

Australian police exaggerated “antisemitic” incidents amid crackdown on opposition to Gaza genocide

Oscar Grenfell**15 October 2025**

The New South Wales (NSW) Police admitted last Friday that their official figures on antisemitic incidents, which have repeatedly been cited by politicians, are not only unreliable but false.

The revelation was made at a NSW parliamentary inquiry into antisemitism in Australia's most populous state. Police said that a “preliminary review” of their own data “suggests that a significant number of incidents do not meet the criteria for antisemitism.”

Even the NSW Police's acknowledgement grossly understates the exaggerations contained in the listing of incidents they provided to the inquiry. The incidents include events that had no conceivable relation to antisemitism.

Peaceful pro-Palestinian protests were classified as antisemitic, without the slightest grounds. Random criminal incidents with no apparent connection to racism were listed. And even several occasions on which Zionists attacked opponents of the Israeli genocide in Gaza, or Palestinians were subjected to racist abuse, are inexplicably included.

The admission is explosive, given that the claims of rampant antisemitism have dominated official political life for the past two years. Such claims have been used as a sledgehammer by the ruling elite to attack mass opposition to Australia's complicity in the Israeli war crimes, including with a significant clampdown on civil liberties.

In NSW, the bogus figures were directly invoked by the state Labor government to pass sweeping anti-protest and “hate speech” laws clearly targeting opponents of the genocide.

In that context, the police admission should have been frontpage news. But it has been almost entirely suppressed. The story was first reported by Michael McGowan of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. But his valuable article was buried on the *Herald's* frontpage, seemingly as soon as it was posted.

The *Guardian* has published a report. But from the official press, that is it. The publicly-funded Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) appears to have posted nothing. The Murdoch publications, which have ranted about antisemitism virtually every day for 24 months, have ignored the admission.

An analysis of the police figures by the independent outlet

Deepcut News found that only 117 of the 367 listed explicitly mention antisemitism. Sixty-two of the total “include mention of Israel and/or Zionism” and there are 38 duplicates.

Claims the police made an “error” are not plausible. The list provided by NSW Police to the inquiry makes it crystal clear that they were directed to regard legitimate pro-Palestinian activism as “antisemitism.”

For instance, a 2024 protest at the Botany port in Sydney is included. The peaceful demonstration, which was brutally attacked by police, was in opposition to the coming and going of ships from the Israeli Zim line, which, early in the genocide, offered to place its entire fleet at the disposal of the war against the Palestinians.

That single protest is listed no fewer than 16 times.

Another incident, reported three times, is recorded as follows: “During a pro-Palestinian protest one person poured red dye over a police Sergeant, damaging his uniform and equipment. A second person sprayed red dye on a Detective Superintendent and others, while a third person used a spray bottle and metal bowl to disrupt police.”

The incident, not only multiplied in reporting, is also inaccurately recorded. In reality, the protesters poured red dye over themselves to symbolise the blood of murdered Palestinians. The police responded by violently attacking them. In any event, the police encounter with dye, a spray bottle and a metal bowl had nothing to do with antisemitism.

There are multiple listings of pro-Palestinian graffiti. Several of them reference such graffiti being put on the offices of Labor Party MPs, including that of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. Such actions may have violated minor criminal statutes relating to vandalism, but these were political actions, directed not against Jewish people, but against politicians who have supported war crimes.

The inclusion of such incidents raises a host of questions that have not been answered. The phony figures were collected during Operation Shelter, which NSW Police launched in October 2023, ostensibly to target antisemitism but in reality to crack down on pro-Palestinian sentiment.

Shelter was presented as the number one priority of the NSW

Police. They declared that their extensive surveillance and investigation abilities, built up over the course of the bogus “war on terror” would all be deployed.

