

My name is Deborah Conway, I was born in Melbourne in 1959 to an observant but not religious Jewish family. I went to a non-Jewish school and never experienced antisemitism. I attended two separate tertiary institutions, RMIT & Melbourne University & once again never experienced antisemitism. I became a professional musician in 1981 and have enjoyed a multi-decades long career, performing, writing & producing music without ever experiencing antisemitism.

I have never concealed that I am a Jew.

I began to notice a change in attitudes in Australia with the awarding of the Vogel Prize to Helen Demidenko's first book, *The Hand That Signed The Paper*, released in 1995. Demidenko claimed her book was based on real life family history, which perhaps excused the fact that her book was an ill disguised treatise of antisemitic agitprop. Demidenko was eventually revealed to be Helen Darville & her book a fiction as opposed to a family history. It made no difference to the judges who doubled down in their praise for Darville/Demidenko's fictitious creation. It was hard to imagine that if the book had been written about any other minority group, the judges would have been as enthusiastic in their praise.

In 2001 when the World Trade Centre Towers were the target of Osama bin Laden's terrorist suicide missions causing the death of more than 3000 people, the conspiracy theories didn't take long to attribute blame to the Jews. It was my second real taste of antisemitism.

The golden dream of an extended respite from murderous antisemitism (that none of my past generations of Jewish ancestors had enjoyed) now appeared to be the direct result of the shame & guilt the world was atoning for, post Shoah.

The guilt & shame had a use-by-date.

Antisemitism may have been shameful for a time in the West but it certainly wasn't in the Islamic world, nor, increasingly, in Western academia, both of which were finding inroads throughout the early 1970's to be antisemitic that incorporated the most noble framings by casting Israel as a colonialist, oppressive, apartheid entity within a new paradigm - anti-Zionism. Delegitimising Israel.

The signs of a powerful, yet still fringe movement were all there. What happened on **8 October, 2023** the day after the worst massacre of Jews in a single day since the Holocaust, was an eruption of all that antisemitic, anti-Zionist malevolence, a movement that had, up til that moment, been on the fringes became seemingly effortlessly, mainstream. On **9 October, 2023** while Jewish bodies were still being identified, while hostage numbers were still being calculated, who missing, who dead, people were gathering on the steps of the Sydney Opera House, Australia's most iconic cultural building, to celebrate. They chanted "*Where are the Jews*"; "*Fuck the Jews*"; "*Gas the Jews*".

In fact, "*Gas the Jews*" was deemed so reprehensible that the NSW Police were called in to do forensic analysis and despite numbers of people who witnessed hearing those words, the reports came back that in fact no such words were chanted.

I would like to request the Royal Commission examine why NSW Police felt compelled to make an inquiry into what was chanted on 9 October on the Opera House steps & how they can be SO SURE,

despite the many witnesses that said they did hear "Gas the Jews", that those words were not spoken? Why did they feel compelled to exonerate these revellers?

In the wake of these protest/celebrations, not a single person was charged, detained, cautioned. I felt sick, physically, not from fear but from feeling my entire world had been ripped from me. I was being "othered" in real time. We as a community were summoned back to the 1930's of the German National Socialists screaming for Jewish blood.

Not only were there no cautions issued to the flag burning chanters, the only "arrest" the NSW police made that day was of a Jewish man carrying an Israeli flag, who was there to mourn the Israeli lives lost. He was apparently arrested for his own safety.

It was like a thousand alarm bells went off at once. Where were we? We went to bed on October 6th as Australian Jews. We went to bed on October 9th questioning everything we thought we understood about our country, our leaders, our law enforcement, our neighbours.

The feeling of wanting to scream from the rooftops about the new paradigm we were now all living in but not doing so, was exhausting. My husband Willy Zygier and I made a brief statement on **13 October, 2023** on our social media pages.

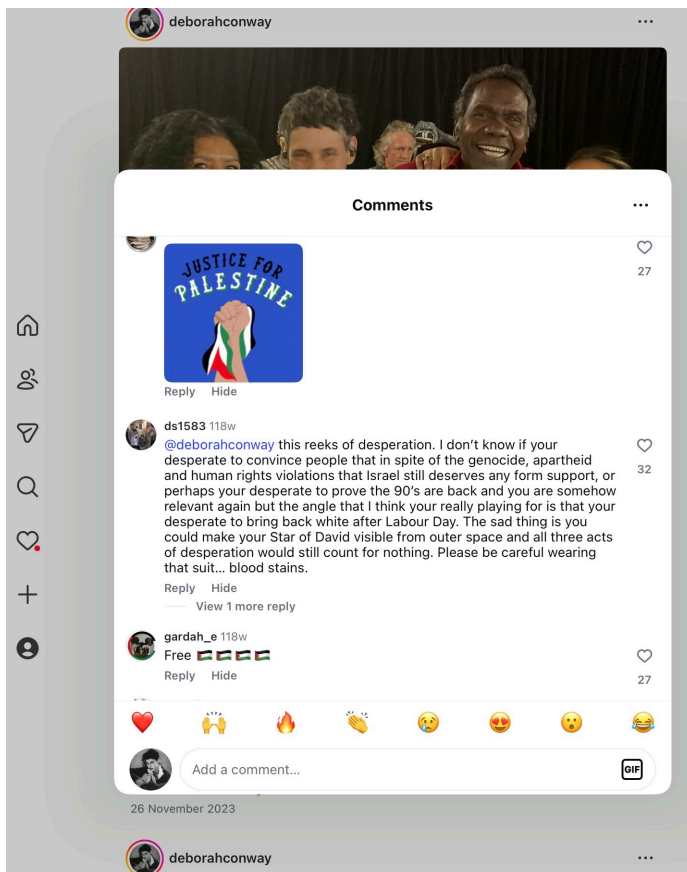
"In every generation they rise up to annihilate us. So says the prayer book, so goes history. We know you have your reasons. Everyone has always had their reasons."

It was the merest toe in the water.

On **26 November, 2023** Mushroom held a 50th Anniversary Celebration at which Willy Zygier and I were asked to perform. The audience was a full house at Rod Laver Arena, 12,000 strong, and around 2 million watching on free to air TV. Willy and I wore white suits, blue shirts, he wore a white yarmulke, I wore my oversized Magen David. I introduced It's Only the Beginning saying, "Michael (Gudinski) hated what I wore in the video clip for this song (*plus 4's on a golf course*) but I think he would have loved this outfit. I had marked us as targets.

A few pics were snapped backstage. There was an outpouring of support from some on our social media pages but the post also attracted some ugly, faintly threatening commentary, one in particular referencing blood on the white suits of genocide supporters. [See screenshots & links]

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C0G2AxsyIKN/?igsh=Z3pnczE2emFlcDUz>



A few weeks later the Sydney Theatre Company opening night of *The Seagull*, caused uproar when 3 of the cast members donned keffiyehs for their curtain call. The fallout was intense; board members resigned, subscribers cancelled, donations were withdrawn. In the wake of this I was invited to talk to Patricia Karvelas on Radio National on **15 December, 2023** ostensibly about the comparison between the STC donning keffiyehs and Willy and I dressing as we did for the Mushroom event. It could have been an interesting discussion but my interviewer was not to be mollified merely with the sartorial and within a few minutes the conversation turned to Gaza with Karvelas insisting Israel was solely responsible for the high

death toll of innocent civilians. And somehow she thought that I, as a Jew, was supposed to represent Israeli government policy. The next few moments became ground zero for my total fall from grace. The haters have relished decoupling a very few words (“depends what you call kids”) from the context of their intent and wave them as a flag to proclaim my craven disregard for human suffering. The meaning of my words in context, are when Hamas puts weapons in the hands of underage boys to point at the enemy, they use them as fighters and also then use them in the childhood casualty count. To say this is a horrendous, cynical exploitation of young lives is a chronic understatement but the mountain of evidence remains unexamined by the pro-Palestine groups defending Hamas as freedom fighters.

