

COURAGE TO CARE AUSTRALIA LTD

Submission to the Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion

This is a summary of the full submission lodged on 8 May 2026.

The complete document is available by emailing australia@couragetocare.org.au

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Executive Summary

1. The Case for Education: Context and Purpose

Every week, in classrooms across Australia, young people sit with Holocaust Survivors and learn what happens when hatred goes unchallenged. They learn to recognise the earliest signs of discrimination in their own environments, that bystanders are not neutral, and that they can choose to act in safe and practical ways when they witness hate in any form. This is Upstander education. It is what Courage to Care has been delivering into classrooms for more than 30 years, and it is the foundation on which every other element of a national response to antisemitism depends.

Australia has the opportunity, and now the institutional architecture, to place education at the foundation of its national response. A national response is being built. What it needs is the foundation, and that foundation is education.

2. Submission at a Glance

The Problems		
Problem 1 Rising Antisemitism, Hate & Polarisation	Problem 2 Teachers Lack the Training and Confidence to Respond	Problem 3 Uneven Access to Education
A sharp post-October 7, 2023 rise in antisemitic incidents. Declining social cohesion. The Bondi Beach attack was the most serious antisemitic act in Australian history. Record levels of antisemitism persist despite significant government investment in security and incident-response measures.	Teachers lack training, resources and confidence to manage discrimination issues in classrooms. Without structured professional development and access to external programs and resources, the gap between what teachers are expected to address and what they have been equipped to deliver remains unresolved.	Regional, rural, remote, Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Indigenous students are significantly underserved by current anti-discrimination education provision. Equity of access is a social cohesion imperative.



The Recommendations		
Recommendation 1 Sustained Federal Funding for antidiscrimination education	Recommendation 2 Building Teacher Capability Across the System	Recommendation 3 Recognise Community Organisations as Delivery Partners
Establish a dedicated, multi-year federal funding stream for evidence-based foundational anti-discrimination programs, framed as social cohesion infrastructure, not niche/project grants.	Establish structured, accredited professional development for teachers aligned with Australian Professional Standards. Scale Teacher Professional Learning to create system-wide multiplier effects.	Formalise long-term partnership arrangements between government and community education organisations as co-deliverers of the national anti-discrimination strategy, with multi-year funding and capacity-building support.

3. Who We Are

Courage to Care Australia Ltd is Australia's largest provider of evidence-based Upstander and anti-discrimination education, working at the foundational layer of the school curriculum: building the values, language and practical skills young people need to recognise and respond to discrimination before prejudiced attitudes become entrenched. We have reached more than 500,000 students over 33 years, free of charge, through a network of more than 180 trained volunteers including Holocaust Survivors and their descendants.

Our Upstander Programs are delivered in government, Catholic and independent schools nationally.

We are proudly apolitical: our mission is universal, our content is curriculum-aligned, and our programs contain no religious or political content.

500,000+	35,000+	~100,000	33+ years
Students reached nationally since inception — free of charge	Face-to-face participants in 2025 alone	Students reached through digital Upstander lesson plans in under two years	Evidence-based Upstander education delivered to Australian schools

This submission addresses three structural problems that security investment alone cannot resolve:

1. **A sharp and sustained rise in antisemitism** that persists despite record government expenditure on incident response;
2. **Teachers who lack the training and confidence** to address discrimination in classrooms; and
3. **Deep inequity in access** to anti-discrimination education, with regional, rural, remote, CALD and Indigenous students the most underserved.

Each maps directly to the three recommendations in Part 7, each of which requires a sustained upstream investment response.

Part 1: What Makes Courage to Care Unique

1.1 The Dual Approach: Universal Values, Specific Content

Upstander Programs are grounded in universal values — respect, empathy, fairness, and active citizenship — and are designed to build resilience against all forms of racism and discrimination across Australian school communities.

At the same time, they directly and explicitly address antisemitism through the lived testimony of Holocaust Survivor Speakers whose personal accounts bring history into the present and give students a human face for the consequences of hatred and indifference.

This dual approach — universal in its framing, specific in its content — is not a compromise between two goals. It is the reason the programs work.

When a student sits with a Survivor — not a historical figure, but a person in the room who has a name and a story and grandchildren — the antisemitic attitudes formed in ignorance and isolation meet something they cannot easily survive: a human being.

