



Policy submission

Submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

June 2026

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The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that brings together the multidisciplinary expertise of our nation's leading thinkers to provide practical, evidence-based advice on important social issues facing society.

As the pre-eminent organisation in Australia representing excellence across the social science disciplines, we welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion.

Overview

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (the Academy) welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion (the Royal Commission). The antisemitic terrorist attack at Bondi must be a turning point in Australian public life, a moment of acute national reckoning that prompts deep reflection, institutional learning, and prevention-focused reform.

This submission responds specifically to sections of the Terms of Reference that relate to identifying opportunities to enhance government responses to antisemitism, including best practice approaches to strengthening social cohesion. These issues are closely connected. Antisemitism should be understood not only as a form of prejudice, but as a distinct and historically embedded phenomenon that can both reflect and intensify breakdowns in social cohesion.

This submission draws on a substantial body of international and Australian social science evidence on social cohesion, its relationship to antisemitism, and the mechanisms of grievance escalation and hate speech. It uses this evidence base to inform principles for reform and practical recommendations for embedding and operationalising social cohesion within a broader, system-based policy approach.

Importantly, the Royal Commission has an opportunity to translate years of thoughtful review into genuine structural change. **As a starting point we recommend that the relevant findings and proposals of the [Multicultural Framework Review](#) and Australian Human Rights Commission [National Anti-Racism Framework](#) are implemented without delay, as a coordinated national response to antisemitism, racism, and social division (Recommendation 1).**

Academy Fellows include leading experts across these fields, with deep expertise relevant to social cohesion and to the wider matters under consideration by the Royal Commission, including countering extremism, radicalisation and racism. The Academy would welcome the opportunity to facilitate further engagement between the Commissioners and its Fellows to support the Royal Commission's work.

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1:** Implement the relevant findings and proposals of the *Multicultural Framework Review* and Australian Human Rights Commission *National Anti-Racism Framework* without delay, as a coordinated national response to antisemitism, racism, and social division.
- **Recommendation 2:** Consolidate the functions of the Office of Social Cohesion and Office of Multicultural Affairs and governance roles envisaged by the *Multicultural Framework Review* and *National Anti-Racism Framework* into a dedicated national body or agency, which recognises social cohesion as a whole of government, nation building priority under a single coherent mandate.

Recommendation 3: Task the national body or agency with establishing a coordinated, adequately resourced, national social cohesion framework with clear leadership, accountability, and long-term planning. The framework should be evidence-informed, adaptive, and evaluated over time and developed in collaboration with community organisations and all levels of government.

- **Recommendation 4:** Promote an evidence-informed understanding of social cohesion as a dynamic, multidimensional condition built through shared values, trust, and everyday interactions and shaped by enabling conditions such as democratic institutions, civic space, and socio-economic drivers.
- **Recommendation 5:** The Australian Government progress a national social cohesion measurement framework that expands on attitudinal surveys and separates cohesion outcomes from its enabling conditions, to support more targeted and evidence-informed policy and the ability to distinguish between episodic fluctuations and structural changes in social cohesion over time.
- **Recommendation 6:** The Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments adopt coordinated rapid-response social cohesion strategies following major incidents, including those arising from international conflicts with domestic impacts. These strategies should incorporate bipartisan public communication protocols, structured engagement with community leaders, and targeted measures to counter misinformation and disinformation in order to de-escalate tensions and maintain public trust.
- **Recommendation 7:** The Australian Government commission a comprehensive audit of hate speech laws across Australia, with the intention of moving towards uniformity across jurisdictions, and publish a clear, accessible summary of their scope and key parameters on relevant government websites.
- **Recommendation 8:** The Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments improve clarity and consistency in the application of hate speech laws by strengthening guidance and education for both the public and law enforcement on legal thresholds and definitions, informed by robust scholarship, research, and understandings of what constitutes hate speech.
- **Recommendation 9:** The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority embed antisemitism education within strengthened intercultural capability in the Australian Curriculum, along with explicit teaching of democratic culture and respectful dialogue skills, and support this through sustained investment in teacher capability, including professional development, high-quality curriculum resources, and clear guidance for facilitating discussions on contested issues.
- **Recommendation 10:** Consider promoting established frameworks, such as the Monash Initiative for Rapid Research into Antisemitism *Framework for addressing antisemitism in Australian universities*, as an example of good practice in integrating prevention, response, and cultural change across the higher education sector.
- **Recommendation 11:** The Australian Government signal to the research community and funders that projects addressing social cohesion are a national priority by explicitly incorporating social cohesion into the *National Science and Research Priorities* and implementation of the *Ambitious Australia* report.
- **Recommendation 12:** The Australian Government establish and fund a national hub-and-spoke collaborative research institute on social cohesion to coordinate a sustained, policy-relevant national research agenda, bringing together universities, community organisations, and government.
- **Recommendation 13:** The Australian Government fund and scale well-designed, evidence-based contact interventions that foster meaningful intergroup relationships, particularly within shared institutions and everyday interaction spaces such as schools, workplaces, and community programs that foster meaningful, repeated contact.

