



ועד הרבנים דאוסטרלאסיה

## RABBINICAL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALASIA

13 January 2026

24 Tevet 5786

### **Statement following the announcement of a National Day of Mourning and the upcoming Shloshim for the Victims of the Bondi Attack**

The Australian Government has announced that a National Day of Mourning will be held on 22 January, coinciding with the Shloshim for the fifteen victims of the Bondi terror attack. On that day, Chabad of Bondi will lead a communal Shloshim service, offering a sacred space for remembrance, prayer, and reflection.

In Jewish tradition, Shloshim is not only a time to grieve; it is a time to reflect. The Torah teaches (Ecclesiastes/Kohelet 7:2), “והחי יתן אל לבו” - The living must take it to heart.” We do not only mourn who we have lost; we ask what their loss now calls upon us to do.

We remember each of the fifteen lives taken. Each was a world. Each was cherished. Each held a unique and irreplaceable place within their family and community. We also hold in our hearts the many who were injured, traumatised, and forever changed by what they witnessed and endured.

This tragedy did not emerge in isolation. For more than two years since October 7, Jewish communities in Australia have warned of the steady and alarming rise of antisemitism. It has been visible in protests, on social media, in schools, and in public discourse. These warnings were not abstract; they were grounded in fear, lived experience, and escalating hostility. Too often, they were not taken seriously enough.

That is why we reiterate what we said in our previous statement. This moment cannot wait for future inquiries and reports. The safety of Jewish Australians requires action now. This includes adequate security where needed, the clear enforcement of laws against incitement and hate, and the full adoption and application of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. These are not political positions; they are the responsibilities of a society that seeks to protect all its citizens.

#### MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Rabbi Nochum Schapiro, *President*, Rabbi Nir Gurevitch, *Vice President*, Rabbi Menachem Aron, *Treasurer*,  
Rabbi Hillel Nagel, *Secretary*, Rabbi Mendy Ajzenszmidt, Rabbi Netaniel Friedler, Rabbi Chaim Ingram, Rabbi Daniel Rabin.

At the same time, we believe deeply that understanding and education are essential in confronting hatred. As Dr Martin Luther King Jr. said, “I am convinced that men hate each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don’t know each other.”

For that reason, we urge Australians to truly come to know Judaism, not through slogans or distorted headlines, but through its teachings, values, and moral and spiritual vision. Judaism has helped shape the ethical foundations of the Western world through its teachings of human dignity, responsibility, justice, and the sanctity of life. Works such as ‘The Book of Jewish Knowledge,’ Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks’ many writings on moral and social responsibility, and Philip Wexler’s ‘Social Vision’ reflect a civilisation that has contributed a profound ethical inheritance to humanity.

Only from this deeper understanding can genuine respect grow.

We must also speak honestly about the role of public narratives. For over two years, much of the coverage of Israel — the world’s only Jewish state — has too often reflected the language and claims of Hamas and its affiliates, while the voice of a fellow liberal democracy has been treated with suspicion. Israel is a nation with a free press, independent courts, and a robustly self-critical media. Hamas is a terrorist organisation whose strategy is built on propaganda, intimidation, and the deliberate targeting of civilians.

When terror is sanitised and democratic self-defence is demonised, the consequences do not remain overseas. They reach our streets, shape public attitudes, and make Jewish Australians less safe.

Alongside mourning, we also invite Australians to respond with goodness. The NSW Government’s ‘One Mitzvah for Bondi’ initiative offers every person a way to bring light in the face of darkness through acts of kindness, generosity, and care. In Jewish tradition, such acts do not erase loss, but they honour those we have lost by refusing to let hatred define the future.

Within our own community, Shloshim calls us to strengthen our unity – to support those who are frightened or grieving. We refuse to allow trauma to fracture our sense of family.

On 22 January, as Australia mourns and as the Jewish community gathers in prayer, we do so not only with sorrow, but with resolve.

We remember.

We reflect.

And we commit to a future where hatred is confronted, truth is upheld, and every Australian can live without fear.

May the memories of the fifteen victims be a blessing, and may their legacy move this nation toward greater responsibility, compassion, and courage.

**Rabbi Nochum Schapiro, President  
and the Executive of the Rabbinical Association of Australasia**