Patricia Karvelas ended our interview and once I was off line, closed the segment by telling her audience - “*She’s (sic) very much, feels like this war is justified.*”

See link to transcript below

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/xt0fc5su6inxg3njsbyjh/ABC-Radio-National-Breakfast-15-December-2023.rtf?rlkey=dk4gip1mpeeuvhvzjga96iplc&dl=0>

In characterising my position in this way Karvelas put words in my mouth that assisted in fuelling a series of vicious attacks, amplifying falsely that I was genocidal with no regard for Palestinian suffering.

I felt like I had been “verballed” by our national broadcaster.

This began a series of events, attacks, pile-ons and cancellations that began shortly after the Radio National interview went to air on 15 December, 2023 that have completely changed my life, my career, my relationship to my country of birth.

What follows is my attempt to put these events into some kind of order.

On **3 October, 2023** I had released my first book, a memoir called *Book of Life*. On **4 October** my husband and I opened *Songs From the Book of Life*, a music theatre version based on the book, at Arts Centre Melbourne. On **7 October**, during the matinee performance, our youngest daughter contacted us to say she was sheltering in a stairwell in Tel Aviv as Hamas rocket fire was raining down.

My publisher at Allen & Unwin had booked me into many writer’s festivals, bookstore appearances, one on one interviews and various publicity opportunities in various locations around the country. As we were also performing the show, we were also courting publicity to promote that too.

My first book festival was Writing WA (WWA) held as part of the Perth Festival **23-26 February, 2024**. I received a call in late January from Iain Grandage, the Director, to let me know there was a storm brewing around my inclusion. WWA had received a letter demanding my exclusion but Iain assured me they would not be cancelling me, rather WWA were inviting ‘more diverse authors’ to be part of their program and ensuring there was enough security to keep everyone safe. It was such strange new territory for me that I did not take it particularly seriously, it all seemed so ludicrous. On **14 February, 2024** I received an email from WWA once again assuring me that I would be safe and they were making sure everything that could be done was being done. I still was not concerned, though with every assurance I grew slightly more apprehensive. The first two events were sold out and no protesters were in evidence. The third session was a panel with two other authors. A few minutes in I was asked a question at which point, around ten masked people got to their feet, unfurling signs with various messages - *Globalise the Intifada/Free Palestine/Genocide Supporter* - there were a number of them, and they started yelling hateful things at me. The moderator and I were rushed

off the stage, the protesters were escorted from the room by security and after ten minutes, the session began again. One of the panelists was ex WA Premier Peter Dowding who, once the session got back underway, said something to the effect that he understood how tempers could run high at this fraught time. I returned to the stage in a discombobulated state. I resumed the session but I found Dowding's comment isolating and unnecessary under the circumstances, a justification of the protestors towards me. In the aftermath I understood that a letter with 500 signatures, including that of academic, children's author (and later hero of the push for free speech), Randa Abdel-Fattah, was sent to WWA demanding I be dropped from the festival on account of my "dehumanising refusal to acknowledge Palestinian children as innocent victims" and the leadership role I played in the "Zio600" WhatsApp group trying to cancel pro Palestinian voices. Needless to say these were outrageous, unfounded and cruel lies being promulgated about me.

I would like to acknowledge Writing WA, who did not cancel me even though they were under a great deal of pressure to do so.

The so-called "Zio600" was a WhatsApp group formed specifically to respond to an editorial that had appeared in the literary magazine Overland in the middle of October 2023, that condemned Israel for its military response to October 7 but contained not a single word of condemnation for Hamas' atrocities, nor any concern for the deaths of Israeli civilians or hostages being held in Gaza. The WhatsApp group was called Jewish Creatives and Academics (later to be known disparagingly as the Zio600). I had been invited to join to help shape the response to the Overland oped, though my suggestions were ultimately not incorporated. The small WhatsApp group of around 40 letter writers rapidly grew to around 600 members, largely there to share resources, strategise about countering some of the worst excesses of this new hate that most of the people who were in this group were experiencing but mostly to find an understanding tribe in difficult times.

In late January 2024 the group was doxxed, meaning the private messages and personal details of everyone in the group were made public. People who had sought refuge in this forum were exposed to even more vicious attacks. The effects of this were devastating for people who had never sought a public platform. They were sacked from their employment, had their businesses graffitied, threats were made to people in person and online, one family had threats made to their child and had to move house and their business in response, artists were dropped from galleries and creative platforms, academics hounded at their work place.

In democracies likeminded people have every right to band together to form lobby groups but when Jews do it, it suddenly becomes sinister and nefarious. This is pure antisemitism whether the doxxers were aware of that or not.

My participation and subsequent doxxing, was not as damaging for me personally because I was already in the public eye as a Jew and a Zionist, however my association meant I was credited and held responsible for things I was not part of nor had even commented on. Anything and everything I could be accused of was fair game. I was depicted as some shadowy string puller intent on bringing other people's careers down. And despite it all being nonsense, without a shred of evidence, the taint was inferred - certainly by the letter trying to have me banished from Perth Writer's Festival.

I made a statement to the AFP - Operation Caledonia - on **24 February, 2025** in reference to the doxxing incident. Nothing has ever come of that.

In late 2023 I was asked to put together a recording for a Community Radio 3CR show called “And This One’s Introduced By...” hosted by Paul Elliot, aka Dr Gonzo. I sent the recording to Elliot on **3 January, 2024**. After several weeks I called him to find out when it would go to air at which point he told me it wouldn’t go to air because his station manager had decided I was inappropriate for their station. I tried to talk to Elliot about the antisemitism that was at play in this decision but he denied antisemitism existed either currently or even historically; it was shocking to me that he had so little understanding and was so completely incurious. The conversation was painful and I felt signalled the end of my longstanding relationship with community radio.

In August 2023 I was booked for a fundraiser event to be held on **14 March, 2024** to support Barnardos Children’s Charity, Beyond Barbed Wire. The format would be an interview style discussion in Sydney’s The Eternity Playhouse to discuss my new book with my friend, journalist Caroline Wilson, all profits going to Barnardos. I received a call from the person who had booked me for this, Janie Wolstenholme, on **9 February, 2024** to tell me that the event could not go ahead because of my involvement. She had backers who were insisting that I couldn’t be involved in a children’s charity because I was deemed to be problematic to even be on the same advertising poster as children. I told her she was being bullied by antisemites telling lies and that this behaviour slotted comfortably into the long history of Jewish blood libels. She was apologetic but unmoved by my pleas for her to reconsider. This was a particularly devastating cancellation for me, as a mother of 3 children, to be categorised as someone who should be nowhere near children, even just to fundraise for them. This was pointedly cruel.

I was invited to speak on the Alex the Seal Podcast, **1 February, 2024**. On **27 February** I received the email below.

We are sorry to do this, but we feel it is best to cancel your guest appearance on our podcast at this time. I have been personally criticised online for sharing my love of your memoir and music, something I’ve removed as my genuine delight at your life story was being used to attack your views on the Israel-Gaza war.

Sandy and I keep our political and world views separate from our podcast Alex the Seal, and have created a show for the sheer joy of reminiscing about the music and pop culture from our youth. We know you would have participated in our show in that vein and brought that joy, but in the current climate it is hard to separate the artist from the activist and the episode will be judged with a filter on the latter.

I responded on the same day-

Hi Jo,

I’m sure you must realise I have been verbally by a group of people who just want to hate me as a Jew and to characterise my support for Israel’s right to defend itself as some kind of blood lust.

I get that you don’t want to get involved but honestly we should stand up against bullies in these times.

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

Is it also your intention to not invite those supporting Palestine on to your show, there are plenty of musicians (the majority) who hold those views. I would never demand for pro-Palestinian voices to be silenced but I do worry that it may be a one sided cancelling.

Obviously politics would not have been discussed but I understand your discomfort.