1.2 The Pyramid of Hate Framework

Central to every program is the Pyramid of Hate — a pedagogical tool that gives students a clear, memorable framework for understanding how discrimination escalates: from stereotyping and prejudice through to institutional discrimination, violence, and at the extreme, genocide.

Students learn to recognise the earliest tiers of the pyramid in their own environments, and to understand that intervention at the base is both possible and powerful.

1.3 Our Volunteer Model

C2C was founded by B'nai B'rith, one of the world's oldest Jewish service organisations, and the overwhelming majority of our 180+ trained volunteers are Jewish. Many are descendants of Holocaust Survivors. Some are survivors themselves. They come to this work not as professionals fulfilling a contract, but as members of a community that understands, in the most personal terms, where hatred leads when it goes unchallenged.

This is what community organisations carry that no government program can replicate through procurement: the lived experience of the communities most affected by hatred, the trust built across 33 years of showing up in Australian classrooms, and the moral authority that comes from volunteers who have personal reasons to be in the room.

“Having the Courage to Care volunteers sharing real, genuine stories that have impacted their lives brings authenticity to it that you would find very hard to find elsewhere.

By having more Upstanders, we get increased rates of reporting, which lets us do the appropriate interventions to ensure that we have a safe yard and safe students.”

— Peter Langham, Principal, Brighton Secondary College

1.4 Our Place in the Ecosystem

Australia has a growing ecosystem of organisations and initiatives working to combat antisemitism. The ASECA's 'layer cake' framework, documented in The Dor Foundation's Foundational Educators' Ecosystem Key Trends Analysis (February 2026), describes how these layers work together.

Courage to Care operates at Layer 1 — the broadest, foundational layer — reaching students at scale with universal values content that makes every layer above it more effective: Layer 2 (in-depth Holocaust education delivered by state-based museums and centres) and Layer 3 (teacher professional learning and contemporary antisemitism education driven through UNESCO and ASECA).

A student who has sat with a C2C Survivor or descendant speaker is better prepared to engage with deeper Holocaust education, more receptive to antisemitism awareness programs, and more likely to carry those lessons into adult life.

C2C is the entry point into this ecosystem for most students who will ever encounter it. Investment in foundational Upstander education does not displace other programs in this ecosystem: it supports them all to be most effective.

Part 2: The Environment in Which We Submit

The Bondi Beach attack of December 2025, which killed 15 people, was the most serious antisemitic act in this country's recorded history. It did not emerge from nowhere, rather it was the foreseeable product of an environment in which anti-Jewish rhetoric had become normalised, Holocaust denial had spread into the mainstream, and the social mechanisms that once checked hatred had been progressively eroded.

Record levels of antisemitism persist despite significant government investment in security and incident-response measures. Security infrastructure is essential but not sufficient. One of the critical questions this Commission must answer is whether Australia is also prepared to invest upstream — in the educational conditions that make hatred less likely to take root in the first place.

The ECAJ Annual Report on Anti-Jewish Incidents (2025) records anti-Jewish incidents at a two-year average that is more than five times the decade preceding October 2023. Australia recorded the largest spike of any comparable country in the world. The ADL Global 100 Survey (2025, USA) found that 50% of adults under 35 hold deeply antisemitic attitudes — this is the generation currently in Australian classrooms.

The broader social cohesion context reinforces the urgency. The Scanlon Index of Social Cohesion showed only 46% of Australians reported a strong sense of belonging, down from 63% in 2020; and fewer than one in three Millennials and Gen Zs reported a strong sense of belonging. These trends are not separate from rising antisemitism. They are the social conditions in which hatred finds purchase.

Part 3: What We Have Witnessed

Antisemitic Incidents in Schools (NSW): C2C NSW has experienced many incidents of antisemitic conduct in the course of delivering programs, including the depiction of offensive symbols in classrooms and verbal abuse of Jewish students in person and online. Such incidents are reported to peak bodies including ECAJ and JBOD, following which C2C is invited to deliver programs at the relevant school.

Antisemitic Feedback from Teachers (VIC): C2C received written feedback through its formal evaluation process from a teacher at a Victorian government shown below verbatim:

The program is an initiative of a Jewish group (B'nai B'rith) and talks about discrimination, and genocide despite openly supporting Israel during a period when Israel is committing these same atrocities against Palestinian people. Approaching young and vulnerable minds with the agreeable idea that discrimination and bystanding is bad but then going onto present their own Jewish religiocentrism as having moral superiority over these ideals is an insidious practice and should not be a part of public schools.