To discuss any matters raised in this submission, please contact Andrea Verdich, Policy Director on 0438 218 352, or andrea.verdich@socialsciences.org.au.

Social cohesion in Australia: a policy evolution

Australia has one of the largest foreign-born populations in the world and consistently high levels of net migration relative to its population. Yet, the country has remained a stable and peaceful liberal democracy. Cultural diversity has become a defining feature of national identity and a key source of social and civic strength. This outcome is not accidental but partly attributable to the development of multicultural policies which have played a constructive role in fostering social cohesion.

Australia was founded as a British colony on the dispossession of First Nations peoples and the settlement of migrants, embedding questions of social cohesion at its origins. In Broken Hill, a mining city in far western New South Wales established in the 1880s, the built landscape includes not only the familiar churches of colonial Australia but also a mosque (1887) and a synagogue (1910). Now preserved as museums, they stand as a reminder that religious and cultural diversity has long been part of Australian life, even in the heyday of British Australia.

Historically, social cohesion in Australia rested on both formal inclusion and a pragmatic capacity to accommodate some cultural and religious differences in everyday experiences. From assisted migration schemes in the nineteenth century through to the transformative immigration programs after World War II, governments progressively took responsibility not only for population growth but also for settlement support and the integration of newcomers into national life. The abandonment of the White Australia immigration policy in the 1970s opened up Australia as a haven for new and more culturally diverse groups of migrants. Over time, policy frameworks evolved from assimilation and ultimately to multiculturalism, reflecting changing expectations about inclusion and belonging.

Australian multiculturalism, officially adopted in the 1970s, helped foster the social and civic conditions required for a functioning liberal democracy, including tolerance, participation, and a shared commitment to common institutions, confirming social cohesion can be successfully supported by appropriate institutional frameworks and policy settings.

However, longstanding challenges have persisted. The unresolved marginalisation of First Nations peoples, which has normalised racism as a structural feature of social life; a recurring and poorly addressed history of antisemitism, and the gradual shift from the mid-1990s away from the explicit multicultural policy architecture have all served to undermine social cohesion.

At the same time, economic pressures, declining trust in institutions, the erosion of shared national narratives and increases in global mobility, temporary migration, digital polarisation, and foreign interference have all weakened the civic foundations that once supported social cohesion. Antisemitic tropes and hate speech have been on the rise internationally and these have been imported into Australia including through the ubiquity of social media and the functioning of its targeted algorithms.

Understanding this history and its contemporary dynamics is essential to addressing social cohesion and renewing the policy frameworks that have enabled Australia to manage diversity with relative success.

Response to the Terms of Reference

An overview of the social science research evidence

This section draws on a substantial body of international and Australian research across social science disciplines and summarises the key findings relevant to this submission.

