

From: s 47F
To: [Leanne Smith](#); [Giridharan Sivaraman](#); [Hugh de Kretser](#)
Cc: s 47F
Subject: RE: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 4 October 2024 2:39:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.jpg](#)

Yes of course.

Just to clarify, I am holding off upload to as soon as Hugh provides confirmation.

Cheers,

s 47F

Australian Human Rights Commission

GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

s 47F

www.humanrights.gov.au

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.



From: Leanne Smith s 47F

Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 2:39 PM

s47 F [redacted] Giridharan Sivaraman

s47F [redacted] Hugh de Kretser

s47F [redacted]

s 47F

Subject: RE: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]

I expect we will also be sharing this with all staff, as usual practice?

Best,

L

s 47F

Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 2:22 PM

To: Giridharan Sivaraman

s 47F

de Kretser

s 47F

s 47F

Subject: RE: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Will do, Giri, I'm uploading this now.

s 47F

Australian Human Rights Commission

GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

s 47F

[humanrights.gov.au](https://www.humanrights.gov.au)

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From: Giridharan Sivaraman s 47F

Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 2:11 PM

To: Hugh de Kretser s47F

Subject: RE: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]

That's fine thanks. s47F can you pls email me the link to the statement once released so I can push out on LinkedIn later today? Thanks.

From: Hugh de Kretser s 47F

Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 1:58 PM

To: Giridharan Sivaraman s 47F

s 47F

Subject: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Giri – see minor mark ups – just making sure you're happy with these. Let us (comms team cced) if you are. Hoping to send it before 3pm.

Hugh

Hugh de Kretser (He/Him)

President of the Australian Human Rights Commission

Australian Human Rights Commission

Level 19, 175 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000

GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

s 47F

s 47F

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We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Gadigal peoples of the Eora Nation,
and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and future.

There is no expectation that you read or respond to this email outside your normal working hours.

From: [Media AHRC](#)
To: [All Commission](#)
Subject: AHRC President reiterates calls for upholding human rights as violence in the Middle East escalates [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 4 October 2024 3:43:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

Good afternoon, colleagues,

AHRC President Hugh de Kretser has [just issued a statement](#) reiterating calls for the upholding of human rights and international humanitarian law, as the violence in the Middle East escalates and the anniversary of the 7 October attacks by Hamas and ensuing response by Israel approaches.

Hope you have a safe and enjoyable long weekend.

Kind regards,

S 47F

Australian Human Rights Commission

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S 47F

humanrights.gov.au

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From: s 47F
To: [Hugh de Kretser](#)
Cc: s47F
Subject: EJAC response to AHRC media release dated 4 October
Date: Thursday, 10 October 2024 10:37:05 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[2024_10_10_letter_to_AHRC.pdf](#)

s 47F

[Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Hugh,

I hope all is well with you.

I am attaching a copy of a letter from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry in response to the AHRC's media release dated 4 October 2024.

This response is provided in the spirit of constructive and honest dialogue, and we hope that you will see it as such.

Kind regards,

s 47F

Executive Council of Australian Jewry

s 47F

w: www.ecaj.org.au





10 October 2024

Mr Hugh de Kretser
President
Australian Human Rights Commission
GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Email: **S 47F**

Dear Hugh,

I am writing in response to the [AHRC's media release](#) which was published around 6.00pm on Friday, 4th October, and was titled 'Commission President reiterates calls for upholding human rights as violence in the Middle East escalates' (**Release**). The Release highlights some of the issues we have previously raised with you which we believe have undermined the Australian Jewish community's confidence and trust in the Australian Human Rights Commission (**AHRC**). Those issues include the following:

Firstly, the Release was very poorly timed. The Jewish Sabbath starts at sundown on Friday, and Friday 4 October was also the second day of Rosh Hashanah – Jewish new year - one of our High Holy Days. For observant Jews, and for any representative Jewish organisations, the Release would not have been accessible until sundown on Saturday, 5 October. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (**ECAJ**), the peak, elected, representative body of the Australian Jewish Community, was therefore unable to engage with the content, or raise any issues in the release. Given that the Release purported to address, among other things, the anniversary of the 7 October launching of 5000 rockets into Israel, the massacres, rapes and hostage-taking by Hamas in southern Israel, as well as the massive upsurge in incidents of antisemitism in Australia, the decision to publish it at a time when Jewish organisations and many Australian Jews were unlikely or unable to access it, was at best misconceived and at worst, remarkably insensitive especially for a human rights organisation.