And I received this immediately in response -

Deborah, I have agonised over this decision and absolutely can see the opportunism of many to take your beliefs and twist them into something more sinister. If this were a podcast about sharing those beliefs and giving guests the space to qualify their stance on political and international issues, I'd be all in.

Having you on our show at the moment would provide another platform for more vitriolic comments, however, and we do not want that for you or ourselves. Sometimes standing up to bullies is doing nothing.

Deborah I am sure you are hurting and feel every personal attack deeply. I have no connection to either sides of this war in heritage or deep understanding of the history. I am deeply sad that so many people have died and are displaced and if some of them are your family, I am very sorry.

Please do not see this as a judgement for or against you, or for those that you are defending yourself against. I have long held the belief that social media has provided a platform for polarisation, and people will double-down on their extreme belief and not stop to consider a differing view. It is no place for considered debate.

That is why this good person is doing nothing; so evil cannot thrive in a hijacked space under a podcast that bears no relation to this war.

These are good people who believe they are minimising my pain. The atmosphere of intimidation is so pervasive that barely anyone can withstand it, they sincerely believe their own careers and reputations are on the line. And maybe they are.

On **29 February, 2024** David Laing, a publicist working for one of the venue promoters for *Songs From the Book of Life*, contacted me to tee up an interview on **5 March, 2024** for ABC Melbourne "Evenings with David Astle". On the day the interview was scheduled I received a call from the publicist to say that a producer of Astle's show had just returned from being overseas & was pulling the interview due to my being too controversial. I then received the following text from the publicist:

Nadia's (producer of David Astle's show) take is the evening show is very light and breezy and they actively avoid anything that is likely to cause controversy or be contentious. She said it being the ABC they couldn't avoid actually discussing it in some way and it's not somewhere they want to go on that program.

I told the publicist, I had absolutely no intention of discussing the ME, just our new theatre show but the ABC remained unmoved.

I then contacted Australian journalist Cameron Stewart who I had had some previous dealing with, to let him know what had happened and he contacted the ABC to get a comment. Not long after that exchange I was informed the David Astle interview would go ahead after all. On **18 March, 2024** I also received a sincere apology from David Astle which I include here.

Dear Deb,

David Astle here, the host of Evenings on ABC Radio Victoria. I'm writing to you directly, and personally, to apologise for the hurt that I've caused you and Willy in my team's mishandling of your booking back on Tuesday, March 5.

The mess, and its fallout, has caused us all deep anguish here at ABC.

On my own behalf, I'm sorry for the pain you must still be nursing, and the justified anger, as the Evenings team let you and Willy down as professional and brilliant artists. I hope you can forgive me, and my co-producers in Nadia Hume and Matt Tribe.

I'm also looking forward to welcoming you in person this week, and celebrating your music, your story, and your Songs From The Book of Life shows that are coming up.

Take care, see you both soon, and my apologies once again,

David

It was heartening to receive the apology but of course the cancellation had caused a great deal of anguish.

On **5 December 2023** I was booked to be the key note speaker for Words on the Waves, a writer's festival on the Central Coast NSW. On **7 March 2024** Words on the Waves cancelled my appearance citing staff shortages and the director having to take early maternity leave.

Hi Deborah,

I have to let you know that unfortunately they have had to cancel this event.

Their festival director and only paid employee - the rest are all volunteers – has had to leave early for maternity leave this week and she is the main organiser for this event.

And on top of this, their volunteer organiser has resigned.

The keynote event is a new one and had not gone on sale, and they simply do not have the man power for this event to go ahead.

She said sadly they've had to cancel a few others as well.

They pass on their apologies to you as they were very much looking forward to hosting you.

Sam.

The Words on the Waves opening key note event still went ahead. Just not with me.

On **28 September, 2023** I was invited to appear at the Newcastle Writer's Festival to take place between **5 to 7 April, 2024**. As the event got closer local organisations started to pile on the pressure demanding I be dropped and if not they were calling for a boycott of the festival. Like Writing WA, Newcastle Writers Festival stuck by their commitment to program me, even after the woman they had chosen to interview me refused to participate. They changed the interviewer and the venue I was to appear at and put me in a room a fraction of the size with the explanation that it would limit the amount of people who might try to disrupt the session. The organisers hired plain clothes security guards and there were also a number of police in attendance.

Email from the organiser:

I met with Newcastle Police at the festival venue this morning and we ran through some key security measures in response to last week's campaign to target the Sat morning event.

I offered to write to the protesters in an attempt to calm things down.

I received the below from the festival director-

Hi Deborah

Thanks for your offer but I think this would inflame the situation. At this stage it is local organisations calling for a boycott of the festival. We've been anticipating protestors for a while and I have been liaising with University security and Newcastle police. The event will largely be held in University venues.

My key concerns are artists opting to withdraw from the program - we've had a co-curator of the Words and Music event step down because he's feeling threatened by targeted messages - and people's safety. I'm not expecting violent protests.

We will have a staff/board member in your events and security close by - not in the room - and our volunteers have been well briefed. These measures include the following:

- Program manager Amy will pick up Deborah and Willy from their accommodation at 9am on Saturday and drop them at the festival venue. Maggie will be waiting to escort you to the 'Green Room' on level 5 which is the staff kitchen.*
- Two police in plain clothes will introduce themselves. They will also be in the room while the event is happening. They would prefer that you didn't acknowledge them when your event starts. They want to blend in.*
- We will be setting up a more formal ticket checking area outside the room and any large bags will be 'cloaked'.*
- Deborah and Maggie, if there happens to be a disruption - someone shouting, chanting - it would be good to know how you want this handled? Do you want to request the person stop or leave the room? Police will step in if it escalates, but it's the in-between I'm keen to know more about.*
- After the event, you'll be escorted downstairs to the foyer to the book signing area. There will be 8 other police around and in the building - not in heavy tactical gear.*
- Their approach is that they're there if required but they will keep a low profile.*
- After the book signing, it is up to you if you'd like to stay on at the festival Deborah or head out and about.*

I am grateful to NWF for honouring their commitment to me despite the pressure to do otherwise. Someone hissed “shame on you” on the street between venues but otherwise I was not hassled. Being surrounded by police and security for my own safety was a strange addition to my new career as an author.

Concurrently to the writer's festivals, my husband and I were also touring *Songs From the Book of Life*, mentioned above. Our show at Burrinja Theatre - **23 March, 2024** - had to be “*cancelled as sales completely dried up after the protests were ramped up*”.

On **4 April, 2024** we performed at Altona Theatre. The Hobsons Bay 4 Palestine group had protested vehemently with extensive use of posters and flyers demanding my cancellation. Hobson's Bay Council refused to be bullied. On the night, police were in attendance to prevent the protestors from invading the theatre, the glass doors were locked but the 20 or so protestors pounded on the doors. A personal security detail was hired for me.

Having to play music under these stressful conditions was becoming routine and very depressing.

In mid April we performed our show twice at Queensland Performing Arts Centre without incident. Since we were in town, a last minute invitation to speak at Little Bird Bookshop, on **13 April, 2024** was offered by the owners who have faced ugly consequences for repeatedly standing up for their principles. The event was announced on their Facebook page and the owner came to pick us up from where we were staying. By the time we arrived, a gathering of furious, unhinged protestors had turned up to harass us and everyone in

attendance. Wailing accusations of genocide, hiding behind their masks and signs of *Globalise the Intifada* and *Zionist = Nazis*, they attracted a dozen police who did nothing to disperse them.

A Facebook post from Emma Trim:-

“Deborah, I remember in Paddington, Brisbane you were in a bookshop a year or so ago and were being yelled at by pro-Palestine supporters while you tried to sing. I was sitting at a traffic light and I watched as police officers just stood idly by, I assume stopping it from escalating into ‘violence’ despite the fact they were yelling ‘from the river to the sea.’ I was appalled - this should not be happening in Australia and I know personally, I have had ‘enough,’. If this happens again, I will stop...I will ask the police why they are not doing more, I will get in the face of these protestors who mask themselves and tell them to leave you in peace. It has been a terrible couple of years in Australia’s history. All of us could have done more.”