— Teacher evaluation feedback, Victorian school (date withheld to protect school identity)

Targeting Through Misinformation (VIC): In November 2025, C2C VIC was the target of a campaign it considers defamatory misinformation, conducted by a group calling itself 'Teachers for Palestine'. Flyers distributed at a Victorian Association for the Teaching of English (VATE) Conference contained what C2C believes to be false claims about its educational intent and methodology, including an assertion that C2C's silence on Palestine and the Palestinian people amounts to racism and dehumanisation.

Exclusion from Institutional Partnerships (VIC): In May 2025, C2C VIC engaged with the Organisational Development and Learning team at a leading health institute, which had sought C2C as a potential partner to deliver workplace anti-racism training following the organisation’s development of an internal anti-racism policy. However, senior leaders ultimately determined that partnering with C2C was ‘too risky’ due to potential political implications and chose to proceed with an alternative provider without such associations.

Impact on Volunteers: The rise in antisemitism since October 7, 2023 has placed significant additional operational and human resource pressures on C2C’s volunteer base. Many are Holocaust Survivors or descendants of Survivors, and the surge in antisemitic incidents has been personally distressing. The majority of C2C NSW volunteers live within five kilometres of Bondi Beach.

It is a testament to their courage and dedication that they continue to deliver programs on a voluntary basis despite genuine concerns for their physical and emotional safety.

“When I tell my own story and found that I could, and children would listen, it was a rewarding experience. Courage to Care makes an important contribution to the general education of children to make them conscious of the suffering of others and encourage them to always assist the victim.”

— Survivor Speaker Henry Ekert AM

Part 4: What Works — Program Evidence and Impact

The research literature on effective anti-discrimination education consistently identifies direct contact with affected communities, structured facilitation by trained practitioners, and the sustained development of program content over time as conditions that produce measurable attitudinal change.

Three features work together to produce outcomes that neither universal anti-discrimination education alone, nor antisemitism-specific education alone, can achieve:

1. The first is **universal values as the foundation**: the Pyramid of Hate framework, the language and practical tools to recognise and respond to all forms of discrimination.
2. The second is **Holocaust Survivor testimony as the irreplaceable specific**: abstract principles become lived reality when a student sits with a person in the room whose family survived the consequence of silence.
3. The third is **the combination as the model** — together, these create conditions for genuine moral learning that neither element achieves alone. For many students, a C2C incursion is the first time they have encountered a Jewish person, and the evidence consistently shows that this direct human contact is one of the most reliable mechanisms for reducing prejudice.

4.1 Program Impact Data

95% Students demonstrated increased knowledge of bystander/Upstander concepts *	96% Students demonstrated increased knowledge of bystander/Upstander concepts **	93% Students demonstrated increased knowledge of Upstander action in the Holocaust
83% Students correctly identified how stereotyping escalates to discrimination	96% Students identified safe and appropriate Upstander actions	93% Teachers recommend the Upstander Programs to their peers

Source: C2C VIC Evaluation, 2025 *SYP = Secondary Years Program (Years 8–12); ** MYP = Middle Years Program (Years 5–7).

4.2 Growth as a Demand Signal

The Middle Years Program (MYP), targeting Years 5–7, has been the fastest-growing part of delivery with a 210% increase in VIC and NSW recording 300% growth in primary school delivery over the same period. The case for prioritising this cohort is both developmental and strategic.

Years 5–7 is the stage at which foundational values, ethical frameworks, and social responsibility are actively being shaped, before prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviours become entrenched.

Teachers consistently report that students at this age are particularly receptive to messages about empathy, fairness, and courage, and that they develop the language and confidence to challenge discrimination before the social complexities of adolescence make intervention more difficult.

Digital lesson plans, developed in partnership with cool.org and freely available to all Australian teachers, have reached 100,000+ students across 303 schools in every state and territory in under two years — including communities in remote and rural locations that face-to-face programs have not historically been able to serve. In both August 2025 and February 2026, all six Courage to Care lessons ranked simultaneously in the cool.org Top 10 most-downloaded secondary resources sitewide.

Part 5: Case Studies

Part 5 of the full submission presents three case studies drawn from C2C's direct program delivery:

At Brighton Secondary College in Melbourne — referred to C2C by the Victorian Department of Education following serious antisemitic bullying incidents and a subsequent Federal Court ruling against the State of Victoria — sustained annual delivery to Year 7 and Year 9 cohorts since 2022 has produced measurable whole-school cultural change.

