

'INCREDIBLY OFFENSIVE' Senator slammed over Israel speech

EVAN ZLATKIS

A LABOR Senator for Tasmania has come under fire from Australia's Jewish roof body after claiming in Parliament that the "cynical use of the slur of antisemitism" is a "tool to silence critics of Israel for that state's exhaustively documented human rights abuses against Palestinians".

Anne Urquhart made the comment last month in response to a speech by Liberal National Senator for Queensland Paul Scarr, who called for unity against extremism.

"I believe, if we are to be successful in defeating extremism in this country, those of us who consider antisemitism, fascism and extremism of all types to be vile and unacceptable in our society need to come together," he said.

Responding to Senator Urquhart's assertion, Executive Council of Australian Jewry co-CEO Alex Ryvchin told *The AJN* the suggestion that Jews use claims of antisemitism for political purposes is "incredibly offensive".

"This is a line straight from the Corbyn playbook that had brought disgrace and electoral ruin to ... [the UK Labour] Party," Ryvchin said.

"It is used as a way to prevent Jews from calling out racism directed at them and has the effect of enabling antisemitism, because whenever someone now makes an overtly antisemitic statement and



Senator Anne Urquhart.

Photo: Screengrab

is condemned for it, they can hide behind statements like Senator Urquhart's and allege that the Jews are merely 'crying antisemitism' again."

Urquhart did not respond to *The AJN's* enquiries.

Asked by *The AJN* for his views on his fellow party member's comment, federal Labor MP Josh Burns said the ALP "clearly and unequivocally endorses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism".

Noting the definition "makes clear that while legitimate criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country is perfectly reasonable and not antisemitic", Burns added, "Charges of antisemitism can rightly come when it rises to holding Israel to an unfair double standard, a denial of the Jewish right to self-determination, or quite simply promotes

falsehoods about the Jewish State."

Meanwhile, addressing Parliament last week, Burns took aim at a number of Liberals for making comments that trivialised the Holocaust, made inappropriate Nazi comparisons, and used antisemitic tropes.

Among them were former Liberal MP Craig Kelly for comparing the Victorian government's COVID lockdown to Nazi Germany, Nationals MP George Christensen for rewriting Martin Niemöller's *First They Came* poem to be about Donald Trump and Craig Kelly, and Senator Alex Antic for making a speech about cultural Marxism, which is an antisemitic conspiracy theory.

"We need more leadership in this country and less of the sort of behaviour that flirts with the right-wing extremism that has no place in a modern Australia," Burns lamented.

POWERFUL FIRST STEP Neo-Nazi terror listing

EVAN ZLATKIS

THE Anti-Defamation Commission (ADC) hopes the federal government's announcement this week that it plans to declare a British far-right group as a terrorist organisation "will extend to other local groups".

Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton confirmed on Monday he had received a recommendation from spy agency ASIO to formally proscribe the Sonnenkrieg Division, which has been outlawed in Britain, as a terror group.

Noting the organisation has a "presence that we're particularly worried about in the UK", Dutton warned, "Their reach goes into the minds of young people and Australians here."

"People are on the internet, they have the ability to join these chat groups to hear this disinformation, these lies and this sick ideology."

"Kids and adults can be turned very quickly and become martyrs for these causes."

Speaking on Nine's *A Current Affair* program, Dutton said supporters of Sonnenkrieg Division could face up to 25 years' jail once the group is listed.

He added, "If there are other organisations that need to be listed, ASIO will consider those matters."

Responding to the announce-



Peter Dutton.

Photo: AAP Image/Mick Tsikas

ment, ADC chair Dvir Abramovich, who featured prominently on the ACA program about homegrown extremism, applauded the government for its "powerful first step in addressing the emerging terrorist threat of neo-Nazi groups".

"Failing to recognise the grave risk this deadly form of hatred poses is to invite tragedy, and we applaud this historic shift by Minister Dutton," Abramovich said.

"The government has listened to our concerns about the dramatic global uptick in white-supremacist violence, and the dangerous tactics of its adherents, and this designation, which we hope will extend to other local groups, is a meaningful and powerful tool in dealing with this problem."

The ACA episode focused on the Melbourne-based National Socialist Network group, who held a neo-Nazi gathering in the Grampians area over the Australia Day weekend.

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