Clearly Emma’s memory of the event was vivid even though it was a momentary snapshot viewed in the time it took for the light to turn green.

For us it was yet another traumatising event in a series of traumatising events. Our crimes - being Jews and Zionists - was incitement enough for these protesters to slam themselves into the shopfront glass repeatedly, to scream at the top of their lungs that we supported genocide, to harass everyone coming into or out of the shop, surrounding them and yelling in their faces and ensuring that everyone inside was thoroughly intimidated. The police in attendance stood stony faced outside, not lifting a finger or even a voice to calm the increasingly hysterical mob.

We finished the event and headed for the car, a couple of police following, tagging after the many protesters who were still screaming into my face, now without the protection of a shopfront window and, as an added bonus standing on the back of Willy’s shoes to attempt to trip him up.

The worst culprit was arrested a month later when she egged Queensland’s Premier, Steven Miles.

No one was arrested at our book signing, no names were taken, no cautions issued. This behaviour apparently comes under the free speech protections.

The Narooma Oyster Festival booked Willy and I for a show on **3 May, 2024** cancelled us on **4 April** citing very poor ticket sales. Though when the promoter found an alternative venue for us to play in on the same night and just around the corner, the show sold out.

The next section was something I wrote within a few days of the events described.

*The Pro-Palestine protesters mobilised as soon as we announced Songs From the Book of Life would play in Hobart’s Playhouse Theatre on **25 May, 2024**.*

There were many entreaties & then threats made against the theatre and the promoter to cancel us. To their credit both theatre & promoter weathered the increasingly unpleasant storm of demands.

We arrived at the theatre for the tech run & the technician mentioned that the email traffic to cancel the show had escalated to peak hour in the last few days. I had recently read Salman Rushdie’s account of the knife attack on him at a conference he was speaking at which cost him an eye and put

him in hospital for months of recovery. Not that I was imagining that kind of violence but reading the account had given me something to have nightmares over.

The show was sold out. Outside a group of around 20 protesters were handing out pamphlets with a full transcript of my Radio National interview with Patricia Karvelas accompanied by 'fact checks' quoting various sources such as Al Jazeera and Human Rights Watch, all intended to discredit me. Everyone entering the theatre was offered a pamphlet.

Back inside, we had got off to a promising start. The audience applauded wildly when I walked on stage and again when Willy appeared. They were responsive, listening, laughing, everything was going well.

We played our 2nd song and we heard some unholy feedback, squealing from somewhere I knew not where, could it have been our PA? Was it outside? I had no idea. We chose to ignore it and kept playing.

For those unfamiliar with our show, we are playing as a duo, no band backing us up, just the 2 of us onstage with acoustic guitars and our voices.

The screaming feedback stopped. I was told later, it was a bullhorn directly outside the theatre positioned by the protesters to cause as much noise as possible. The police stepped in to quell that fracas.

The next segment of our performance passed without interruption but for me it was obvious from the audience response, that something had shifted.

The 4th chapter in our show is a moody piece, a discussion of my Jewish heritage and what it means to me, that concludes with observations about age old antisemitism. As I finished a man's voice loudly and aggressively, announced from the darkened auditorium "we're all the same". It was a reasonably opaque pronouncement but it wasn't said in the spirit of peace and love. If I had to guess, I would say the disembodied voice wanted to let me know that the Jewish experience of antisemitism was nothing special and I should get over myself and think about other people's pain. But I am just guessing.

We chose to ignore the comment and we played the song Book of Life, a quiet reverie of personal reflection in a difficult world, with a mesmerising musical introduction on Willy's National guitar.

We performed the next scene and song but were interrupted for the 3rd time at the beginning of the following monologue. A man in the balcony unfurled a Palestinian flag and started yelling at me to condemn the genocide in Gaza. This time the theatre was in an uproar at having been yet again yanked out of the world of play and into the world of the protesters' choosing. I left the stage, the houselights came up and among the melee of yelling - "fuck off", "get out" and other discouragements, the flag owner & flag were removed by security. The interruption lasted a few minutes but from behind stage it seemed to last a lot longer.

The house lights went down and I was given the signal to resume the show.

I came back out and picked up where I had left off, we carried on into the next scene. Just before I concluded a monologue about my childhood living with a challenging parent, yet another protester chose her moment to wrench the audience and me out of the show and into her universe, screaming from the front row "how dare you condone the murder of children and babies".

The house lights went up and I left the stage again. More screaming, yelling and abuse from the auditorium as security honed in on the young woman who had caused the latest disruption. Before they could get to her, another woman, older, who must have reached a breaking point of frustration with the protesters, got up from her seat down the front, smashed the wine glass she was holding on the front of the stage and used what was left of it to threaten the protester. (I should be clear that this

was not something I witnessed. After the show, selling merch, I could see glass all over the floor and stage and I was told by an usher clearing it up, to be careful. I was told what happened by other people who did witness it as we signed books for them.) The glass smasher as well as the protester were both removed by security and I was told the police were questioning the woman wielding the broken glass.

After another few minutes the house lights went down and I walked back on stage. This time I decided to formally break the 4th wall, of course it had been pretty much demolished already but I felt it necessary to direct a statement to our audience.

“Look war is awful, it is truly awful and I understand your anger but your anger is misdirected. I am a musician from Melbourne. There is nothing you or I can do to effect any outcome in the Middle East. So if no-one else has anything to add... hopefully you’ve all got it out of your system.. we can resume the show with no more interruptions”.

Unfortunately, after this glass breaking incident, a number of people had left the theatre feeling uncomfortable, unsettled, unsafe and in some cases, frightened. Our show had been hijacked to the point of violence.

On the Monday following the Saturday night performance ABC Hobart asked if I was willing to be interviewed. The invitation was revoked when the ABC decided they would rather the audience recounted the events.

The presenter Leon Compton posed the question to his audience “should Deborah Conway have the right to perform? Where is the balance between the right to protest and the right to perform, where does the line sit?”

A retired ABC newsreader, Peter Gee, had been in attendance and was going to be on their morning program to discuss it. Another audience member, Trish, was also interviewed. They both came down on the side that the protests crossed a line when they moved from outside the theatre to disrupt proceedings inside the theatre. The 3rd interview was with Tasmanian author James Boyce who stated that I had dehumanised the people of Gaza during an interview with Patricia Karvelas and what's more I had never attempted to put that in any context.

I wrote to the ABC directly after listening to Mr Boyce say these things.

- in response to Leon talking to the Tasmanian author, James Boyce I want to clarify that I have addressed the Patricia Karvelas interview numbers of times, in numbers of forums. Here's a succinct summary of that: -

Patricia Karvelas: You mentioned Israel has a right to defend itself, and we hear that language a lot, but at the same time, there has been a disproportionate impact on innocent people.

Deborah Conway: And yet I hear that, response a lot. But I would say to you that...

Patricia Karvelas: But kids, lots of kids, we know they're not Hamas, right?

Deborah Conway: it depends on what you call kids. But, young people, 16, 17 year old young boys toting rifles.

I said ‘it depends what you call kids’ in response to PK saying that “we know they’re not Hamas” I was trying to tell the listeners that when Hamas put guns in the hands of their adolescent sons to point at the enemy, Hamas steals their childhood, turns them into fighters & then turns them into casualties. It's the triple whammy of cruel. I wasn't talking about little children, it goes without saying that the deaths of innocents are unbearably tragic. But this is what Hamas has engineered.-

The presenter also read out a text on his show that put words and opinions in my mouth that I did not say and do not hold. Is that libel? Obviously this was a listener's opinion as opposed to a fact, but

hey it's the fast and furious world of live radio which I have had my baptism of fire into and I feel pretty cautious about getting into again.

Ultimately I think the discussion neglected to ask the more pertinent question of their listeners.

