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Australian Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

Submission by the City of Port Phillip

May 2026

ABN 21 762 977 945

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Introduction – Local context

The City of Port Phillip is home to one of the largest and most visible Jewish communities in Victoria. At the 2021 Census, 3,408 residents identified Judaism as their religion, representing 3.3 per cent of the municipal population, compared with 0.9 per cent across Greater Melbourne. In particular, significant Jewish populations exist within Ripponlea, Balaclava and St Kilda East, where Jewish life is a visible and everyday part of neighbourhood activity.

The City of Port Phillip has been shaped by over 150 years of Jewish settlement, reflecting multiple waves of migration that have contributed to the municipality's social, cultural and economic life. From early settlers in the nineteenth century through to refugees arriving before and after the Second World War, Jewish migrants established strong place-based communities centred around St Kilda, Ripponlea, Acland Street and Carlisle Street. These areas supported religious practice, kosher food and retail, family life and community connection, with later waves of migration from Europe, South Africa, Israel and elsewhere continuing to sustain vibrant Jewish life.

Jewish residents make a significant contribution to Port Phillip's social, cultural and economic life through religious practice, family life, education, volunteering, business ownership and community participation. The municipality includes a substantial concentration of Jewish religious, cultural and community infrastructure, supporting worship, education, cultural continuity and strong community connection. Jewish community life involves regular use of local schools, childcare services, community facilities, cultural programs, events and public spaces, alongside active participation in broader multicultural and interfaith activities.

Council recognises the diversity of Jewish communities in Port Phillip, encompassing a wide range of faith practices, migration histories, languages, ages and socioeconomic circumstances, as well as diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. This includes residents of public and social housing, Russian speaking Jewish migrants, long-established families, older and younger residents, Orthodox communities such as Adass Israel, and progressive and synagogue-based communities. The municipality also hosts inclusive Jewish spaces, including Temple Beth Israel and its Pride and LGBTIQA+ Jewish community.

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Key issues in Port Phillip

In recent years, there has been a clear escalation in antisemitism across the City of Port Phillip, including:

- acts of terrorism
- intimidation
- harassment
- vandalism
- repeated antisemitic graffiti

These incidents are most visible in areas with a significant Jewish community presence, including Ripponlea and Balaclava.

According to the Victorian Antisemitism Reports published by the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV) and the Community Security Group (CSG), 86 antisemitic incidents were reported in Port Phillip in 2024, rising to 104 incidents in 2025, with approximately 18.4% of all antisemitism incidents in Victoria in 2025 occurring in Port Phillip.

The terrorist attack on the Adass Israel Synagogue in 2024 and the Bondi terrorist attack in 2025 have had a significant impact on Port Phillip's Jewish community.

The targeting of vehicles and public infrastructure has further heightened concerns within our community, with recent serious incidents involving occupants in cars abusing, intimidating and threatening Jewish residents, reinforcing concerns about safety in public spaces.

Following the Adass Israel attack, Council worked closely with community leaders from Adass Israel to support recovery and address emerging issues. This included appointing a culturally sensitive dedicated liaison officer as a seamless, central point of contact to troubleshoot concerns, escalate matters efficiently within Council, coordinate permitting and recovery processes, and facilitate temporary arrangements for prayer and worship where required.

Council leadership has taken a clear public stance condemning antisemitism, recognising the importance of visible leadership in reassuring communities. Notably, in 2025 the City of Port Phillip and Glen Eira City Council jointly coordinated a statewide mayoral statement condemning antisemitism, endorsed by approximately 85 per cent of Victorian councils. This collective action reinforced the leadership role of local government as a credible and trusted tier of government during periods of heightened social tension.

Further examples of Council's action are outlined in this submission.

Community voice

"You stop wearing things that show your identity because you feel afraid."

De-identified feedback from City of Port Phillip Multicultural Strategy engagement (March 2026).

Council through the development of its Multicultural Strategy, Ripponlea Place Plan and Community Safety Plan, has undertaken extensive community engagement to understand how safety, inclusion and social cohesion are experienced, including within Port Phillip's Jewish communities. This provides important insight into how safety, identity, belonging and antisemitism are experienced in everyday community life

Responses through this wider community engagement underscored the seriousness and harmful impact of antisemitism on Jewish residents, while also highlighting a strong message from some participants about the importance of avoiding narrow or single-issue approaches to discrimination. Community members noted that responses perceived as selective may risk undermining social cohesion by creating perceptions of inequity. At the same time, there was strong support for whole-of-community approaches that respond decisively to specific harms such as antisemitism while reinforcing shared responsibility for inclusion, belonging, safety and respect across communities.