Secondly, there are several factual inaccuracies and omissions in the Release. For example, it cannot be said that 7 October is the date of 'the start of Israel's devastating and continuing response', because for the first few days the IDF's focus was on clearing the terrorists from Israeli territory.

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Jewish Community Council of WA
Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies
Jewish Community Council of SA
Hobart Hebrew Congregation
ACT Jewish Community

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Australian Federation of WIZO
Union for Progressive Judaism
Federation of Jewish Aged Car Services
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Jewish National Fund of Australia
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Federation of Australian Jewish
Ex-Service Associations
New Zealand Jewish Council
Zionist Federation of Australia
Council of Orthodox Synagogues
of Australia



The Release also states that “The toll of human suffering and death across Israel, Gaza and now Lebanon is horrifying”. There is no mention of the words ‘terror’, ‘terrorism’, or ‘Hezbollah’ or the fact that Hamas and Hezbollah, which each initiated war with Israel, are listed terrorist organisations under Australian law. This omission conveys a false impression that Israel is at war with the civilian population of Gaza and Lebanon.

The Release calls for a ceasefire, but makes no mention of the fact that prior to the Hamas-led atrocities on 7 October 2023, there were ceasefires in place between Israel and both Hamas and Hezbollah and that Israel neither provoked Hamas prior to 7 October nor Hezbollah prior to its barrage of rocket attacks into Israel that commenced on 8 October 2023 and which Hezbollah has frequently stated are a show of solidarity with Hamas. These rocket attacks, which to date exceed 8,000, have resulted in the displacement of more than 68,000 civilians from Israel’s north, while the 7 October massacre led to the displacement of more than 75,000 civilians from Israel’s south.

Thirdly, the Release seems to equate the surge in antisemitism in Australia over the last year with “Islamophobia and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism.” This flies in the face of the empirical data. In the month after October 7, in Victoria alone, Victoria Police reported:

“Of the 84 reports made in Victoria since [Hamas’ deadly attack on southern Israel](#) and the Netanyahu government’s subsequent decision to launch airstrikes and a ground invasion in Gaza, 72 were for antisemitism and 12 were for Islamophobia.” The Age: <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/at-least-10-arrests-made-amid-spate-of-antisemitism-islamophobia-reports-20231109-p5eiqb.html>

And more recently, *“Between 7 October 2023 and 11 June 2024, Operation Park has been notified of **197** incidents, with **88** reports relating to antisemitic incidents and **16** reports relating to Islamophobia”*: <https://jccv.org.au/statement-from-victoria-police/>

Fourthly, the final four paragraphs of the Release are quite at odds with the position that you articulated to the ECAJ on our call with you on 12 September, in which you stated that the AHRC’s remit did not extend to commentary on international conflicts and events, except to the extent that there were clear domestic implications in the human rights areas in which the AHRC focuses.

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Joint Distribution Committee Australia

OBSERVERS
Council of Progressive Rabbis
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Ex-Service Associations
New Zealand Jewish Council
Zionist Federation of Australia
Council of Orthodox Synagogues
of Australia

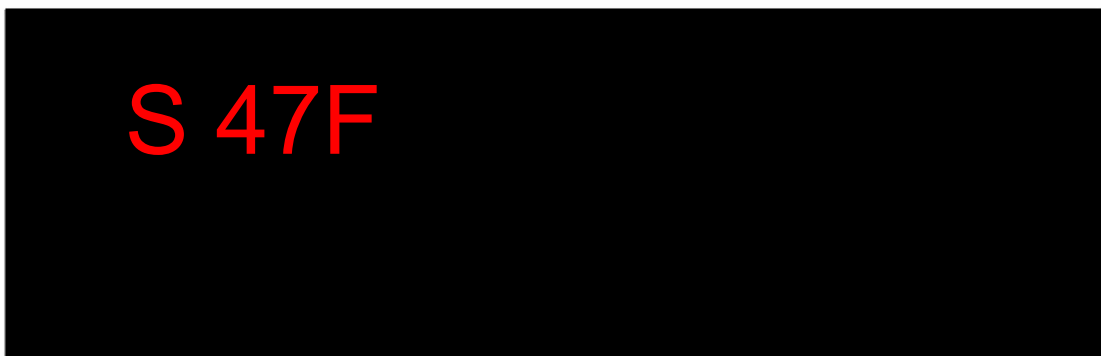


The conflict between Israel, Hamas and Hezbollah has had implications in Australia, such as the surge in antisemitism which the ECAJ and others have documented, and the undermining of social cohesion by certain protest activities. On such matters, we accept that the AHRC has a legitimate role to play. However, the Release also ventured into: commentary on Australia’s foreign policy in relation to the conflict; expressing uncritical support for the [Advisory Opinion](#) of the International Court of Justice; and citing the highly polemical statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. With respect, these are all matters which go beyond the AHRC’s articulation of its own [remit](#).