For example -

If a pro-Palestinian university lecturer was delivering a lecture, not on politics but lets say on law or maths or economics etc, and was repeatedly heckled and interrupted in the delivery of his/her lecture because of views unrelated to the lecture, would that be in any way reasonable? Would that be something we as a community would want to condone?

And why stop at Israel/Palestine? Is it reasonable to stop people going about their business because you don't think they recycle enough or they're not sufficiently supportive of wind farms, or they don't donate enough to a charity you happen to think is worthy?

I'm not sure that would be a community we would want to encourage.

No one has objected to, or stopped the protesters from their right to protest outside the theatre but once work places are breached in such a fundamental way, and the ABC frames this as a reasonable debating point, then I think it's arguable that contributes to unreason in our society.

Would ABC Hobart be fine about having someone come on air to be interviewed only to hijack the program? Would ABC Hobart ask their audience afterwards if that was a reasonable way to conduct a protest?

I don't believe anything good can come from condoning this kind of intolerance.

As a postscript, the ABC online news, posted an article about the incident today but, despite asking me for a statement, they put up the truncated quote that the activists have repeatedly used to defame me and not what I sent them explaining the meaning of the oft repeated quote from the Radio National interview. They would justify themselves by saying they linked to the full interview in their article but they also know most people will not listen to that.

The Tasmanian promoter who has booked us on a number of occasions declined to work with us last year, citing nervous exhaustion. Despite touring nationally in 2025 to promote a new album, we were not able to perform in Tasmania where we have played countless times over decades to appreciative audiences.

On the **31 October, 2023** I was invited to be part of the “Byron Writers Festival ... renowned for its relaxed atmosphere and diverse program of stimulating and entertaining conversations. We aim to bring writers together in an environment that nurtures and invigorates them as much as it does our audiences.”

Excited, I accepted their invitation immediately. On **8 March, 2024** I received another message from the ‘very relaxed’ BBWF to say they’re very excited to instead offer me an ‘out of season event’. I smelt a rat. I am clearly not as relaxed and laid back as the BBWF. I responded that I would far prefer to be in the scrum of the festival proper but I wasn’t given a choice. And then, as I had suspected all along, the very relaxed BBWF that prides itself on offering a “diverse program of stimulating and entertaining conversation” decided I was a little bit too diverse for their sensitive souls. Oh no, they screamed as they climbed on the chair, skirts and noses held high, “she thinks Israel should be allowed to exist”. They cited the aforementioned incident at The Playhouse Theatre in Hobart as the reason but without context. I was left to wonder, had they received threats? Were they nervous to endanger their audiences? Or are they fully onboard with cancelling someone who believes Israel should be allowed to exist?

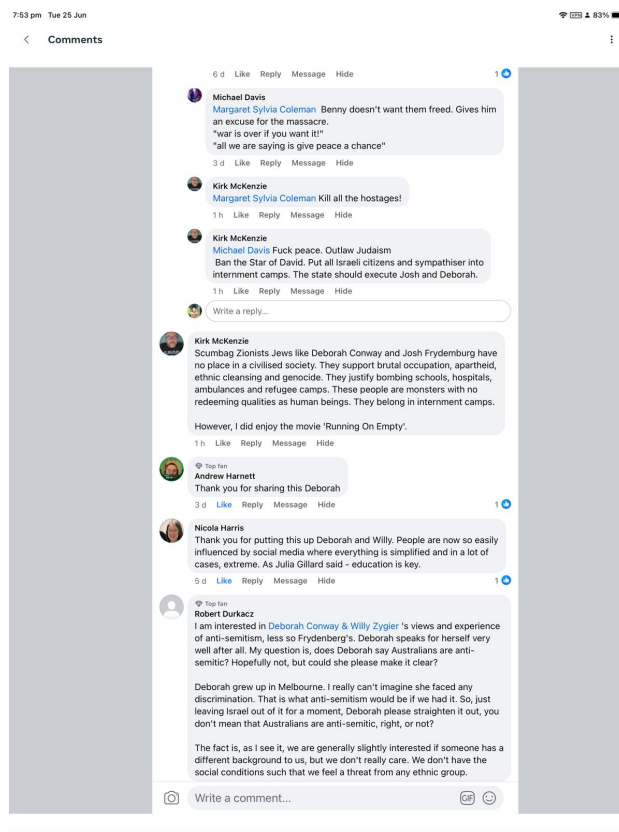
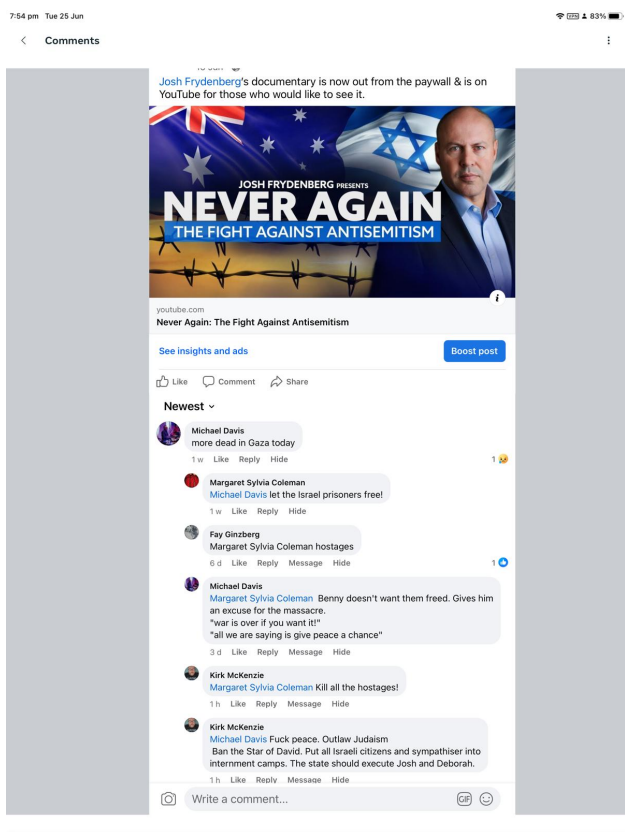
On **7 April, 2024** we performed at the Camelot Lounge in Marrickville, Sydney and were greeted by graffiti on the wall directly facing the entrance to the venue. “D. CONWAY SUPPORTS GENOCIDE IN GAZA” To see this horrendous slur written in enormous letters outside a venue we were performing at was awful. I made a gag about it when our show started, but I didn’t feel anywhere near as lighthearted as I tried to come across as. On **9 September, 2024** we performed at the Camelot Lounge again and were greeted once more by graffiti “D. CONWAY ZIONIST STOOGES” We put a post up on our social media in response.

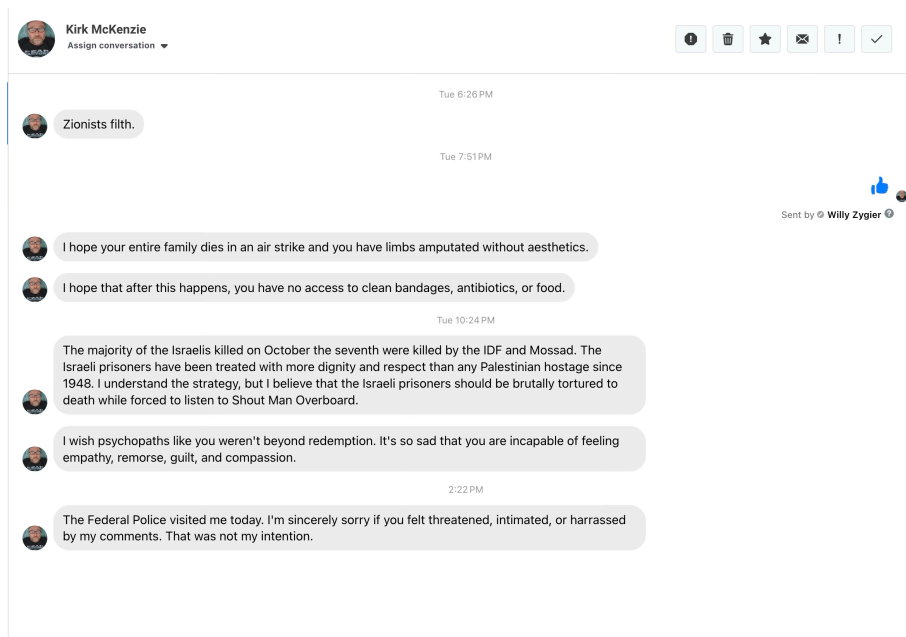
<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1084034269760870&set=pb.100044629204848..2207520000&type=3>

The masked graffitist was caught on security cameras, twice, but has not been identified.