At Ballarat Christian College, a three-stage whole-school program delivered across two days in March 2026, encompassing teacher professional learning, a parent information session, and student incursions from Years 5–10, demonstrated that the Upstander model is effective across diverse regional communities far beyond metropolitan Victoria.

At a regional independent school in NSW, four hours from Sydney, fourteen C2C volunteers and two Holocaust Survivors travelled by train to deliver the program to all 454 students following the referral of a serious antisemitic incident targeting the school's only Jewish student — illustrating the critical role of the community referral pathway and the absence of any alternative intervention mechanism in isolated communities.

Part 6: The Gaps

Part 6 of the full submission names three structural gaps the Commission must address:

1. **The persistence of antisemitism and declining social cohesion,**
2. **A teacher capability gap, and**
3. **Inequitable access.**

Each gap maps directly to one of the three recommendations in Part 7.

Part 7: Recommendations — What the Commission Should Do

1 RECOMMENDATION 1

Sustained Federal Funding for Anti-Discrimination Education

Establish a dedicated, multi-year federal funding stream for evidence-based foundational anti-discrimination education, framed as social cohesion infrastructure, not targeted community support.

ANU's research on whole-of-school bystander programs found measurable improvements in students' prosocial skills, inter-racial school climate, and students' confidence and self-efficacy to intervene when they witnessed racism — outcomes that align closely with C2C's own evaluation data.

The cost of inaction is also material. When early intervention is absent, downstream costs grow across mental health services, legal proceedings, institutional exclusion and lost productivity, security infrastructure, and the slow work of rebuilding social cohesion after it has been damaged.

Upstream education investment is therefore not only a moral imperative; it is a cost-effective public policy response to conditions that otherwise become more expensive to manage over time.

2 RECOMMENDATION 2

Build Teacher Capability Across the System

Establish structured, accredited professional development for teachers aligned with Australian Professional Standards, scaled nationally to create system-wide multiplier effects.

Teachers are simultaneously the most important and most under-supported link in the school's response to discrimination. The evidence makes clear that teachers are not failing through indifference, they are failing through lack of tools. The Blueprint Institute's 2024 survey identified poor pedagogical approaches to Holocaust education and teacher uncertainty as factors driving antisemitism in schools; the Victorian Department of Education's 2025 policy explicitly directs schools to build staff capability to prevent and respond to racism; and the Gandel Foundation's national survey called for a consistent approach to Holocaust education underpinned by accredited teacher training.

The questions teachers brought to C2C's professional learning session at Ballarat Christian College were not the questions of indifferent professionals, they were the questions of people trying to do the right thing in the absence of any structured preparation.

A teacher equipped to respond reaches every student they teach, every year, for the rest of their career. That is the multiplier effect sustained teacher professional learning is designed to produce.

3 RECOMMENDATION 3

Recognise Community Organisations as Delivery Partners

Formalise long-term partnership arrangements between government and community education organisations as co-deliverers of the national anti-discrimination strategy, with multi-year funding and capacity-building support.

The NSW Regional Grammar School case study is the clearest illustration of what community partnership means in practice. A school four hours from Sydney, with a single Jewish student being targeted with antisemitism, had no pathway to structured intervention — until a peak body (JBOD)

made the referral to C2C. Fourteen volunteers and two Holocaust Survivors then travelled to the school to deliver the program to all 454 students across two days.

“I was especially impressed by the way the team handled the students in the workshop groups. The volunteers’ passion and engagement really enhanced the experience. During our assembly, I referenced the C2C program directly, reinforcing the importance of carrying its lessons forward.”

— Senior Teacher, Regional Grammar School, NSW

That response was only possible because a formalised, trusted community organisation existed and was ready to act. Without that, the school would have had no recourse. The referral pathway works only if there is a funded community partner at the end of it.

The distinction between a contractor and a co-deliverer is not semantic. A contractor produces an output to a specification. A co-deliverer brings what cannot be procured: community trust, volunteer networks, Survivor testimony, and school relationships built across 33 years.

As former head of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Terry Moran AC has observed, the full benefits of government and community organisation relationships remain constrained without realistic payment for service delivery, clear outcome accountability, and the autonomy for community organisations to get on with the job. This is the model the Commission is asked to endorse: one in which accountability runs to outcomes rather than activities, and the community organisation’s independence (the source of its credibility with schools) is preserved rather than eroded by the funding relationship.