Jewish voices were heard directly through these broader community engagement processes through the participation of residents, traders, institutions and young people in Ripponlea, an area with a significant and visible Jewish presence. Engagement included students and Jewish residents who use the precinct daily for worship, education, shopping and travel, and feedback linked to the rebuilding of the Adass Israel Synagogue and the design of surrounding public spaces.

Across these conversations, community members described antisemitism and visible hostility as shaping daily routines, movement through neighbourhoods and decisions about visibility in public spaces. Some community members described not wearing or covering visible symbols of their faith and culture, while others have experienced fundamental changes to daily life by not visiting certain places or being able to practice their faith and culture in the ways that would ordinarily have.

Safety emerged as a central concern throughout engagement on these broader strategies and plans. Through the Ripponlea Place Plan alone, approximately 333 community members participated, with safety identified as a core priority. Participants emphasised the need to feel safe and secure in public spaces throughout the day, alongside consistent expectations for clean, graffiti free streets. Children from Jewish and government schools identified lighting, safe crossings and barriers between pedestrians and vehicles as their highest priorities, highlighting how safety concerns are experienced by families and young people. The Community Safety Plan and Multicultural Strategy engagement reinforced that fear of harassment or hate incidents can lead people to

avoid certain places or times of day, withdraw from public space and community activities, and participate less openly in community life.

Participation in this broader engagement also captured heightened anxiety and strain following events since 7 October 2023, when a large-scale attack by Hamas in Israel and the subsequent conflict led to increased global and local tension. In the local context, community members described this period as marking a noticeable escalation in antisemitism, fear, misinformation and polarisation, alongside heightened concern within other communities, affecting relationships, perceptions of safety and social cohesion at a neighbourhood level.

While there was strong support for multiculturalism through the Multicultural Strategy engagement, community members expressed a clear expectation that Council prioritise everyday interaction and relationship building between communities, rather than symbolic gestures or one-off events. Participants consistently noted that when regular opportunities for connection are limited, fear, misinformation and stereotyping are more likely to take hold, particularly during periods of heightened social tension. Concerns extended beyond antisemitism to include Islamophobia and broader intercommunity discrimination, reinforcing the importance of shared spaces and visible local leadership that support routine, positive contact.

Across engagement forums, including the Multicultural Advisory Committee and Multifaith Network, community fatigue was raised repeatedly. Jewish community members, faith leaders and multicultural stakeholders described exhaustion from being asked to recount experiences of fear and harm across multiple consultations and crisis responses without clear feedback on outcomes or system level change. Since 7 October 2023, multifaith leaders in particular reported emotional strain associated with ongoing crisis response and expectations to act as informal mediators and spokespersons. There was a consistent call for clearer communication, better coordination across Council and other levels of government, and engagement processes that demonstrate how community input translates into action.

Engagement also highlighted the role of misinformation in driving fear, polarisation and erosion of trust across communities. Participants noted that misinformation circulates both within and between communities, disproportionately affecting visibly Jewish residents, older community members and LGBTIQA+ individuals. Jewish multicultural seniors and LGBTIQA+ Jewish community members described fragmented service responses, often falling between multicultural, ageing, mental health and LGBTIQA+ systems, limiting access to culturally safe and appropriate support.

Taken together, these insights demonstrate how antisemitism operates not only as discrete incidents, but as sustained pressures on confidence, connection and participation in public life, with broader impacts on community cohesion.

Key recommendations

Below is evidence, current City of Port Phillip actions and recommendations to address gaps, aligned with four (4) key matters outlined in the Royal Commission's Terms of Reference.

1. The nature and prevalence of antisemitism in institutions and across society

Evidence: Council records, service requests, and community reporting show an increase in antisemitic graffiti, vandalism, and intimidation within the City of Port Phillip, particularly in areas with high Jewish visibility. In the last 12 months (1 April 2025 to 30 March 2026), Council received 3,273 graffiti removal requests, of which 565 were considered racist, antisemitic, sexual in nature, or similar. Council records indicate repeated antisemitic graffiti incidents rose across the municipality during 2024–2025.