Finally, the Release states that “The Commission has been funded to undertake a program of community engagement and awareness raising about racism to support safety in Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim and Arab communities across Australia.” Having regard to the timing of the Release, the lack of any consultation with us as the peak Australian Jewish representative body in the lead-up to the anniversary of the most traumatic day for world Jewry since the end of the Holocaust, we also fail to see how the Release would improve community engagement, increase awareness-raising about racism, or achieve the goal of making Jewish communities feel safe. It had the contrary effect.

This response is provided in the spirit of constructive and honest dialogue, and we hope that you will see it as such. In our previous conversations we thought we had made it clear that you are always welcome to contact us to discuss issues that are or might be of special interest to the Jewish community. Had the ECAJ been consulted beforehand about both the content and the timing of the Release, we believe the deficiencies we have outlined could have been avoided, or at least ameliorated.

Yours sincerely,



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of Australia

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From: Media AHRC s 47F

Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 3:44 PM

To: All Commission s 47F

Subject: AHRC President reiterates calls for upholding human rights as violence in the Middle East escalates [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Good afternoon, colleagues,

AHRC President Hugh de Kretser has [just issued a statement](#) reiterating calls for the upholding of human rights and international humanitarian law, as the violence in the Middle East escalates and the anniversary of the 7 October attacks by Hamas and ensuing response by Israel approaches.

Hope you have a safe and enjoyable long weekend.

Kind regards,

s 47F

humanrights.gov.au

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.



From: s 47F
To: [Hugh de Kretser](#)
Cc: [Leanne Smith](#)
Subject: RE: EJAC response to AHRC media release dated 4 October [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Monday, 14 October 2024 12:58:26 PM
Attachments: [image002.jpg](#)
[image003.png](#)

Hi Hugh,

Just confirming that the statement went live on our website at 3:39pm on Friday 4 October.
The email alerting all staff to the media statement was sent at 3:44pm.

s 47E(d)

Please let me know if you need any further info.

s 47F
S 47F

Australian Human Rights Commission

GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

s 47F

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From: Hugh de Kretser s 47F
Sent: Thursday, 10 October 2024 2:03 PM
To: S 47F Leanne Smith
S 47F Giridharan Sivaraman
S 47F
Subject: Fw: EJAC response to AHRC media release dated 4 October

s 47E(d)

Hugh

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s 47F

Sent: Thursday, October 10, 2024 10:36:34 AM

To: Hugh de Kretser S 47F

s 47F

Subject: EJAC response to AHRC media release dated 4 October

s 47F

[Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Hugh,

I hope all is well with you.

I am attaching a copy of a letter from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry in response to the AHRC's media release dated 4 October 2024.

This response is provided in the spirit of constructive and honest dialogue, and we hope that you will see it as such.

Kind regards,

s 47F

Executive Council of Australian Jewry

s 47F

w: www.ecaj.org.au



From: [Hugh de Kretser](#)
To: [Commissioners](#)
Cc: **S 47F** [Leanne Smith](#)
Subject: Draft minutes of today's Commissioner meeting [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 4 October 2024 10:28:00 AM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.png](#)

S 47C

Hugh

- [24.10.04 Minutes Commissioner meeting 4 October 2024.docx](#)
- [24.10.01 Statement on Israel and Palestine.docx](#)

Hugh de Kretser (He/Him)

President of the Australian Human Rights Commission

Australian Human Rights Commission

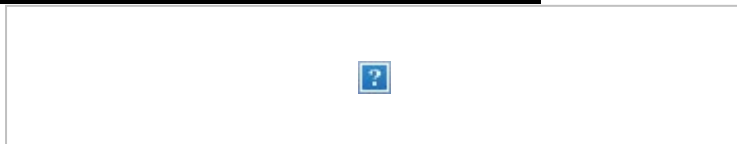
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S 47F

S 47F

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and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and future.

There is no expectation that you read or respond to this email outside your normal working hours.