Implementation Principles

The three recommendations are necessary but not sufficient on their own. How they are designed, funded and delivered will determine whether they produce lasting change or repeat the pattern of well-intentioned investment that fades when the grant cycle ends.

The seven principles below set out the conditions under which the recommendations will be most effective.

1	Prioritise younger students	Intervene before attitudes harden.
2	Build for compounding impact	Whole-cohort, multi-year delivery produces lasting cultural change that single-program interventions cannot.
3	Invest long-term over short-term grants	Social cohesion infrastructure demands the same investment logic as physical infrastructure: multi-year commitments, not project grants.
4	Use universal framing	Apolitical, inclusive programs reach every school and every student regardless of background or faith identity.
5	Ensure equity of access	Regional, rural, remote, CALD and Indigenous students must be reached. The digital program and C2C’s referral infrastructure exist precisely to serve communities that face-to-face delivery cannot.
6	Require outcome accountability	Accountability to outcomes, not activities, is the standard public investment should require.
7	Embed community partnership	Community organisations are co-deliverers, not contractors. What C2C brings — trust, Survivor testimony, 33-year school relationships — cannot be procured. It can only be partnered with.

Part 8: Conclusion: The Commission's Opportunity

For the first time, the institutional conditions exist to match the scale of Australia's response to antisemitism with the scale of the problem. Education is the foundation that makes every other element of that response more effective.

The government has adopted the Special Envoy's Plan, the Taskforce is acting, the architecture of a national response is being built. The institutional conditions that have long been absent are now in place. What remains is the foundation, and that foundation is education.

Foundational Upstander education serves every Australian, not only those most directly affected. It is the base layer of a socially cohesive Australia, where the Pyramid of Hate is interrupted before it rises, and where a generation of young Australians learns, from the living testimony of those who survived the consequence of silence, that they have the power to choose differently.

Two targeted investments would transform that reach into a genuine national infrastructure:

1. Approximately \$8 million over three years would effectively double face-to-face delivery, reaching approximately 70,000 students annually, with priority given to Middle Years cohorts and regional, rural and remote schools that have historically been most underserved.
2. Approximately \$1.4 million over the same period would extend the digital Upstander program to a full Foundation/Prep through Year 12 pathway — around 70 new curriculum-aligned lesson plans projected to reach over two million students in three years, then freely available to every Australian school in perpetuity at no ongoing cost to government. At that scale, the cost per student is measured in cents.

Together or separately, these investments require no new institutions or delivery infrastructure, only the commitment to fund and formalise what the evidence shows already works.

The programs are proven, and the demand from schools is growing faster than current capacity to meet it. The Commission has the opportunity to recommend the conditions that make that choice available to every student in every school — and to help ensure that the generation now passing through Australian classrooms is the one that turns the pyramid around.

Appendix A: How Courage to Care's submission responds to the Terms of Reference:

ToR	How this submission responds	Key evidence & sections	Recs
(i)	Nature, prevalence & drivers of antisemitism	Australia #1 globally for spike post-Oct 7 · triple pre-2023 rate · Pyramid of Hate mapped to live Australian data · ECAJ: antisemitism has moved from fringes to mainstream · Frontline evidence: school incidents, cancellations, misinformation Parts 2.1–2.3, Part 3, Part 4.3	1, 2, 3
(ii)	Impact on the daily life of Jewish Australians	Bondi Beach attack: 15 killed · Jewish volunteers experiencing anxiety, fear and vicarious trauma · Jewish students: sustained verbal abuse, exclusion, harassment · Exclusion from partnerships Part 2, Part 3, Part 5	1, 3
(iii)	Best practice: education, prevention & de-radicalisation	33 years of evidence-based Upstander Programs, free to schools · 95%+ of students demonstrate increased Upstander knowledge · 93% of teachers recommend the program · Part 1, Part 4, Part 5	1, 2, 3
(iv)	Strengthen social cohesion & enhance government responses	Upstander education is social cohesion infrastructure — not niche grants · Scanlon Index flat 3 years; belonging scores lowest among youth · Teachers ill-equipped · Uneven access: regional/rural underserved · Parts 2.3–2.5, Part 6, Part 7	1, 2, 3

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