I'd rather just a hug. You don't have to ask me about it, but some people just, they don't have the capacity."

- In the immediate days and weeks following the Bondi terrorist attack, Beyond Blue delivered free, immediate mental health support to people across Australia. This response demonstrated the importance of timely and accessible mental health support in responding to major traumatic events.
- Survivors and witnesses of the terrorist attack will require access to more intensive and ongoing support. Similar Royal Commission processes overseas, such as the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019, identified a need for ongoing effective, efficient and culturally appropriate wellbeing support for survivors and witnesses. It also recommended that the government facilitate coordinated access to public services by assigning a single point of contact.²³ It should be considered if similar approaches would be beneficial.
- The National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework identified that the timeliness of services is critical, and that administration and funding processes delay the availability of support.²⁴ It also noted that digital and phone services provide accessible and flexible support while reducing pressure and complementing face-to-face services. To ensure readiness, there is a need to build on these existing plans by identifying services and supports that can be rapidly activated in a coordinated response, with funding mechanisms in place to allow for surges in demand.

Recommendation 3: Identify mental health services and supports that can be rapidly adapted, resourced and coordinated to respond to major incidents, including terrorist attacks.

How Beyond Blue is contributing to the response

Support Service

- In December 2025, the Beyond Blue Support Service experienced a six per cent increase in the number of contacts, compared with the previous year. This included multiple calls directly relating to the Bondi terrorist attack. In the months that followed, the service has continued to receive Bondi-related contacts in which members of the Jewish community reported feeling unsafe, resulting in cancelled gatherings and reduced participation in community life.
- As with other significant events, this likely represents a small portion of contacts who were impacted by the Bondi terrorist attack. These events can directly or indirectly contribute to elevated distress among callers seeking support for a range of concerns, even when Bondi is not mentioned. These calls occurred in a context of sustained and increasing demand for the Beyond Blue Support Service, alongside growing complexity in people's mental health needs when presenting to the service.
- In the immediate aftermath of the attack, key themes from people who contacted the service included:
 - heightened fear and anxiety, particularly about the safety of loved ones
 - significant emotional distress associated with the attack
 - intentionally limiting exposure to news or discussion due to overwhelm
 - anxiety linked to the negative public commentary following the attack
 - witnesses seeking support relating to what they observed.
- From January to March 2026, contacts directly related to the terrorist attack demonstrated continued impacts, including themes of trauma reactivation, grief and adjustment responses, increasing anxiety and worry, and demand for ongoing support.

"I was feeling out of touch, anxious and a bit depersonalised as I've been having a hard time lately, then Bondi really made me feel unsafe. The [mental health professional] was thoughtful and compassionate. She helped me find some motivation and direction. She gave me the human connection I needed to help get my feet back on the ground."
- Beyond Blue Support Service caller

Website and social media

- Demand for support through our website significantly increased in the aftermath of the attack. In the following week, traffic to the Beyond Blue homepage and support page rose by 20%, while traffic to Beyond Blue's webchat page almost tripled. Beyond Blue launched a [dedicated Bondi support page](#), which contributed to the overall (8%) rise in monthly web traffic for December 2025, compared with the previous year.
- The dedicated support page provided clear pathways to support, helping people understand trauma, advice on managing news and social media information, and offering guidance on taking care of yourself, children and young people, and others after a traumatic event.
- Beyond Blue also used its social media channels to amplify information about local services and community groups, including Jewish Care. The 11 posts across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn reached 4.6 million people – a 400% increase on average monthly organic reach.
- Beyond Blue's CEO wrote a dedicated piece on LinkedIn denouncing persecution of members of the Jewish community and promoting calls for social cohesion. Beyond Blue also issued a [media release](#) condemning the attack and antisemitism.

Printed information and advice

- Beyond Blue developed materials for locations and businesses in Bondi and across Australia, validating people's reactions to traumatic events, providing advice on checking in on yourself and others, and connecting people to free, confidential, 24/7 support.

Online peer support forums

- Beyond Blue created a dedicated forum thread on 15 December, remaining available 24/7 for those needing support. Users have discussed mourning and support for the Jewish community, and sadness and anger about the event.

References

- ¹ Beyond Blue took a targeted community engagement approach rather than a general invitation to Beyond Blue's lived experience community of Speakers, Blue Voices members and volunteers for clinical and care governance reasons.
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- ⁵ Selvarajah, S., Maioli, SC., Abi Deivanayagam, T., de Morais Sato, P., Devakumar, D., Kim, SS., Wells, JC., Yoseph, M., Abubakar, I. & Paradies, Y. (2022). [Racism, xenophobia, and discrimination: mapping pathways to health outcomes](#). *The Lancet*, 400(10368), 2109-2124.
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- ⁷ Elias, A. & Paradies, Y. (2016). [Estimating the mental health costs of racial discrimination](#). *BMC Public Health* 16, 1205.
- ⁸ Australian Human Rights Commission. (2026). [The struggle to be seen, the power in being heard: community insights from the Seen & Heard project](#), Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney.
- ⁹ Nesterko, Y., Specht, F., Stammel, N., Nohr, L., & Böttche, M. (2025). [Mental health and experiences of anti-semitism in 2nd and 3rd offspring generation of Holocaust survivors from Israel, Germany, and the USA](#). *International Journal of Psychology*, 60(3), e70053.
- ¹⁰ American Psychological Association. (2026). [APA Resolution on Antisemitism](#).
- ¹¹ Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism. (2025). [Special Envoy's Plan to Combat Antisemitism: a policy-oriented framework for government and the Australian community](#).
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism. (2026). [Understanding antisemitism in Australia](#).
- ¹⁴ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (n.d.). *Hate speech and incitement to hatred or violence: Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief*.
- ¹⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2025). [Terrorism and violent extremism motivated by xenophobia, racism and other forms of intolerance](#).
- ¹⁶ UN Special Rapporteur on racism. (2020). [Statements to the UN Security Council on racially and ethnically motivated extremism](#).
- ¹⁷ UK Parliament POST. (2024). [Extremism and Hate Crime](#).
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- ²⁰ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). (2023). [Social cohesion: concept and measurement](#).
- ²¹ OECD. (2011). [Perspectives on global development 2012: social cohesion in a shifting world](#). OECD Publishing.
- ²² Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019. (2020). [Ko tō tātou kāinga tēnei: report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019](#). New Zealand Government.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ National Mental Health Commission. (2023). [National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework: supporting Australians' mental health through disaster](#).