From: [Hugh de Kretser](#)
To: [Commissioners](#)
Cc: [Leanne Smith](#); [Lorraine Finlay](#); [Giridharan Sivaraman](#); [Rosemary Kayess](#); [Robert Fitzgerald](#); [Anna Cody](#); [Anne Hollonds](#)
Subject: Commissioner's fortnightly meeting (RESCHEDULED due to public holiday) [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hi all,

This meeting was moved from 7 October as it is a NSW public holiday. Due to diary problems, we need to keep it to 1 hour. Agenda is:

- * Attendance and apologies
- * Previous minutes 24.09.23 Minutes Commissioner meeting 23 September 2024.docx
<https://australianhrc.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/CommissionersWorkspace/ERJDrUkH_b1OjhoNjN8Aj14BeTOvLvKFqCleNk5oo412NQ?e=5VvyTx>
- * Possible statement on Middle East conflict 24.10.01 Statement on Israel and Palestine.docx
<<https://australianhrc.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/CommissionersWorkspace/EfD2OWuX33tFvR-lZospq4cBUd-IFLEZeNeqqAH-NUqAlw?e=WpUbam>>
- * Remuneration tribunal travel guidelines
- * Debrief from staff meeting and agreed actions Staff census presentation.docx
<https://australianhrc.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/President/Ed8k204X8Z9OvHvU393PRUIBb5vvWay_cRBhWqcXDbKq1Q?e=reCMIO>
- * Other business and future agenda items (approach to campaigns, Human Resources data, APS diversity targets, 360 feedback, intern program update, retreat outcomes, governance review, communication approval process, risk appetite)



From: [Hugh de Kretser](#)
To: **S47 F**
Subject: Palestine statement [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 4 October 2024 1:39:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.jpg](#)

[24.10.01 Statement on Israel and Palestine.docx](#)

Hugh de Kretser (He/Him)

President of the Australian Human Rights Commission

Australian Human Rights Commission

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[REDACTED]

From: Hugh de Kretser
Sent: Monday, 14 October 2024 4:53 PM
To: s47F [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: EJAC response to AHRC media release dated 4 October [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: AHRC response to Question on Notices - Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2) 300924.docx

Dear s 47F [REDACTED]

Thank you for your letter and the spirit in which it was provided. I'm sorry the statement was received this way.

I'm advised that the statement was published on our website at 3.39pm that day and shared with staff shortly afterwards, but I understand your criticism of the timing. In part, we wanted to respond to the issues that were live that day around whether or not to restrict protests.

I'd be happy to meet to discuss your feedback on the statement and I can explain our approach on international issues. Let me know if you'd like to do this and I can send through some suggested times.

Separately, you probably saw our [opening statement](#) before the recent inquiry hearing on the universities bill. I'm sharing it in case you haven't. We were also asked by Senator Scarr to respond to criticisms of the AHRC in your submission to the inquiry. Our response is attached for your information.

Regards

Hugh

From: s47F [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 10 October 2024 10:37 AM
To: Hugh de Kretser s 47F [REDACTED]
s47F [REDACTED]
Subject: EJAC response to AHRC media release dated 4 October

You don't often get email from s47F [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Hugh,

I hope all is well with you.

I am attaching a copy of a letter from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry in response to the AHRC's media release dated 4 October 2024.

This response is provided in the spirit of constructive and honest dialogue, and we hope that you will see it as such.

Kind regards,

S 47F

Executive Council of Australian Jewry

S47F

w: www.ecaj.org.au



Statement: Inquiry into antisemitism at Australian Universities

 Rights and Freedoms

Friday 27 September, 2024



Opening statement by President Hugh de Kretser to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Inquiry into the proposed Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill (2024)

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. I acknowledge we are meeting on Aboriginal land, in my case the land of the Bunurong / Boonwurrung people of the Kulin Nation.

Antisemitism is a matter of grave concern to the Commission.

Antisemitism harms people's identity and self-esteem.

It creates stigma, shame and fear.

It damages people's health and wellbeing and denies them full participation in life.

It corrodes social cohesion and left unchecked it can lead to violence.

There has been widespread reporting of a significant rise in incidents of antisemitism across communities and specifically at universities and it must be condemned.

For example, the Commission has heard that students have reported witnessing Holocaust denial and hearing antisemitic tropes. Students have told us about the ways in which they have changed their behaviour because of these experiences of antisemitism. This inquiry has heard evidence of Nazi graffiti and gestures.

The many submissions to this inquiry bear witness to the human impact of antisemitism at universities.

We thank everyone who has shared their submissions. In addition to assisting this inquiry, your submissions will help the Commission's work.

The Commission's work is strongly focused on addressing racism. The Commission's access to justice work investigates and conciliates complaints of racial discrimination and racial vilification under the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth). Complaints that are not resolved through our processes can be taken for determination through the Federal Court system.