The below are examples of the online serial harassment we were enduring concurrently all the harassment in the physical world was taking place. As you will see we reported Kirk McKenzie to the local police who paid him a visit. We heard nothing more from him after that.





Kate Emerson is another online cyber bully. The following document is our complaint and attempts to bring Kate Emerson to the attention of X and the eSafety Commissioner. Our first encounter with Emerson was when she put a comment on a photo I posted of Willy, myself and 2 Israeli performers, on **6 January, 2025** on which she commented - *“the faces of genocide”* She shared the post with her comment. The link to that is below along with a series of her other antisemitic comments. The complaint was made on our behalf by Leon Zwier of ABL.

By-Email Julie Inman-Grant eSafety Commissioner Office of the eSafety Commissioner Julie.InmanGrant@eSafety.gov.au	Your Ref File No. Contact Leon Zwier Direct +61 3 9229 9607 lzwier@abl.com.au

Dear Commissioner,	
--------------------	--

Complaint under *Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)* (OSA) on behalf of Deborah Conway and Willy Zygier – request for investigation into failure by X to meet Basic Online Safety Expectations

We act for Deborah Conway and Willy Zygier. Both are accomplished and well known musicians.

Set out below are our instructions.

On 31 January 2025 Deborah Conway and her husband Willy Zygier, who are Jewish, complained to X about antisemitic, hateful and abusive posts about them made by, and reacting to, the account @KateEmerson88 (**Complaint**). The Complaint, which was required by the X online complaints form not to exceed 280 characters, stated:

On Jan 5 I posted on Instagram & Facebook a photo. The 4 of us in the photo are Jews. On Jan 9 X account @KateEmerson88 reposted this photo captioned "the faces of genocide". We seek removal of those posts, posts reacting to them & closure of the account @KateEmerson88.

The following links to the hateful and abusive posts were included with the Complaint:

[Kate Emerson 🇩🇪 ▼ on X: "The faces of genocide: https://t.co/YU4VG61uzg" / X](#)

[Kate Emerson 🇩🇪 ▼ on X: "And i wonder who that be? The genocidal AJA? Maybe Mark Leibler and his son Jeremy who are practically Mossad agents in this country-maybe they can sue me too, for saying that. Deborah Conway and her husband ARE the faces of genocide. No one doubts it, not even them: https://t.co/wz4ZmfJLMa" / X](#)

[Kate Emerson 🇩🇪 ▼ on X: "This ugly Zionist khunt is the nightmare: https://t.co/APgpMNDwwq" / X](#)

On 31 January 2025 at 3:57:49 PM AEDT by email X acknowledged receipt of the Complaint and gave it the X case number CAAAAAAAZQ9bDgEAAAef_xQ

On 31 January 2025 at 5:00:51 PM AEDT by email X wrote:

Hello,

After reviewing the available information, we determined that there were no violations of the X rules in the content you reported.

We appreciate your help and encourage you to reach out again in the future if you see any potential violations.

For more resources about how to control your X experience please visit our Help center.

Thank you,

X

The X decision arrived only 63 minutes after receipt of the Complaint had been acknowledged. It is not possible to say for sure that the decision was fully automated. At minimum, it appears to be template wording, whether sent by a human or a bot. Certainly, the decision failed to address the specifics of the complaint or explain how the three example posts and the posts reacting to them supportively did not, according to X, violate the relevant X Rules on [Hateful Conduct](#) and [Abuse and Harassment](#).

Two other examples of reactive posts supporting @KateEmerson88 are:

[Seriously on X: "@KateEmerson88 Kill the jew cunts" / X](#)

[bronwen algate #proudprole on X: "@KateEmerson88 Hitler was a vegetarian." / X](#)

The antisemitic, hateful and abusive nature of the @KateEmerson88 posts and of posts supporting them is self-evident. The unchecked continual publication and republication of such antisemitic, hateful and abusive statements is contributing to the unprecedented rise in antisemitism in Australia and causing a breakdown in social cohesion.

It is also a basic expectation that X give reasons for its incomprehensible conclusion that its rules were not violated.

Deborah Conway and Willy Zygier have endured considerable abuse on X over a period pre-dating the 9 January 2025 post as well as since. Three examples of posts on X by the account @KateEmerson88 will serve to illustrate the vile nature of many posts:

7 January 2024 9:58PM -

The late great Bill Hicks once said:

Hitler had the right idea, he was just an underachiever.

He was generalised about it. I am not. I am quite particular about how Hitler might have made the world better. I would not exist, but that is a price I would happily pay.

27 January 2024 9:14 PM (since deleted) -

So, I am a Jew. I am Ashkenazi, as are most Jews around the world and many in Israel itself.

All I can think of tonight is that Hitler's only mistake was stopping too soon. Pity, that.

I will likely go for this post but so be it. I have to say it.

It is all I can think of now.

19 December 2024 9:48 PM -

[reposting a photo posted on social media by Deborah Conway and Willy Zygier when they were in Israel] -

Well, well. Here is the Zew Deborah Conway with the zunt Little Willy.

Tea at the King David Hotel...if only history might repeat itself :)

The account @KateEmerson88 uses a symbol of a red triangle in its profile header. Among the meanings of the red triangle is that it is used by Hamas fighters to denote targets for attack. These links to an [article](#) and a [video](#) provide further details about the red triangle symbol.

Being the target of the kind of material summarised above takes a heavy toll on them and their community.

The primary purpose of this letter is to request the Office of the eSafety Commissioner to investigate, decide and remedy three separate issues arising out of the circumstances of this case:

1 Cyber-abuse material

Deborah Conway and Willy Zygier have been the targets of [cyber-abuse material](#) posted on X (*Online Safety Act* Part 3 Division 4 section 36) and X ought to be required to remove the cyber-abuse material (OSA Part 7).

2 Incitement or promotion of abhorrent violent conduct

The posts @KateEmerson88 and that account's supporters promote the murder of Jews – directly, as in “kill the Jew cunts”, or through the notion that the Holocaust is incomplete, as in “Hitler's only mistake was stopping too soon”. Those posts breach the OSA because they incite or promote abhorrent violent conduct as that term is defined in the OSA section 5, Criminal Code subdivision H, Division 474, s 474.32. Those posts ought to be blocked (OSA Part 8).

3 Failure by X to meet Basic Online Safety Expectations

Continuing publication of the posts and X's handling of the Complaint together amount to failure by X to meet certain Basic Online Safety Expectations (OSA Part 4, s 46 (1) (c) ii, v, vi and (e) ii, vi vii and (f) read with eSafety's [Basic Online Safety Expectations Regulatory Guidance](#) July 2024, in particular pages 27-29 *Proactive minimisation of unlawful and harmful material*, page 36 *Detecting and addressing hate speech*, page 45 *Preventing anonymous accounts being used for unlawful or harmful material* and pages 53-55 *Minimising cyber-abuse material targeted at adults and material that incites/promotes abhorrent violent conduct*).

Our clients recognise that eSafety, like any statutory regulator, has many responsibilities and limited resources for complaints handling. They urge eSafety to take up their complaint not just for themselves but because it represents, in microcosm, a too-common contemporary experience for other Jewish Australians. Many suffer from hateful, abusive activity by certain vociferous social media users.