A puff piece by the ABC, promoting Operation Shelter earlier this year, gave a sense of its scale, resembling more a domestic military operation than standard policing. The ABC gushed: “Dozens of officers, helicopters and patrol cars scan the streets of Sydney’s eastern suburbs ready to intercept antisemitic attacks before they happen.”

At that point, in January, the ABC reported that more than 300 Shelter-related patrols were occurring each day, and that the overall total was 38,200.

The ostensible reasons for the vast mobilisation late last year and early in 2025 were murky incidents, involving crude and often misspelled anti-Israeli and sometimes antisemitic graffiti, and sometimes arson. Police admitted in March that those attacks were all a hoax, which they claimed were carried out by politically-uninterested criminals who were seeking to barter with the police.

Months later and those attacks all remained listed in the file provided by NSW Police to the inquiry.

Given the conflation of pro-Palestinian activity and antisemitism in the list, the question is posed: to what extent did that vast mobilisation entail surveillance, investigation and possibly even dirty tricks targeting opponents of the genocide?

A particularly disturbing aspect of the list is its inclusion of attacks against pro-Palestinian activists.

In October 2023, for instance, Professor Peter Slezak, an outspoken opponent of Israeli war crimes, was violently attacked by a Zionist. Slezak is Jewish, but the attack was clearly not motivated by that fact but by his opposition to the genocide.

In another incident that is listed, “A Palestinian protester was sitting outside Anthony Albanese MP’s office when a man approached, made remarks about hostages, and verbally abused the demonstrators, calling them ‘anti-Semites.’ He then damaged a Palestinian banner taped to a pole, returned shortly after to repeat the act, and stomped on the banner’s frame.”

Two other incidents, not yet reported by the media, are along the same lines.

In February, a *Daily Telegraph* reporter and a pro-Israeli activist walked into a restaurant in Newtown, Sydney. Their actions were interpreted, by the pro-Palestinian owner, as an attempted provocation. He reported them to the police. Somehow, this was included in the list of antisemitic incidents.

One listing refers to harassment and abuse directed towards a pro-Palestinian academic at Macquarie University. That appears to be about Randa Abdel-Fattah, who has been subjected to threats and vilification for her opposition to Zionist crimes. Even while listing the academic as the “victim,” the report is included on the list of antisemitic incidents.

Some of the other listings are simply bizarre, and indicate that the police, having been tasked with finding a vast eruption of

antisemitism, came up with very little. In one case, a man went to a mobile phone repair shop and was angry with the quote he was given. Police were called. But there is no indication that this had anything to do with antisemitism, as opposed to phones.

The bogus list has repeatedly been invoked by the NSW Labor government. It was cited as proof of the need for sweeping legislative changes. That included the passage, earlier this year, of “hate speech” laws aimed at criminalising strident condemnations of Zionism, and anti-protest laws barring demonstrations in the vicinity of “places of worship.”

The NSW Supreme Court this morning ruled that elements of the anti-protest legislation were unlawful. The court noted that in the form in which they were passed, the laws could be invoked even when there was no connection between the protest and a nearby “place of worship.”

That is, the ruling pointed to the obvious reality that these laws, whose passage was based on lies, were an attempt to outlaw the right to protest altogether.

The false list also underscores the reality that in targeting pro-Palestinian activists, governments and the police are giving cover to real antisemites. By branding actions that have nothing to do with anti-Jewish bigotry as antisemitism, they are trivialising the dangers presented by that form of hatred. People who would cynically play with antisemitism, as with a political weapon, are its enablers, not its opponents.

Many of the incidents listed that appear to be genuinely antisemitic include favourable references to Hitler and the Nazis. The fascist forces who make such statements, or carry out such graffiti, are hostile to the Jewish people, as well as to Palestinians.

Amid their promotion by sections of the political establishment, epitomised by the elevation of the fascist Donald Trump to the US presidency, these far-right forces can spew their antisemitic venom, confident in the knowledge that it will likely be blamed on anti-racist defenders of the Palestinians.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:
wsws.org/contact