Through the Commission's policy work addressing racism we are looking at the prevalence, nature and impact of antisemitism in Australia to highlight the scale of the problem and provide lasting solutions to address it.

For example, the Commission is currently working on a National Anti-Racism Strategy, which includes a National Anti-Racism Framework, and anti-racism public awareness and education campaign.

The Commission has also been funded by the Australian Government to conduct a Study into the Prevalence and Impact of Racism in Australian Universities.

This study implements a recommendation of the Universities Accord. It will have a significant focus on antisemitism, as well as racism against First Nations people and Islamophobia. The Commission's legislation has strong provisions to protect confidential information shared with us through the study.

The Commission has also been funded to undertake a program of community engagement and awareness raising about racism to support safety in Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim and Arab communities in Australia.

It is a matter for the Australian Government and Parliament to consider the most appropriate approach to address the surge in antisemitism and other forms of racism in Australia, and what additional steps it may take to address it.

The Commission recognises the significant concerns that have been raised and the importance of taking action. The proposed judicial inquiry is one way to do this and should be considered within a broader framework of measures designed to address antisemitism, and racism more broadly.

If the proposed Judicial Commission is established, the Commission would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with it in addressing antisemitism in Australia.

Tags

[Civil and Political Rights \(/about/news?keys=Civil and Political Rights\)](/about/news?keys=Civil and Political Rights)

[Commission – General \(/about/news?keys=Commission – General\)](/about/news?keys=Commission – General)

[Race Discrimination \(/about/news?keys=Race Discrimination\)](/about/news?keys=Race Discrimination)



Australian Human Rights Commission response to Question on Notices.

RE: Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee's inquiry into the Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2) public hearing in Canberra on 20 September 2024.

Question 1: Muslim Votes Matter response

Hansard text:

Senator SCARR: There was also a concern, raised by the witness representing Muslim Votes Matter, with respect to an engagement with the Australian Human Rights Commission. It would be useful to give the Australian Human Rights Commission an opportunity to respond to that concern.

Australian Human Rights Commission response:

The Australian Human Rights Commission was not aware of concerns expressed by Muslim Votes Matter prior to this inquiry and is not aware what Muslim Votes Matter was referring to around individuals and groups they have supported raising matters with the Commission. Accordingly, the Commission is unable to respond to the concerns at this time.

More broadly, one of the Commission's core statutory functions is to inquire into and conciliate complaints of alleged discrimination and human rights breaches occurring in areas of public life covered by the laws we administer. Every complaint received by the Commission must be assessed according to the requirements of these laws. Sometimes the subject matter of a complaint does not come within the Commission's complaint handling jurisdiction and if that is the case, the Commission will explain why and try to make a targeted referral to an organisation that may be better placed to assist.

Question 2: 13 October Statement

Senator HENDERSON: On 13 October, when the AHRC handed down its statement, was that a statement that was viewed and cleared by all commissioners before its release? I'll perhaps direct that to you, Mr de Kretser, even though I know you weren't there at the time.

Mr de Kretser: It's before my time. I think my colleagues will know the background to what you're referring to better than I will.

Senator HENDERSON: I might ask Mrs Finlay. Was that a statement that you viewed and cleared?

Mrs Finlay: In relation to that specific statement—and I'm not meaning to not give an answer—could I take it on notice to remind myself? There were a number of



statements, and I want to make sure that I'm giving you accurate information about that.

Senator HENDERSON: Alright. It's the statement of 13 October. It was obviously six days after the Hamas terrorist attack. Then the Sydney Opera House riots occurred on 9 October. Does that help you at all?

Mrs Finlay: It does, but I'd still like, if I may, to take that on notice to make sure you're getting accurate information.

Australian Human Rights Commission response:

The statement published on 13 October 2023 was a statement issued by the President of the Australian Human Rights Commission and Acting Race Discrimination Commissioner, Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher AM. It was not a statement on behalf of other Commissioners and accordingly did not require their approval.

Question 3: Executive Council of Australian Jewry concerns

Senator SCARR: On notice, it would be useful to get your response to the submission we received from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry in relation to that issue—their perceptions of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Australian Human Rights Commission response:

The submission from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) raises a number of concerns. Some of these concerns have been addressed previously in Senate Estimates. The Commission has attempted to summarise the concerns *in italics* below and outlined the Commission's response to them.

The terms of the government's announcement and the Commission's public statement, indicate that antisemitism will not be a strong focus of the Commission's study into racism at universities.

The Commission is committed to working with stakeholders such as ECAJ in progressing our Study into racism in the university sector. Antisemitism will be a key area of focus of the Study and we will engage with Jewish students and staff as part of our work.