- **Social cohesion is consistently understood as a multidimensional concept that combines trust, social connectedness, and shared belonging and cooperation, spanning both interpersonal (horizontal) and institutional (vertical) relationships.**^{1,2,3,4} These elements are mutually reinforcing, require active cultivation over time, and cannot be captured by a single measure or a simplistic definition. It does not imply an absence of conflict, rather the ability to live with cultural pluralism in a

respectful way.⁵ Social cohesion is a desirable social condition with important links to wellbeing and mental health.^{6,7}

- **The core components of social cohesion are distinct from its enabling conditions such as democratic institutions, civic space, and socio-economic conditions.** These conditions do not themselves constitute social cohesion, but they are foundational operating systems which provide the institutional framework that enables cohesion to develop and flourish.^{8,9}
- **Overly broad and inconsistently applied concepts of social cohesion which conflate enabling conditions with cohesion itself can weaken measurement and limit the development of effective policy interventions.** Governments, academics and communities have variously defined social cohesion in different ways, reflecting their distinct policy objectives, disciplinary approaches, and priorities. Current approaches to measuring social cohesion in Australia are fragmented and overly reliant on survey-based measures of individual attitudes, which, while useful for tracking broad trends, tend to overlook the relational and system-level nature of cohesion limiting their ability to diagnose drivers of cohesion or identify emerging risks.¹⁰
- **Forms of prejudice and racism, like antisemitism, are both a symptom and a stressor of cohesion. The relationship is bidirectional, whereby prejudice and racism emerge more readily in contexts of low social cohesion and at the same time the presence of both actively undermines social cohesion.**¹¹ However, antisemitism also operates as a distinct form of hatred with unique historical, ideological, and transnational dimensions, meaning it can escalate in ways not fully captured by general models of prejudice and racism. Major gaps remain in understanding how antisemitism, identity threat, and social cohesion dynamically interact—especially during periods of geopolitical conflict and democratic strain. The literature is particularly limited in longitudinal research, as well as in integrated Australian evidence linking social cohesion measures to contemporary forms of hate and polarisation.
- **Antisemitism, racism and other forms of prejudice directed at minority groups frequently overlap and reinforce one another.** They are shaped by broader social processes that construct and maintain racial and religious and other intergroup boundaries.^{12,13}
- **Overall, the scholarly literature converges on the importance of multi-level interventions, spanning institutions, civic discourse, education systems, and community relationships.** The strongest evidence from intervention studies points to two consistently effective strategies:
 - **Well-designed contact-based interventions and stereotype reduction** are the most effective strategies for strengthening cohesion, particularly over time.^{14,15,16,17} Social networks tend to be shaped by homophily—people interacting mainly with those like themselves—requiring deliberate opportunities for intergroup interactions. However, intergroup contact contributes to cohesion only when it is positive, meaningful, consistently applied, and institutionally supported.^{18,19} Interventions must be tailored to life stage, recognising that mechanisms differ between the understandings of children, adolescents, working-age adults, and older people.²⁰
 - **Norms, narratives and leadership.** While less extensively studied, the literature identifies leadership and discourse as critical system-level factors shaping cohesion that are often a key missing element in many interventions, particularly in setting group norms and values.^{21,22}
- **Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Australia cannot be disconnected from ongoing international conflicts, particularly in the Middle East and the broader rise of transnational Islamist and far-right extremism.** Major international conflicts can act as powerful catalysts or ‘trigger events’ that reshape domestic social dynamics, activating identity-based grievances, amplifying polarisation, and intensifying hostility toward specific communities. The evidence does not suggest uniform radicalisation, but rather selective escalation within already activated segments of the population, particularly where grievance narratives are reinforced by digital and transnational networks. This underscores that social cohesion must be understood not only as a domestic policy issue, but as one shaped by broader international dynamics including global social media.^{23,24 25}
- **Contemporary cultures of violence directed at identified groups are increasingly shaped and normalised in online environments.** Social media and online forums facilitate peer validation,

propaganda sharing, and gradual desensitisation to violent rhetoric, particularly among young people. These digital spaces lower barriers to entry, accelerate radicalisation, and enable hateful and violent worldviews to translate more readily into offline harms.²⁶