Typically, antisemites operating on X hide behind anonymity. They use X handles which may or may not contain information relating to their real identities. The accounts may or may not be run by an isolated independent individual as distinct from a hate-spreading organised group.

By design, X permits – perhaps even for its own ends facilitates - the cowardice of anonymity and the cyber equivalent of clamorous mob hatred.

eSafety, through its OSA Part 13 powers to compel from a social media service provider the identity and contact details of an end-user, has the capacity, backed by federal law, to extract a measure of accountability from the purveyors of hateful and abusive posts and the digital platforms which tolerate them.

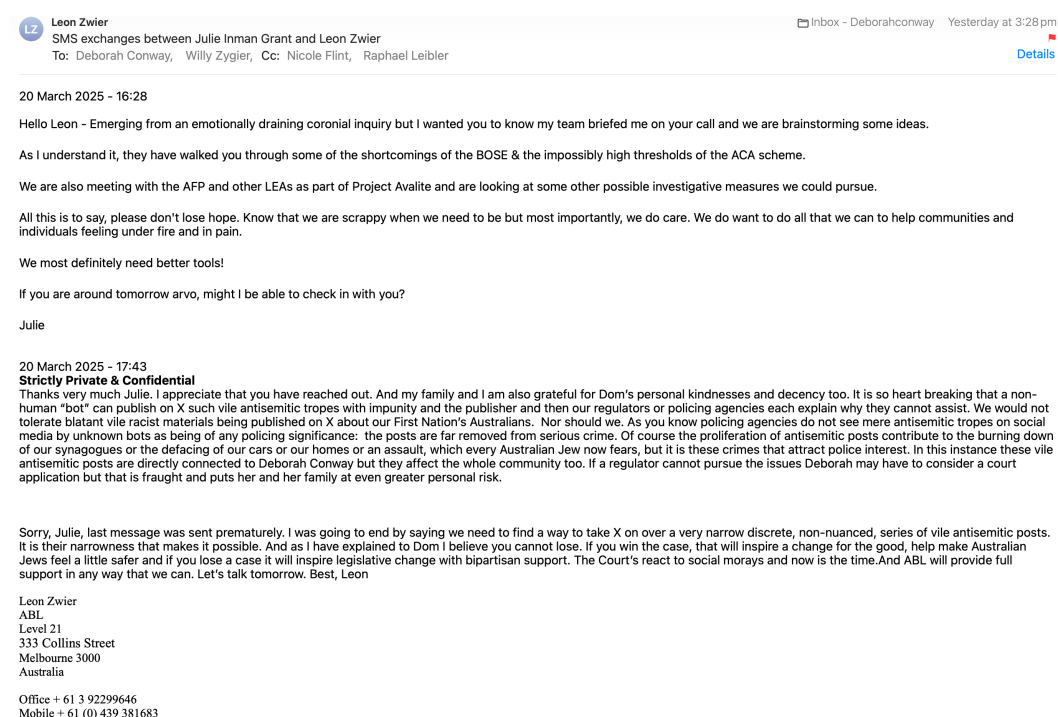
Through investigating complaints and, where appropriate, issuing blocking, removal or contravention notices which have the effect of reducing or deterring antisemitic hate speech, eSafety fulfils, for all Jewish Australians and in a larger sense all Australians, the objects in section 3 of the OSA, namely the improvement and promotion of online safety.

If it is necessary for our clients to lodge all or parts of this complaint to you via any of eSafety's online portals, please let us know. Our clients look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Leon Zwier
Partner

Below is a screenshot of an email exchange from **20 March, 2025** between eSafety commissioner Julie Inman Grant and ABL's Leon Zwier discussing the limitations of what the eSafety commission can do in the face of the torrent of online abuse that I and many others have had to endure and that goes unchecked.



Clementine Ford is an author, public personality, musician & social media influencer who, at the time of her extensive and virulent antisemitic commentary had around 250,000 followers. She was one of the people behind the doxxing incident of January/February 2024. And she has been a regular contributor to the scapegoating of Australian Jewish/Zionist/Israeli women by denying their horrific experiences both on October 7 and afterwards.

“Ruptured” is an anthology of 36 Jewish Australian women’s experiences post October 7. It constitutes a unique and powerful overview of the very disturbing consequences and trauma Jewish Australian woman have been dealing with. I contributed an essay to the anthology.

On **14 August, 2025** Clementine Ford “reviewed” the anthology on her social media pages. When I read these posts on the same day, I took the screenshots you see below and sent them to Kristen Wilson of the Australian Federal Police. Subsequently I made a statement of complaint to the AFP.

On the **24 February, 2026** I received the below:

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Wilson, Kristen" <Kristen.Wilson@afp.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Clementine Ford posts [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: 24 February 2026 at 11:04:14 am AEDT
To: Deborah Conway <wzdc@deborahconway.com>
Cc: "Allison, Jim" <James.Allison@afp.gov.au>

OFFICIAL

Good morning Deborah,

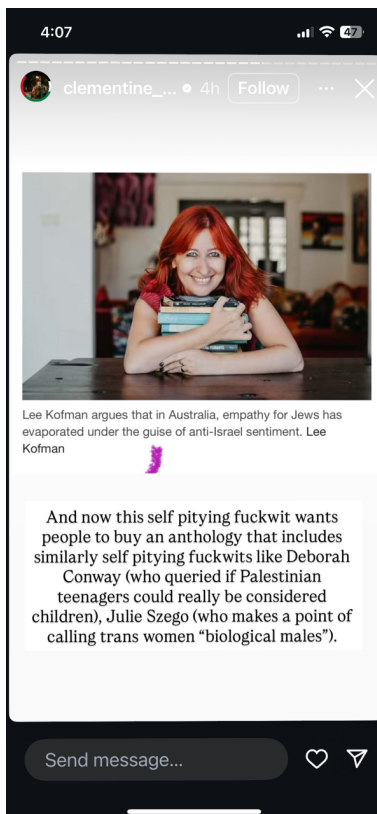
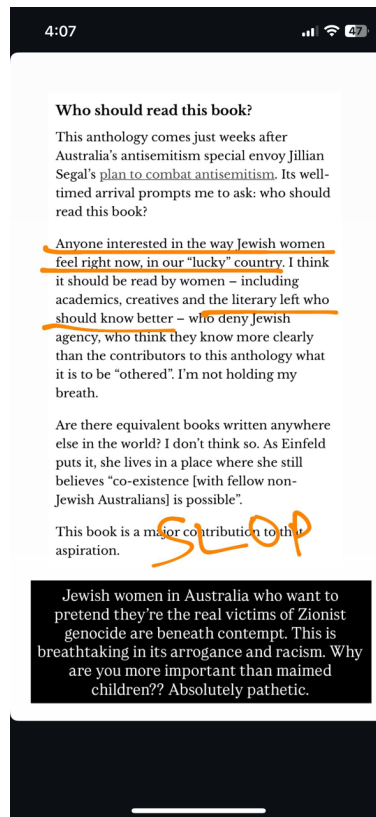
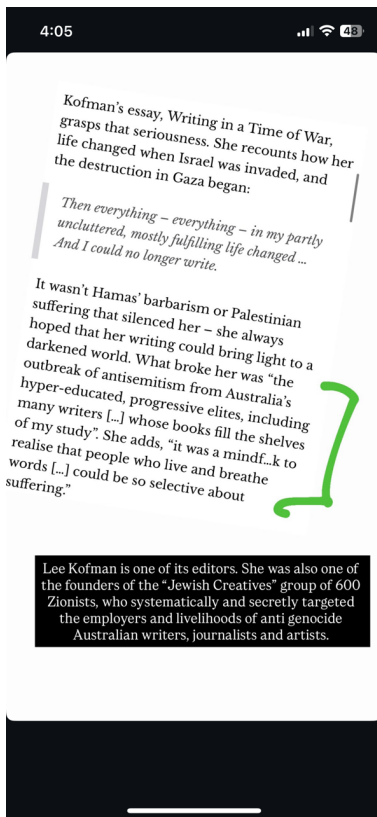
Unfortunately, I do not have much of an update as to the status of the investigation relating to the ‘doxxing’ by Clementine Ford.