The Commission's record of public statements and action in the face of the unprecedented surge of antisemitism that has occurred in Australia, especially since 7 October 2023, has been conspicuously deficient.

In its National Anti-Racism Framework Scoping Report released in December 2022 the Commission recognised antisemitism and racist extremism as one of the drivers in its call for the Framework's development. The Commission continues to support



communities affected by antisemitism. It continues to hear about the alarming antisemitism experienced by Jewish Australians in both the physical and online world.

Since October 2023 the Commission has been consulting with a range of individuals and organisations around the impact of the Israel-Hamas conflict on communities, in workplaces and in education and healthcare settings including Jewish academics, antisemitism experts and representative bodies. The Commission has engaged with Commonwealth and State and Territory government departments, health providers, educational institutions and other government service providers about addressing antisemitism. These engagements have been conducted both at the request of stakeholders and initiated by the Commission. These consultations, meetings and discussions are informing the Commission's planning on the types of information and support the Commission can provide to communities and ways the concerning rise in antisemitism can be addressed through public education. They have also resulted in the Commission providing support and referrals to organisations, workplaces and individuals around combatting antisemitism.

The Commission is also supporting people affected by racial discrimination and racial vilification through the Commission's dedicated information and complaint handling services.

The Race Discrimination Commissioner, Giridharan Sivaraman has engaged significantly on the issue of antisemitism. In addition to leading the projects and the engagements listed above, the Commissioner in May 2024 wrote an opinion article in *The Mandarin*, condemning antisemitism and anti-Palestinian racism being seen on university campuses and explaining and announcing the Commission's work on the Study. In addition, in an op-ed published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in May, he called out an increase in antisemitism.

Other Commissioners have also engaged on this issue, for example, in March the Human Rights Commissioner, Lorraine Finlay, wrote an opinion article in *The Nightly* on the rise of anti-Semitism in Australia. The new President, Hugh de Kretser, spoke about the need to address the rise in antisemitism in a speech at the Holocaust Museum.

Relevant Commission public statements include:

2023

- [*13 October Media release President calls for human rights in Australia to be upheld in wake of Middle East conflict*](#)
- [*23 November Op ed As the Israel-Palestine crisis continues, Australians must not allow anguish or fury to overwhelm us by Rosalind Croucher*](#)

2024

- [*26 January Statement on the ruling of the International Court of Justice*](#)



- [19 February Media release *Anti-racism grant to support communities affected by war in Gaza*](#)
- [6 March Media release *The escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza and addressing the impacts in our communities*](#)
- [13 March 'Human rights commission hits back at accusations of inaction on anti-Semitism' *The Australian*](#)
- [27 March Op-ed *In Silence Antisemitism and Racism Flourishes* by Lorraine Finlay](#)
- [17 April Media release *Race Discrimination Commissioner urges unity in wake of Sydney attacks*](#)
- [15 May Media release *Commission to lead historic anti-racism study into universities*](#)
- [23 May Op ed *Racism at universities has been an issue for decades* by Giridharan Sivaraman](#)
- [30 May Op ed *Why ABC chiefs should back Laura Tingle for calling out racism* by Giridharan Sivaraman](#)
- [3 July Op ed *Let's resist the worst of times with the best of humanity* by Rosalind Croucher](#)
- [10 July Media release *New report finds governments at all levels across Australia failing on racism*](#)
- [22 August Speech at Melbourne Holocaust Museum *Critical Thinking is Critical* by Hugh de Kretser](#)

Particular personnel engaged or promoted by the Commission have themselves been involved in antisemitic conduct.

As Australian Public Service employees, Commission staff have obligations about how they use social media. There are standards of conduct that are a requirement of APS employment, and this has an impact on the way in which Commission staff express themselves in public forums in a personal capacity. From time to time the Chief Executive reminds Commission staff of their responsibilities to meet these obligations – most recently on 7 December 2023 and 25 January 2024. The Commission takes seriously the obligations in the APS Values and APS Code of Conduct. Breach of these obligations may result in disciplinary action. If the Commission becomes aware of conduct that may be in breach of the Code, we engage the staff involved and apply our Breaches of the Code of Conduct Procedures. The CPSU has also conducted training for staff, with the union inviting union members and all other staff to participate, on the Code of Conduct.

The AHRC as an A-status national human rights institution is required to meet certain international accreditation requirements and its recent retention of its A-status was dependent on the assessment of a group chaired by a representative of 'Palestine'.