- **Political and online discourse can normalise and diffuse hatred across networks.** Consistent with global trends, Australian society is becoming increasingly polarised and socially insular. Escalatory rhetoric can follow an ‘outbidding logic’, where actors intensify positions to compete for support, contributing to polarisation and creating fertile ground for the spread of mis and dis-information. Antisemitism can be reinforced not only through direct statements but also through subtle signals like ‘dog-whistling’, especially in fast-moving crises where simplified narratives crowd out accurate information and are amplified in online environments.²⁷
- **Gender equality is a driver of social cohesion and conversely a preventative factor for violent extremism.** Gender equality strengthens national security and can reduce vulnerability to crisis-related shocks. Educating for gender equality within schools, religious communities and organisations is also a crucial strategy for promoting a culture of tolerance and peace and encouraging social cohesion. Given that many extremist ideologies are underpinned by beliefs about male superiority, strengthening community norms and institutions that promote gender equality can be an effective way to challenge extremist narratives and reduce their influence.^{28,29,30}
- **An almost 40-year Australian evidence base on radicalisation and extremism shows that most people with extremist beliefs never engage in violence, and that the drivers of belief are different from those that lead to violent action.** Radicalisation is better understood as a spectrum rather than a direct pathway to violence. However, much of this research predates the current environment of transnational, online-enabled extremism. Evaluations of countering violent extremism programs show modest but generally positive effects, particularly through case management, mentoring, and counselling that reduce escalation or support disengagement.³¹
- **Recent reforms to hate speech and hate crime laws, enacted rapidly across jurisdictions and accelerated in the wake of Bondi, have produced a complex and fragmented legal landscape.** This is generating both under-enforcement of genuinely harmful antisemitic conduct and over-enforcement that risks deterring lawful expression and democratic participation.³² There is almost non-existent evaluation evidence for measures banning slogans and symbols.³³

Evidence based principles for reform

The Academy recommends the following principles guide the Commission’s recommendations:

1. **System-level rather than siloed responses:** Effective responses require coordination both across jurisdictions and across institutional, educational, regulatory, and community domains, rather than fragmented interventions.
2. **Long-term, sustained interventions rather than short-term responses:** Effective approaches require consistency over time, rather than relying on time-limited or reactive measures.
3. **Dual framing of antisemitism:** Antisemitism should be treated as both as part of broader social cohesion efforts and as a distinct phenomenon requiring tailored responses, particularly where it intersects with international conflict, conspiracy narratives, and transnational ideological movements.
4. **Community partnership and shared responsibility:** Sustainable cohesion requires a bipartisan approach and shared ownership across government, civil society, and affected communities. Responses to antisemitism and racism should be co-designed with targeted communities and grounded in lived experience.
5. **Evidence-informed:** Interventions should be informed by the research and evidence from across disciplines, with ongoing evaluation of their effectiveness.
6. **Protection of democratic pluralism:** Responses must strengthen social cohesion without undermining freedom of expression, academic integrity, or legitimate democratic debate.

7. **Prevention over reaction:** Policy should prioritise early intervention, resilience-building, and norm-setting, rather than relying primarily on post-incident responses.

High-level recommendations: a proactive, multi-layered approach to strengthening social cohesion

Establish a national, preventative, system-based social cohesion framework

Antisemitism is both a safety issue and a cultural challenge. It is closely linked to broader patterns of social cohesion which are embedded in networks, institutions, and social norms, all of which are shaped by structural conditions and leadership. The key policy challenge is to address antisemitism within a system-wide framework that strengthens social cohesion, particularly at moments when it is under stress. Although the dynamics are complex, the translation of geopolitical conflict into localised hostility must be actively anticipated and mitigated to de-escalate tensions, maintain trust, and reinforce the norms and relationships that underpin a cohesive and resilient society. This requires institutions to anticipate and manage these ‘trigger events,’ not simply respond after escalation.

