

Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion
PO Box 4926
Kingston ACT 2604

30 June 2026

Dear Commissioner,

Philanthropy Australia (PA) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation with more than 800 trusts, foundations, families, individual donors, professional advisers, companies, intermediaries and not-for-profit organisations as our members and partners.

As the nation's peak body for philanthropy, PA supports and grows the philanthropy ecosystem in collaboration with funders and changemakers. The aim of our work is to strengthen giving towards a more generous, just and sustainable future.

PA thanks the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion for the opportunity to make this submission.

Australia's Jewish community makes a significant contribution to our nation's culture of giving. Whether arriving in these lands in the earlier stages of Australia's modern history or more recently, including during the large wave of migration following the Holocaust, Jewish Australians have actively cultivated traditions of generosity, adding so much to the vibrancy of Australian civic life.

In doing so, Jewish Australians have modelled good citizenship and set an example as a community within our multicultural society. This should be celebrated and cherished.

These contributions also cannot be taken for granted. They are dependent on fostering an environment within civil society, and the wider community, where Jewish Australians feel welcomed and included. Unfortunately, in recent times there is evidence that this is not the case, with many Jewish Australians in the philanthropic community reporting experiences of antisemitism, and confronting fear, hostility and isolation linked to their Jewish identity.

PA believes that it is vital to understand and value the lived experiences of Jewish Australians and how they have been impacted by rising antisemitism, including those within the philanthropic and not-for-profit sectors. We wish to give voice to these experiences, including those shared through the Australian Jewish Funders submission, which we support.

The Australian Jewish Funders submission is based on survey data which channels these experiences, painting a very concerning picture.

Findings from the Australian Jewish Funders survey of the Jewish philanthropic community (2026)		
85% - have experienced or observed antisemitic incidents	80% - changed funding decisions due to antisemitism or reputational risk	3% - confident current DEI frameworks address anti-Jewish harm

Given PA's purpose as the peak body for philanthropy, it is very troubling to face a situation where part of the philanthropic community is experiencing a lack of cultural safety.

This has flow-on impacts, evident in the shifts seen regarding philanthropic funding decisions.

Many Jewish philanthropic funders have felt they have no choice but to withdraw from wider engagement within civil society, and to focus funding on activities that respond to a lack of cultural safety. This shift inwards is a natural response to a situation where an open and outward-focused approach is riskier than it once was, due to the rise of antisemitism.

This of course has implications for those who must make these decisions, reluctantly. It is a cause of personal and professional distress, but it also has major implications for civil society in Australia more broadly.

Antisemitism is not just shaping the behaviour of Jewish philanthropic organisations, its negative effects are wider than this – affecting a broader range of funders and the organisations we partner with in many ways.

Perspective of a Jewish philanthropic funder, shared as part of research undertaken by Australian Jewish Funders.

As Jewish funders operating in a more hostile environment, we see risk, particularly reputational and security risk, shaping decisions in ways that can dilute impact. Heightened scrutiny often pushes us toward “safer,” more visible organisations, even when smaller, community-led efforts may be more effective.

Perspective of a Jewish philanthropic funder, shared as part of research undertaken by Australian Jewish Funders.

A thriving civil society is predicated on an environment where its many and diverse participants feel welcome and safe. This creates the essential conditions for partnership and collaboration, as well as constructive discussion and debate.

This, in turn, also has wider implications for social cohesion in Australia. If we are to work towards building a more socially cohesive society, it is important that we cultivate the foundations for this within civil society.

Addressing the rise of antisemitism and its impact on Jewish Australians within the philanthropic community will involve effort and action.

This is not about what happens outside of Australia. Australians are entitled to have views about the policies of other governments. Rather, this is about the choices we make here in Australia, as a community, irrespective of what is occurring outside of Australia, and irrespective of the actions of other governments.

These are choices about how we relate to one another within civil society, and the wider Australian community. This includes acting with empathy, care and understanding. These are choices which respect the right of every Australian to live free from racism and hatred, in their personal and professional lives, and the facets of our lives which sit in between these two spheres, as is commonly the case within the philanthropic sector. This includes ensuring that Jewish Australians can actively participate in community life without fear of antisemitism.

Given the experiences of recent times, conscious effort and action will be needed from all of us within civil society and the community, to heal. There is a role for government, of course, and Philanthropy Australia will actively engage with any policy proposals which aim to foster an inclusive and vibrant civil society, providing a perspective from the philanthropic sector.

There is also a role for those outside of government to take responsibility for creating a different future going forward, through evolving our practices, norms and ways of engaging with one another. It should not rest on Jewish Australians and Jewish community organisations to carry this load alone, as this important work should be grounded in allyship. As the peak body for philanthropy, Philanthropy Australia commits to working with the Australian Jewish Funders, and other philanthropic and civil society organisations, to these ends.

Thank you to the Royal Commission for considering this submission. Should the Commission Secretariat wish to discuss the matters raised further, please do not hesitate to contact our Executive Director, Policy and Sector Development, Krystian Seibert (kseibert@philanthropy.org.au).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maree Sidey', enclosed within a large, loopy oval flourish.

Maree Sidey
Chief Executive Officer