The members of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions accreditation body, the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) includes one NHRI representative from each of the four regional groupings. SCA members are voted to the position by their respective regional network. They serve a term of three years, which can be renewed. The current SCA members, who were also the members represented at the Commission's accreditation session, are from the NHRIs of: New Zealand (Asia Pacific) – Chairperson; South Africa (Africa); Honduras (Americas); and Greece then Croatia from October 2024 (Europe). Regional networks are required to appoint an alternate member to participate in sessions where the existing member is unavailable or has a conflict of interest.

With the impact of the crisis in Gaza, the Asia Pacific member on the SCA – Dr Ammar Dwaik from the Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR) of Palestine – was unable to attend the October 2023 session as planned, which was due to be the ICHR's final session in its three-year term as member. The NHRI of New Zealand, which was elected by APF members to succeed the ICHR, assumed its voting seat at the SCA one session early. The NZ Chief Executive, represented the Asia-Pacific at the session.

The National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section (NIRMS) at the OHCHR Headquarters in Geneva acts as the Secretariat to the SCA. All correspondence regarding the accreditation process is between the Secretariat and the NHRI. NHRIs do not correspond directly with SCA members during the process. The AHRC only had contact with the SCA members during the live interview sessions, which were conducted remotely online.

From: [Hugh de Kretser](#)
To: s 47F
Cc:
Subject: RE: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 4 October 2024 2:42:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.jpg](#)

Fine to proceed thanks s47F

From: s 47F
Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 2:40 PM
To: Leanne Smith s47F Giridharan Sivaraman
s 47F Hugh de Kretser
s 47F
s 47F
Subject: RE: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Yes of course.

Just to clarify, I am holding off upload to as soon as Hugh provides confirmation.

Cheers,

s 47F

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[W humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.



From: Leanne Smith s 47F
Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 2:39 PM
To: s 47F Giridharan Sivaraman
s 47F Hugh de Kretser
s47F
[Redacted]

[REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]

I expect we will also be sharing this with all staff, as usual practice?

Best,

L

From: s 47F [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 2:22 PM
To: Giridharan Sivaraman s47F [REDACTED] Hugh de Kretser
s47F [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Leanne Smith s47F [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Will do, Giri, I'm uploading this now.

s47F [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] | [W humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.



From: Giridharan Sivaraman s 47F [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 2:11 PM
To: Hugh de Kretser s47F [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Leanne Smith s 47F [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]

That's fine thanks. s47F [REDACTED] can you pls email me the link to the statement once released so I can push out on LinkedIn later today? Thanks.

From: Hugh de Kretser s 47F

Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 1:58 PM

To: Giridharan Sivaraman s 47F

Cc: s47F

[Redacted]

[Redacted] Leanne Smith s 47F

Subject: Minor changes to statement - for feedback [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Giri – see minor mark ups – just making sure you’re happy with these. Let us (comms team cced) if you are. Hoping to send it before 3pm.

Hugh

Hugh de Kretser (He/Him)

President of the Australian Human Rights Commission

Australian Human Rights Commission

Level 19, 175 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000

GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

s 47F

[Redacted] | humanrights.gov.au



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Gadigal peoples of the Eora Nation,
and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and future.

There is no expectation that you read or respond to this email outside your normal working hours.

s22

From: Giridharan Sivaraman
Sent: Thursday, 10 October 2024 4:26 PM
To: Hugh de Kretser; s47F Leanne Smith
Subject: RE: EJAC response to AHRC media release dated 4 October [SEC=OFFICIAL]

s 47E(d)

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From: s47F
Sent: Thursday, October 10, 2024 10:36:34 AM
To: Hugh de Kretser; s47F
Subject: EJAC response to AHRC media release dated 4 October

You don't often get email from s47F [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Verify the sender before you click links or open attachments. Email purporting to be from staff may be an impersonation attempt.

Dear Hugh,

I hope all is well with you.

I am attaching a copy of a letter from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry in response to the AHRC's media release dated 4 October 2024.

This response is provided in the spirit of constructive and honest dialogue, and we hope that you will see it as such.

Kind regards,

s47F
Executive Council of Australian Jewry
s47F

w: www.ecaj.org.au




“


I call on Australian governments to protect people's rights to peacefully assemble and protest. I also urge the Australian Government to adopt a compassionate, sustainable, non-discriminatory humanitarian response to people fleeing the violence.

