



BARAMADAGAL DARUG
TRIBAL GOVERNING COUNCIL

Submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

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Submitted by: Baramadagal Darug Tribal Governing Council (BDTGC)

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About the Baramadagal Darug Tribal Governing Council

The Baramadagal Darug Tribal Governing Council (BDTGC) “The Council” is a Traditional Owner governance body representing Baramadagal people of Baramada / Burramatta (Parramatta) on Darug Country. The Council works to advance self-determination, cultural continuity, care for Country and community-led nation-(re)building. The Council regularly engages with government, academic, cultural and community institutions on matters affecting Aboriginal peoples and Country. Previous submissions and policy positions of the Council are publicly available at baramada.com/submissions.

Submission

The Council makes this submission as the Traditional Owner group of Baramada, now widely known as Parramatta, also covering lands across multiple Local Government Authorities. Our responsibilities arise from our continuing relationship with Country, community, culture and future generations.

We support efforts to address antisemitism in Australia. Jewish peoples should be able to live, gather, worship and participate in public life free from fear, hatred, discrimination and violence.

Our concern is that social cohesion cannot be achieved through selective approaches to racism, nor through measures that unnecessarily restrict political expression, peaceful protest or democratic participation.

As Aboriginal peoples, we understand that genuine social cohesion is not created through silence or enforced agreement. It is built through truth-telling, mutual respect, justice and the ability of communities to engage with difficult issues while recognising one another's humanity.

Through our work across First Nations, multicultural, faith-based and community networks, we have observed that people are more willing to stand against racism when they believe all communities are treated with equal dignity and concern. Trust is weakened when some forms of racism receive significant public attention while others are minimised, overlooked or treated as less serious.

The Council notes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to experience racism, hate, discrimination and violence at rates that remain largely normalised within Australian society. Efforts to strengthen social cohesion should therefore avoid creating hierarchies of racism and instead promote responses that uphold the dignity, safety and human rights of all communities. No community benefits when responses to racism are perceived as selective or unequal.

We are concerned by approaches that conflate criticism of governments or state actions with hatred directed towards a people. In a democratic society, individuals and communities must be able to advocate for human rights,

criticise governments and engage in peaceful political protest without fear that such participation will automatically be characterised as racism, extremism or social harm.

In this regard, we encourage the Commission to consider the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism as a useful framework. In our view, approaches that clearly distinguish between antisemitism, criticism of governments and advocacy concerning human rights are more likely to promote public confidence, democratic participation and social cohesion.

As Traditional Owner Community members, we are also concerned by public narratives that describe recent acts of violence as the most significant attacks to occur on this land without acknowledging the histories of frontier violence, dispossession and attempted genocide experienced by Aboriginal peoples since invasion. Social cohesion requires an honest reckoning with all histories of violence, including those that predate the Australian nation-state.

For Aboriginal peoples, social cohesion cannot be separated from truth-telling. Narratives that erase or diminish the violence experienced by First Nations communities risk undermining the very trust and shared understanding that social cohesion seeks to foster.

The Commission should find that antisemitism is a form of racism that is appropriately defined as hatred of or animus against Jewish people because they are Jewish. The Council submits that the IHRA Working Definition has the potential to undermine public confidence in efforts to combat antisemitism by blurring the distinction between hatred directed at Jewish people and legitimate political expression.

The Council encourages the Commission to give serious consideration to the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism as a framework that more clearly distinguishes antisemitism from legitimate political expression, criticism of governments and advocacy concerning human rights.

Recommendations

- Respond consistently to all forms of racism, discrimination and hate-based violence;

- Support community-led dialogue, relationship-building and intercultural understanding;
- Protect peaceful political expression and democratic participation;
- Strengthen civic education and public understanding across communities; and
- Recognise that social cohesion is built through justice, trust, inclusion and truth-telling.

The Baramadagal Darug Tribal Governing Council believes we are collectively strongest when diverse communities are able to engage respectfully with difficult truths and differing perspectives. Efforts to combat antisemitism should strengthen, rather than weaken, our shared commitment to human rights, democratic participation and freedom of expression.

We thank the Commission for the opportunity to provide this submission.

Made by:



Julie Christian

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Julie Christian', with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jayne Christian', with a large, looped initial 'J'.

Jayne Christian

Traditional Owners and Co-Founders of the Baramadagal Darug Tribal Governing Council
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