Both the *Multicultural Framework Review* and the *National Anti-Racism Framework* converge on the need for a nationally coordinated, community-led, and well-resourced policy architecture that integrates the interdependent processes of settlement, multiculturalism and interculturalism, strengthens institutions and actively builds inclusion and trust across society.³⁴

A coordinated national approach should be established through a multi-level governance model, including:

- **A central whole of government leadership and coordination body for social cohesion:** Responsibility for social cohesion is currently located within the Department of Home Affairs through the Office for Social Cohesion and the Office for Multicultural Affairs. This institutional arrangement tends to frame social cohesion primarily through the lenses of migration and national security, rather than as a whole of government, nation building priority and long-term public good. Fragmented responsibilities have proven insufficient. A dedicated national body or agency with the authority to coordinate policy, investment and accountability across departments, would provide the strategic leadership needed to strengthen social cohesion nationally. This function should not reside within the Department of Home Affairs.

Recommendation 2: Consolidate the functions of the Office of Social Cohesion and Office of Multicultural Affairs and governance roles envisaged by the *Multicultural Framework Review* and *National Anti-Racism Framework* into a dedicated national body or agency, which recognises social cohesion as a whole of government, nation building priority under a single coherent mandate.

- **Formalised cooperation between federal, state, and local governments:** This includes agreed frameworks for shared priorities, clear delineation of responsibilities, and mechanisms for joint implementation across jurisdictions. Given that many of the drivers and protective factors of social cohesion sit at state and local levels (including education systems, community services, law enforcement, local government programs, and legislation), formalised cooperation is essential to ensure a consistent approach.
- **Structurally genuine advisory pathways with communities and civil society groups:** Sustained engagement with communities and civil society groups, including those who provide direct community-based support and settlement services, is critical to the framework design and implementation. Engagement should invite and support the participation of Australians from every background to contribute to a shared democratic future. Schools, universities, media organisations, community groups, religious institutions, employers, and digital platforms all shape the environments in which democratic norms are reinforced or weakened.

- Regular public reporting on indicators of antisemitism and social cohesion health:** Measurement should shift towards a multi-source, network-based framework that integrates survey, administrative, and digital data to capture the quality, inclusivity, and durability of connections across society.³⁵ Regular reporting would also enable trend analysis over time, support early identification of risks, and provide a shared evidence base for coordination across levels of government and sectors.

Recommendation 3: Task the national body or agency with establishing a coordinated, adequately resourced, national social cohesion framework with clear leadership, accountability, and long-term planning. The framework should be evidence-informed, adaptive, and evaluated over time and developed in collaboration with community organisations and all levels of government.

Recommendation 4: Promote an evidence-informed understanding of social cohesion as a dynamic, multidimensional condition built through shared values, trust, and everyday interactions and shaped by enabling conditions such as democratic institutions, civic space, and socio-economic drivers.

Recommendation 5: The Australian Government progress a national social cohesion measurement framework that expands on attitudinal surveys and separates cohesion outcomes from its enabling conditions, to support more targeted and evidence-informed policy and the ability to distinguish between episodic fluctuations and structural changes in social cohesion over time.

Civil discourse is a foundation for social cohesion and democratic resilience, particularly in times of crisis

Civil discourse is the cornerstone of social cohesion and a defining feature of a healthy democracy. It enables disagreement to be expressed through respectful debate, sustains trust in democratic institutions, and supports societies to respond constructively during periods of social tension.

Political leadership plays a critical role in fostering civil discourse and shaping how communities interpret and respond to crises and contested public issues. The obligation to foster public safety in all forms of communication is recognised in the [Behaviour Code for Australian Parliamentarians](#) which highlights as leaders in the community Parliamentarians ‘have a leading role to play in fostering a healthy, safe, respectful and inclusive environment where all people feel safe and valued.’

The political response to the Bondi terrorist attack was notably more partisan and polarised than responses to previous national tragedies, such as the Port Arthur massacre and the Lindt Café siege. Rather than fostering a sustained period of bipartisan unity and measured communication, the aftermath quickly became entangled in questions of personal blame, ideological contestation, and political accountability. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese acknowledged this dynamic, noting ‘I certainly do regret the politicisation of this issue.’³⁶ **The politicisation of traumatic events risks inflaming social tensions at moments when social cohesion is most needed.**

Generally, discussions about social cohesion must begin from positions of shared values and common purpose, rather than emphasising difference, particularly following a trigger event or national crises. Across partisan boundaries, politicians must engage in civil discourse and avoid rhetoric that inflames social tensions.