”

- **Hugh de Kretser**
Human Rights Commission President



 aushmanrights • Follow

 aushmanrights Australian Human Rights Commission President Hugh de Kretser released a statement yesterday reiterating calls for the upholding of human rights and international humanitarian law, as the violence in the Middle East escalates and the anniversary of the brutal 7 October attacks by Hamas and the start of Israel's devastating and continuing response approaches.

"The toll of human suffering and death across Israel, Gaza and now Lebanon is horrifying. I acknowledge the ongoing and escalating impact of the war on communities in Australia," President de Kretser said.

"We have heard from affected communities about their feelings of loss, uncertainty, fear, anger and grief at what is happening. We recognise the disturbing rise in incidents of antisemitism, Islamophobia and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism in Australia."

Full statement in our bio.

#AusHumanRights

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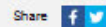
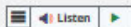
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Commission President reiterates calls for upholding human rights as violence in the Middle East escalates

Commission – General

Content type: Media Release
Published: Friday 4 October, 2024
Topic(s): Civil and Political Rights, Commission – General, International, Race Discrimination



As the violence in the Middle East escalates, and with the approaching anniversary of the brutal 7 October attacks by Hamas and the start of Israel's devastating and continuing response, the President of the Australian Human Rights Commission has reiterated its call for upholding human rights and international humanitarian law.

President Hugh de Kretser: "The toll of human suffering and death across Israel, Gaza and now Lebanon is horrifying. I acknowledge the ongoing and escalating impact of the war on communities in Australia. We have heard from affected communities about their feelings of loss, uncertainty, fear, anger and grief at what is happening. We recognise the disturbing rise in incidents of antisemitism, Islamophobia and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism in Australia.

"The Commission will continue to support and engage with all communities to address discrimination and hate speech. The Commission continues to provide [access to justice](#) services for all people affected by racial discrimination and vilification by investigating and conciliating complaints under the Racial Discrimination Act. Complaints that are not resolved through our processes can be taken for determination through the Federal Court system.

"The Commission has been funded to undertake a program of community engagement and awareness raising about racism to support safety in Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim and Arab communities across Australia. We have also been funded by the Australian Government to conduct a [Study into the Prevalence and Impact of Racism in Australian Universities](#). The study will have a significant focus on antisemitism as well as Islamophobia.

"I call on Australian governments to protect people's rights to peacefully assemble and protest. Any limitation on protest rights must be strictly necessary and reasonable. In general, protests should not be restricted based on the ideas or viewpoints taken by protesters. However, governments must address hate speech and the incitement of violence.

"I urge the Australian Government to adopt a compassionate, sustainable, non-discriminatory humanitarian response to people fleeing the violence.

"At the international level, I urge the Australian Government to support efforts to achieve a sustainable ceasefire, the protection of civilians, the return of hostages and accountability for violations of international humanitarian law.

"The [Advisory Opinion](#) of the International Court of Justice on 19 July 2024 should be supported. I endorse the [statement](#) of Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

'As the world reflects on and considers its inability to prevent this carnage, I urge all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire, lay down their arms and stop the killing once and for all. The hostages must be released. Palestinians arbitrarily detained must be freed. Israel's illegal occupation must end and the internationally agreed two-State solution must become a reality.'

"I urge the Australian Government to support international efforts towards achieving a lasting peace and a two-state solution that addresses the root causes of the violence."

ENDS | Media contact: media@humanrights.gov.au or +61 457 281 897

Tags: [Civil and Political Rights](#) [Commission – General](#) [International](#) [Race Discrimination](#)



Australian Human Rights Commission

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Australian Human Rights Commission President Hugh de Kretser released a statement yesterday reiterating calls for the upholding of human rights and international humanitarian law, as the violence in the Middle East escalates and the anniversary of the brutal 7 October attacks by Hamas and the start of Israel's devastating and continuing response approaches.

"The toll of human suffering and death across Israel, Gaza and now Lebanon is horrifying. I acknowledge the ongoing and escalating impact of the war on communities in Australia," President de Kretser said.

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You can read the statement in full here: <https://loom.ly/drBgjD0>

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Australian Human Rights Commission ✓
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Read more: loom.ly/drBgjD0

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Commission President reiterates calls for upholding human rights as violence in the Middle East escalates

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ENDS | Media contact: media@humanrights.gov.au or +61 457 281 897

From: [Giridharan Sivaraman](#)
Subject: quick discussion re president's statement [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

24.10.01 Statement on Israel and Palestine.docx <<https://australianhrc.sharepoint.com/:w/s/CommissionersWorkspace/EfD2OWuX33tFvR-Izospq4cBUd-IFLEZeNeqqAH-NUqAlw?e=4ORddc>>

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