This local evidence aligns with state-level reporting. The *Victorian Antisemitism Report 2025*, published by JCCV and CSG, documents a continued, record-level increase in antisemitic graffiti, vandalism, and intimidation targeting Jewish institutions and visibly Jewish areas across Victoria. The report highlights that these incidents demonstrate that antisemitism is not experienced as isolated events, but as a cumulative pattern that undermines safety, wellbeing and confidence.

What we do: Council responds rapidly to antisemitic graffiti to prevent normalisation and reduce fear, monitors incident patterns through service requests, and works closely with Victoria Police and Jewish community organisations on local safety responses. Council escalates emerging issues through regional and State forums (for example, the Municipal Association of Victoria, M9), through the State Government LEAH Taskforce and provides visible public leadership by condemning antisemitism through statements and advocacy.

Recommendations:

- Improve antisemitism data collection and reporting, including:
  - Consistent reporting frameworks across police, councils and community organisations.
  - Tracking of repeat and cumulative incidents, not only serious offences.
- Strengthen institutional capability through funding for antisemitism awareness and cultural safety training across government agencies and publicly funded services.
- Support coordinated local–state–federal responses, recognising antisemitism as a systemic issue rather than isolated incidents.
- Recognise local government as a frontline responder to antisemitism in public spaces and provide direct resourcing to councils to enable them to respond quickly and effectively.

2. Recommendations to counteract and prevent antisemitism

Evidence: Engagement undertaken as part of the City of Port Phillip Multicultural Strategy highlights the importance of education, early intervention and interfaith connection as key prevention tools. These findings align with Victorian Multicultural Commission guidance, which identifies culturally informed education and relationship-building as essential to preventing racism and antisemitism before it escalates.

What we do: Council is implementing a Multicultural Strategy focused on safety, inclusion and addressing discrimination, supporting interfaith networks, hosting community events such as a local Interfaith Festival, and funding community-led social cohesion initiatives through an allocated Social Cohesion budget.

We are requiring recipients of Council funding to commit to the Victorian Values Statement, and we are also fostering ongoing collaboration with the City of Glen Eira to share experiences in preventing antisemitism.

Recommendations:

- Sustain and expand prevention-focused funding for culturally informed and inclusive education and anti-racism programs, including early intervention initiatives delivered across schools, community settings and public institutions.
- Invest in community-based approaches that strengthen belonging, critical thinking and resilience to extremist ideology across the lifespan, including outreach and partnerships in informal settings such as sporting, fitness, cultural and youth-focused spaces.
- Provide dedicated funding for interfaith and multifaith networks to deliver dialogue, relationship-building and community connection initiatives.
- Enable regional collaboration between councils particularly where Jewish life and community networks cross municipal boundaries, to ensure consistent and visible prevention efforts.
- Invest in long-term social cohesion initiatives, rather than short term or reactive programs, to prevent escalation and polarisation.
- Require organisations receiving government funding to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to social inclusion, safety and non-discrimination, including clear actions to prevent and respond to antisemitism.

3. **The impact of antisemitism on the daily life, health and wellbeing of Jewish Australians**

Evidence: Jewish residents participating in the City of Port Phillip's Multicultural Strategy engagement described making practical changes to their daily behaviour due to fear and concern for personal safety. This included being more cautious about when and where they move through public spaces, limiting attendance at community or religious activities, and being more alert to their surroundings when travelling to and from work, school or local shops. Some participants spoke about modifying how openly they express their Jewish identity in public, such as being more discreet about religious clothing or symbols, to avoid unwanted attention.

The firebombing of the Adass Israel Synagogue in Ripponlea in December 2024 destroyed the congregation's only place of worship and will force the community to relocate to temporary locations for years. This has disrupted regular faith activities and reduced families' ability to practise their religion safely and as part of daily life. National evidence shows this type of targeted community violence can harm children's mental health and wellbeing. The National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (National Mental Health Commission, 2021) identifies exposure to violence and loss of safe community spaces as risks to children's sense of safety, belonging and wellbeing. The Australia's Children – Justice and Safety report (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) also finds that exposure to crime can lead to fear, social withdrawal and reduced participation in everyday community life, particularly for children and families.

These lived experiences reflect broader findings across Victoria, documented in the Victorian Antisemitism Report 2025 by JCCV and CSG, which shows that rising antisemitism is affecting mental health, identity expression and sense of belonging, with cumulative impacts on confidence, wellbeing and participation in everyday community life.