At the same time, the evidence highlights the importance of distinguishing between antisemitic narratives and legitimate political expression, including criticism of Israel and Zionism, to avoid conflating different forms of speech in ways that can inflame tensions or obscure genuine harms.

Recommendation 6: The Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments adopt coordinated rapid-response social cohesion strategies following major incidents, including those arising from international conflicts with domestic impacts. These strategies should incorporate bipartisan public communication protocols, structured engagement with community leaders, and targeted measures to counter misinformation and disinformation in order to de-escalate tensions and maintain public trust.

Laws and policies must be fit-for-purpose and avoid over-reach

An inclusive society must act against behaviours that are harmful and divisive. This requires unacceptable behaviour to be called out and, in certain circumstances, criminalised. Responding effectively to antisemitism and other forms of hate requires a balanced approach that protects both social cohesion and freedom of expression.

Australia has recently experienced a rapid expansion of hate speech and hate crime laws, including increased criminalisation and new offences. This surge has created legal complexity and public confusion, resulting in both under-enforcement and over-enforcement.³⁷ For example, on her platform [Constitutional Clarion](#), Academy Fellow Professor Emerita Ann Twomey discusses the problems caused by the expansion of laws in Queensland to ban the symbols of prescribed organisations and certain political slogans.

There are also risks associated with criminalising language, as the meaning of words is not fixed but shaped by context, audience, and evolving social norms. Terms that are widely understood as harmful in one moment may shift in meaning or be reclaimed by targeted communities. This creates challenges for law enforcement and courts, which must interpret intent and harm in fluid and contested contexts.

Evidence suggests that further expansion of criminal law should be approached with caution. On its own, it is unlikely to be effective and may create unintended consequences, including diverting resources and eroding public trust. Instead, policy should focus on improving the operation of existing frameworks, focus on uniformity across jurisdictions and adopting multi-layered, whole-of-society approaches. These should combine proportionate legal measures with prevention, education, and community-led interventions.

Recommendation 7: The Australian Government commission a comprehensive audit of hate speech laws across Australia, with the intention of moving towards uniformity across jurisdictions, and publish a clear, accessible summary of their scope and key parameters on relevant government websites.

Recommendation 8: The Australian Government in partnership with state and territory governments improve clarity and consistency in the application of hate speech laws by strengthening guidance and education for both the public and law enforcement on legal thresholds and definitions, informed by robust scholarship, research, and understandings of what constitutes hate speech.

There is an opportunity to build intercultural understanding in education settings

Educational institutions are settings that can contribute to, or help mitigate, the development of prejudice, racism and reduced social cohesion. The Academy recognises that school-based responses to antisemitism will be a central focus of the Antisemitism Education Taskforce and antisemitism at Australian universities was the subject of recent inquiry by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights.

Intercultural Understanding is one of seven General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum, intended to help students reflect on culture, engage with diversity, and navigate intercultural contexts. However, as widely noted in curriculum reviews and education research, these capabilities are not consistently assessed or

embedded across subjects, meaning they are often treated as optional ‘add-ons.’ This weakens their practical impact and limits their role in building the intercultural skills needed for social cohesion.

Curriculum reform must consider how intercultural capabilities are interpreted and taught in Australian schools, so that they more effectively respond to the social challenges facing the nation, including rising antisemitism. Building social cohesion requires more than awareness of diversity; it requires students to engage with difference through interaction, collaboration, and shared problem-solving. Research evidence confirms that a key risk of **calling out a specific form like antisemitism in isolation can reinforce the very problem the curriculum is meant to address** if it is taught as something abstract, exceptional, or detached from everyday experience. Without embedding it in wider discussions of racism and social cohesion, teaching may fail to equip students to recognise and respond to prejudice in real-world situations.^{38,39}

At the same time, strengthening civil discourse is critical. Civics and Citizenship education build students’ knowledge and understanding of Australia’s democratic system, including its institutions and processes, and supports active and informed citizenship. However, it places less explicit emphasis on the skills that underpin democratic culture, particularly deliberation, debate and respectful engagement with contested issues. These capabilities are not clearly embedded in current achievement standards.