What we do: Council embeds antisemitism considerations into place-based planning and public space design through Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, including hostile vehicle mitigation, lighting, sightlines, activation and passive surveillance in areas of high Jewish visibility.

These approaches are integrated with municipal emergency management planning and community safety responses to ensure preparedness, coordination and clear communication during incidents.

Recommendations:

- Fund culturally appropriate and inclusive mental health and wellbeing support pathways for Jewish communities affected by antisemitism, recognising the varied and intersectional impacts on:
    - Anxiety and fear
    - Identity expression

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- Sense of belonging and community participation

- Fund place-based safety and reassurance measures in areas of high Jewish visibility, such as visible Victoria Police patrols and community presence, to reduce fear, support continued daily and religious life and rebuild confidence in public spaces.
- Enable councils to deliver and administer place based, culturally appropriate safety infrastructure by making local governments eligible for targeted State and Federal funding in areas of high community impact.
- Recognising heightened vulnerability, isolation and fear among older cohorts, provide sustained support for older Jewish residents, including extending the Multicultural Seniors Support Program to a multi-year model.
- Integrate wellbeing and recovery into community safety responses, not solely physical security or enforcement measures.

4. Opportunities to enhance the responses of governments to antisemitism

Evidence: Local government plays an established role in delivering place-based services and infrastructure that support community connection, participation and safety. In Port Phillip, this includes libraries, neighbourhood houses, community venues, festivals, events and interfaith networks, which provide regular opportunities for interaction between diverse communities.

Council's experience through community engagement, service delivery and partnerships demonstrates that social cohesion is most often experienced through these every day, local settings. Programs such as the Port Phillip Multifaith Network, local events and community facilities create ongoing opportunities for relationship building, dialogue and inclusion.

Council's coordination of a statewide mayoral statement condemning antisemitism in 2025, further demonstrates the role of local government in providing visible civic leadership and facilitating collective responses.

What we do: Council works closely with neighbouring councils, particularly the City of Glen Eira, participates in State led taskforces such as the LEAH Taskforce, and aligns local strategies with broader State and national frameworks where possible. In 2025, the City of Port Phillip and the City of Glen Eira jointly led a mayoral statement condemning antisemitism, endorsed by approximately 85 per cent of Victorian councils, demonstrating a strong, shared commitment across the sector to collective action and advocacy.

The City of Port Phillip is incorporating the Victorian Government's Values Statement and Commitment to Social Cohesion, as reflected in the Victorian Common Funding Agreement, into its grants and funding frameworks. This provides a practical mechanism to set clear expectations for inclusion, cultural safety and non-discrimination across

Council-funded organisations and activities, strengthening accountability and prevention-focused responses to antisemitism and other forms of hate.

Council recently commissioned a review of its arts and cultural programming processes, to improve our internal processes in relation to how we balance artistic independence, including challenging and diverse expression, with Council's responsibility to support participation that is inclusive and free from discrimination, intimidation, vilification or exclusion. Findings from this review will help inform Council's forthcoming creative and cultural strategy.

Council is also providing funding and support to the Port Phillip Multifaith Network to jointly host the Interfaith Festival in November 2026.

In addition, Council funds a dedicated Jewish Immersion Program for staff to increase cultural awareness, understanding of Jewish community life, and capability to respond appropriately to antisemitism and related safety concerns in their roles.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen coordination between governments, police and councils, including:
  - Clear escalation pathways
  - Reduced duplication
  - Shared responsibility for reassurance and recovery.
  - Consistent messaging across all levels of government to avoid fragmented or confusing responses for affected communities.
- Support long-term recovery, resilience and confidence-building, ensuring responses extend beyond immediate incident management, and support ongoing place-based community liaison.
- Invest in government leadership and capability, including:
  - Visible public leadership condemning antisemitism
  - Ongoing cultural awareness programs for public sector staff.
- Formally recognise and adequately fund local government as a key delivery partner in antisemitism and social cohesion prevention, response and recovery.

Conclusion

In closing, the City of Port Phillip submission demonstrates that antisemitism is not an isolated issue, but one that affects community safety, wellbeing and social cohesion in Port Phillip and beyond. Evidence from statewide reporting, local engagement, and Council experience shows that rising antisemitism has tangible impacts on how Jewish residents live, participate, and express their identity, even in communities that value multiculturalism. The City of Port Phillip has outlined the practical actions already underway through integrated strategies, place-based responses, visible leadership and strong partnerships. However, addressing the scale and persistence of antisemitism requires coordinated action across all levels of government and the submission outlines a range of recommendations that can further help to combat antisemitism.