[From Classroom to Community Civics education and political participation in Australia](#) highlighted challenges faced by teachers in leading debates on political and social issues through an ‘open classroom climate’ that fosters respectful dialogue. The Committee recommended that the Australian Government mandate debate-based education in all national professional development for humanities and social sciences teachers.

Experience from implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority confirms that simply including these topics in the curriculum is insufficient: teacher capability and confidence are decisive. Many educators lack the support, training, and resources to facilitate complex discussions about racism and social division, leading to uneven implementation and, in some cases, avoidance.⁴⁰

Recommendation 9: The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority embed antisemitism education within strengthened intercultural capability in the Australian Curriculum, along with explicit teaching of democratic culture and respectful dialogue skills, and support this through sustained investment in teacher capability, including professional development, high-quality curriculum resources, and clear guidance for facilitating discussions on contested issues.

Universities face particular challenges in responding consistently to forms of prejudice and racism, including balancing academic freedom with the need to prevent harm. At the same time, universities are well placed to strengthen social cohesion by modelling respectful dialogue, supporting diversity, and helping people manage disagreement in constructive ways.

The evidence suggests that addressing antisemitism is not a standalone task but needs system-wide action to strengthen broader institutional capacity to respond to racism and social division. Approaches that are most effective embed antisemitism within wider inclusion and equity frameworks, invest in staff and student training, support respectful but robust debate, and build campus cultures where difference can be engaged constructively rather than lead to exclusion. [A Framework for Addressing Antisemitism in Australian Universities](#) developed by the Monash Initiative for Rapid Research into Antisemitism provides a practical, evidence-based example of this kind of whole-of-institution approach and is recommended as a model of good practice for the Royal Commission’s consideration. The Academy welcomes the 2026–27 Federal Budget investment in the Monash Initiative for Rapid Research into Antisemitism and supports its role in strengthening Australia’s evidence base on antisemitism.

Recommendation 10: Consider promoting established frameworks, such as the Monash Initiative for Rapid Research into Antisemitism *Framework for addressing antisemitism in Australian universities*, as an example of good practice in integrating prevention, response, and cultural change across the higher education sector.

Strengthening national research capability for social cohesion

Independent research makes a critical contribution to informed public debate, public policy, and program evaluation. The social conditions that produce or undermine social cohesion are not self-evident; they require sustained empirical attention and the capacity to translate evidence into responsive policy and practice.

Australia has an active but fragmented research landscape on social cohesion, characterised by strong individual programs of inquiry but lacking a coordinated national framework to align priorities. A recent scoping review found there is limited integration across existing research efforts, significant gaps in data and unanswered questions, and no comprehensive synthesis of findings across domains and disciplines.⁴¹ Research efforts rely on philanthropic and competitive grant funding, and are dispersed and often siloed, thereby creating significant challenges for the continuity and coordination of social cohesion research in Australia.

In the recent [Statement of Expectations](#) issued to the Australian Research Council, the Minister for Education Jason Clare emphasised that keeping Australians safe is the Australian Government's highest priority and that 'achieving this relies on the contributions of the Australian research community including research that supports our inclusive national identity built around our shared values including democracy.'

Yet **Australia's research capability in this area is being left to chance.** Although [Australia's National Science and Research Priorities](#) include 'Priority 5: Building a secure and resilient nation,' none of the critical research areas address a social cohesion agenda. Any recognition of research related to social cohesion, multiculturalism or citizenship is entirely absent from the [Ambitious Australia](#) National Innovation Pillars.

Over the past 13 years the Parliament has addressed this issue repeatedly, without progress. Successive inquiries into various dimensions of multiculturalism and nationhood have all returned remarkably consistent findings: **the need for a coordinated, resourced, and independent national research capability.** For example:

- [2013 Joint Standing Committee on Migration inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia](#) recommendation 15: the establishment of a government funded, independent collaborative institute for excellence in research into multicultural affairs with functions similar to that of the former Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (p. 130).
- [2017 Senate Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism](#) recommendation 13: that the Australian Government consider establishing an independent and resourced body, such as a National Centre for multiculturalism and religious diversity, to provide strategic and coordinated research into the areas of multiculturalism and religious diversity. (p.88).
- [2021 Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee inquiry into Nationhood, national identity and democracy](#) recommendation 8: the Australian government establishes and resources a national research centre on migration, citizenship and social cohesion, to monitor: flows of migration and migrant settlement; issues of diversity and cohesion; affiliation and identity; civic participation and engagement; evaluation of service provision and access; and gaps in existing research (p. 119)

The *Multicultural Framework Review* has prompted renewed discussion, recommending that the Australian Government progress implementation of a multicultural research framework to support data and research (Recommendation 28, p. 127).

In a supporting paper *Research strategies for multicultural Australia* (Appendix D), Academy Fellow Professor Andrew Jakubowicz concluded that a fit-for-purpose framework would be best delivered through a 'hub and spoke' model that supports collaboration, provides stable funding, and connects a broad network of

stakeholders across research, policy, and community sectors. Such a model would integrate foundational research, longitudinal data collection, rapid policy advice, and public engagement, helping to overcome fragmentation in Australia’s current research landscape.

Recommendation 11: The Australian Government signal to the research community and funders that projects addressing social cohesion are a national priority by explicitly incorporating social cohesion into the *National Science and Research Priorities* and implementation of the *Ambitious Australia* report.

Recommendation 12: The Australian Government establish and fund a national hub-and-spoke collaborative research institute on social cohesion to coordinate a sustained, policy-relevant national research agenda, bringing together universities, community organisations, and government.

Invest in locally led intercultural dialogue and deliberative interventions

Research evidence consistently shows that social cohesion does not arise automatically from diversity; rather, it depends on whether people form meaningful relationships across group boundaries. This means that passive coexistence is insufficient: without deliberate opportunities for interaction, underlying identity boundaries and distrust can persist or deepen.

While intergroup contact can reduce prejudice, its effectiveness depends on how it is designed. Locally led intercultural dialogue and deliberative interventions create structured, repeated opportunities for engagement across communities and are most effective when embedded in everyday institutions such as schools, universities, and community organisations. Programs such as interfaith dialogue events, facilitated deliberative forums, and school- or community-based contact initiatives demonstrate that when interaction is intentional, supported, and ongoing, it can reduce prejudice and strengthen trust.

Women-led interfaith and intercultural dialogue initiatives are widely recognised as high-impact approaches to strengthening social cohesion, particularly in contexts marked by identity-based division or post-conflict recovery. Examples such as [Bat Shalom of the North](#) in Israel–Palestine, [Finland’s Dialogue for Peace](#) National Dialogues model, and the [Solidarity Dialogue](#) initiatives in Sarajevo demonstrate how women-led or women-centred facilitation can translate interpersonal understanding into broader community resilience. These initiatives tend to be effective because they centre lived experience, prioritise relational trust-building, and create structured spaces where participants can engage across difference on an equal footing.

However, existing efforts in Australia remain fragmented and often under-resourced, with limited evaluation and scaling of effective models. A stronger, nationally supported but locally delivered approach is needed—one that enables communities to design interventions suited to their own contexts. This should include sustained funding, partnerships with community organisations, and integration with education and social policy settings to ensure interventions are not isolated but part of a broader cohesion framework.

Recommendation 13: The Australian Government fund and scale well-designed, evidence-based contact interventions that foster meaningful intergroup relationships, particularly within shared institutions and everyday interaction spaces such as schools, workplaces, and community programs that foster meaningful, repeated contact.

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- ¹ Joseph Chan, Ho Pong To and Elaine Chan, 'Reconsidering social cohesion: developing a definition and analytical framework for empirical research', *Social Indicators Research*, 2006, vol. 75, no. 2, pp 273–302, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27522534>.
- ² Georgi Dragolov et al., 'Theoretical framework of the Social Cohesion Radar', in *Social cohesion in the Western world*, Springer, Cham, 2016.
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