Appendix 1:
Mayors and Councils Stand in Solidarity Against Antisemitism
Published 16 December 2025

The Cities of Glen Eira and Port Phillip, with the support of the Municipal Association of Victoria, have invited Mayors from across Victoria to co-sign a joint statement in response to the tragic mass shooting at Bondi Beach.

This horrific event took place on the first night of Chanukah, a festival that symbolises light and hope for the Jewish community. Our thoughts are with the victims, their families, NSW Police, first responders, Waverley Council, and Jewish communities across Australia who are deeply impacted by this senseless act of violence.

Victorian Councils are standing in solidarity with our Jewish community and are speaking out against hate and antisemitism.

We know this tragedy will be felt profoundly at a local level. We condemn this attack and stand in solidarity with all those affected.

A united voice coordinated through the combined leadership of Port Phillip and Glen Eira sends a powerful message of compassion, resilience, and support for our Jewish communities during this difficult time.

At the time of writing 68 councils, representing over 85% of local governments within Victoria have signed this statement. We acknowledge their commitment and the promptness of their response.

We stand with our Jewish community. We stand in solidarity against hatred and antisemitism.

Joint Statement
We, the undersigned Mayors, stand united in grief and solidarity following the horrific antisemitic terror attack in Bondi. At least 15 lives have been lost, and our hearts go out to the victims, their families, and the Waverley community.

Victoria is home to some of Australia's largest Jewish communities, and many are feeling deeply shaken. We condemn antisemitism and violence in all its forms. Hate has no place in our cities, and no place in Australia.

This tragedy comes as many prepare to celebrate Chanukah, a festival that symbolises light triumphing over darkness. It is heartbreaking that such darkness has overshadowed

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the start of this season of hope. Let us honour the spirit of Chanukah by standing together and rejecting hate in all its forms.
To our Jewish community, we say: We see you. We stand with you. This is your home, and you should not feel afraid.

Now more than ever, our role as Councils is clear: to bring people together, promote social cohesion, and build inclusive communities. We will continue to work every day to stamp out antisemitism and hate, and to ensure our cities remain places of safety, respect, and belonging for all. Together, we stand united against hate.

At the time of writing the following Councils via their Mayors had added their support for the joint statement:

- City of Port Phillip
- Glen Eira City Council
- Ararat Rural City Council
- Alpine Shire Council
- Ballarat City Council
- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Baw Baw Shire Council
- Bayside City Council
- Boroondara City Council
- Brimbank City Council
- Buloke Shire Council
- Campaspe Shire Council
- Casey City Council
- Central Goldfields Shire Council
- Colac Otway Shire Council
- Corangamite Shire Council
- Darebin City Council
- Frankston City Council
- Glenelg Shire Council
- Golden Plains Shire Council
- Greater Dandenong City Council
- Greater Geelong City Council
- Hepburn Shire Council
- Hindmarsh Shire Council
- Hobsons Bay City Council
- Hume City Council
- Indigo Shire Council
- Kingston City Council

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- Knox City Council
- Latrobe City Council
- Loddon Shire Council
- Macedon Ranges Shire Council
- Manningham City Council
- Mansfield Shire Council
- Maribyrnong City Council
- Maroondah City Council
- Melbourne City Council
- Merri-bek City Council
- Moira Shire Council
- Monash City Council
- Moonee Valley City Council
- Moorabool Shire Council
- Mornington Peninsula Shire Council
- Mount Alexander Shire Council
- Moyne Shire Council
- Murrindindi Shire Council
- Nillumbik Shire Council
- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Pyrenees Shire Council
- Borough of Queenscliffe Council
- South Gippsland Shire Council
- Southern Grampians Shire Council
- Stonnington City Council
- Strathbogie Shire Council
- Surf Coast Shire Council
- Swan Hill Rural City Council
- Towong Shire Council
- Wangaratta Rural City Council
- Warrnambool City Council
- Wellington Shire Council
- West Wimmera Shire Council
- Whitehorse City Council
- Wodonga City Council
- Wyndham City Council
- Yarra City Council
- Yarra Ranges Shire Council
- Yarriambiack Shire Council
- Municipal Association of Victoria

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