The matter is still active and under assessment.

I will be moving on to a different work area. The member responsible for this case will now be Sergeant James Allison. He is contactable at james.allison@afp.gov.au and is cc’d into this email.

Thank you for your ongoing patience.

Kind regards,
Kristen



My statement to AFP

	Statement

Statement in the matter of R v (insert name of Accused)

Name	Deborah Anne CONWAY
Occupation	Musician
Address	Known to police
Date	(select date)

STATES:

1. My full name is Deborah Anne CONWAY. My residential address is known to the Australian Federal Police.
2. I was born in Melbourne, Australia and grew up in an observant Jewish household. Although I didn't attend a Jewish school, I had a Jewish education and attended Jewish dancing classes, Sunday school and summer camp run by Temple Beth Israel.
3. I have been a musician for 40 years.
4. In early November 2024, someone I was in a WhatsApp group with named Lee Kofman approached me and told me that she was going to put together a document of Australian Jewish women and their experiences post October 7th, into an anthology with a view for publication. The document became the anthology titled "Ruptured," which was launched on 10 August 2025. I was one of 36 women who shared their experiences. The other experiences came from women from a variety of ages and backgrounds, but all with a similar chilling story to tell.
5. On the morning of 14 August 2025, I was made aware from another member of a WhatsApp group that I am part of, that Clementine Ford had made posts on her publicly accessible Instagram account. These posts were regarding a review of the book I contributed to titled "Ruptured." When I saw these posts come through, I was horrified about her de-humanisation of Jews, both directed at myself and the wider Jewish population.
6. Between 4:05pm and 4:08pm on 14 August 2025, I then accessed Clementine Ford's Instagram page and took four screenshots of these posts. These posts revolved around Clementine Ford discounting any suffering for Jewish Australian women and created an incapacity to empathise with the Jewish experience at all. Ultimately, Clementine Ford was dehumanising Jews, Zionists and Israeli's. In one of these posts, she mentioned me by my full name for her entire following to see.
7. On 14 August 2025, I reported this matter to AFP via Report a Crime.

8. At 11:00am on 25 August 2025, I provided a copy of these screenshots to Detective Acting Sergeant Kristen WILSON from the Australian Federal Police.
9. As we are public figures, since October 7th my partner and I continue to receive hateful and ugly comments directed towards us, including physical demonstrations at our shows, cancelations of our shows, being outed from festival lineups and requiring security when at festivals. I have also lost all kinds of work.
10. I believe in this instance, Clementine Ford mentioning Jews has really crossed a line. I'm a Jew, my parents are Jews, and my children are Jews. For her to single me out as this is how I view the world is deeply disturbing.
11. Everyone I know in the Jewish community is suffering here. I'm worried that all it takes is one of her followers to view what she has posted and believe what she says as "Gospel" and act on what she is saying. When you vilify a group of people to the extent Clementine Ford has done, then you will plant the seed in someone's mind that has not explored the complexity of the story, and they very well may act on this anger. I believe Clementine Ford is harming the safety of Jews in this country.

Signature _____
Deborah Anne CONWAY

I hereby acknowledge that this statement is true and correct and I make it in the belief that a person making a false statement in the circumstances is liable to penalties of perjury.

Signature _____
Deborah Anne CONWAY

The making of the acknowledgement and the signing of the statement were witnessed by me at (insert time) on (select date) at (insert address) in Victoria.

Signature _____
(insert name of Police Officer)
(insert rank and AFP number)
(insert location)

On **8 August, 2025** my husband Willy Zygier and I released our 11th studio album titled *Right Wing Propaganda*.

The next part of this submission concerns our attempts to get publicity, reviews and to arrange a tour around the release of this album.

The album was sent by our publicist to The Australian and The Fairfax press to review. We were told the Fairfax press had no column inches to write a review of us. The Australian's music editor passed it along to

one of his freelance writers. Weeks went by and there was no review. When I inquired via my publicist what had happened I received the following on **12 August, 2025**:

The Journo Andrew had commissioned (who is a freelance music writer) to review your album has pulled out of doing it. In short he told Andrew that when he took the job on he didn't realise your views and he told Andrew that he couldn't support someone who has caused a lot of hurt with her words.

This upset me greatly and eventually I said something to one of the senior staff at The Australian, the publication that had made me, along with Josh Frydenberg and Alex Rychin, The Australian's Australians Of The Year in 2024. The irony of not being able to get our album reviewed despite being honoured as someone who had shown leadership standing against the tide of antisemitism was a jarring contradiction. The album was eventually reviewed on **25 November, 2025**.

Organising a tour in this fevered atmosphere was very difficult. A few venues from the outset outright rejected our bookings.

On **19 June, 2025** my agent received the below response to a request made to book a Macedon Ranges Shire Council venue in October. After first explaining there was not a lot of availability, the Council representative felt compelled to add the following -:

...Council has a responsibility to ensure that all supported events align with our values of inclusion, respect, and community safety, as outlined in our Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Statement. Recent public commentary by the artist has attracted widespread attention, including instances of protest and event disruption. As part of Council's arts and culture programming, we must consider the potential impact on community wellbeing and cohesion.

In line with Council's artist agreement and ethical guidelines, we are unable to support performances where there is a reasonable risk of community distress, division, or safety concerns arising from the broader public context. These standards guide all programming decisions to help ensure the wellbeing of our diverse community.

We appreciate your understanding and welcome future proposals that align with our shared commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all.

Kind regards,

Cristina Pantazis (They/She)

Creative Venues & Programs Team Leader

Community Strengthening

Macedon Ranges Shire Council

T 03 5421 1428 | M 0461 519 409 | E cpantazis@mrsc.vic.gov.au | W mrsc.vic.gov.au

Working Together | Honesty | Accountability | Innovation | Respect

Since the event had not gone on sale, therefore any community pushback was imagined by the Team Leader, we can only imagine that her reference to inclusive and respectful was directed to everyone except people who believe that Israel should have the right to exist; ie most of the world's Jews.

On **7 July, 2025** I was alerted to Theatre Royal Castlemaine pulling out of the booking they had made with my agent. We received the following email.

After our announcement for Deborah's show a few hours ago, I have received a number of messages that suggest this show will be heavily protested in Castlemaine. I strongly feel we should postpone the show, in the interests of Deborah's safety. I received a call from the local Palestinian support group, who said they would be present at the venue protesting the gig. It's a sad state of affairs, but I do not want trouble for us or the artist. There is strong Palestinian support in the town as you are no doubt aware and I feel like this could only bring negative publicity for all of us.

*Tim
Tim Heath
Owner/Manager
www.theatreroyalcastlemaine.com.au
30 Hargraves St.
Castlemaine 3450
ph. 0354 721 196*

The show was cancelled, ticket buyers wrote to us to protest, thinking we had pulled the show. We explained it was the venue and advised them where they could buy tickets to another performance not geographically too distant. The suggested "postponement" has not been revisited.

On **18 July, 2025** the booking agency Premier Artists entered into a contract with Jan Hodge and Lisa Quinney on behalf of Queenscliff Uniting Church for us to perform on **8 November, 2025**.

On **28 August, 2025**, Premier received notification to terminate the event stating:

"Due to unforeseen circumstances we are no longer able to host the concert at Uniting Queenscliff on Saturday 8 November. We are deeply sorry for any inconvenience caused."

No reason for the cancellation of the event was given in the email.

We requested information about what "unforeseen circumstances" could mean close to more than 3 months out from the event. No answer was forthcoming.

In June 2020 we had performed at the Queenscliff Uniting Church to a sold out audience. The show had been warmly received.

In July 2025 we started to become aware of a letter that was being sent to venues where we were scheduled to perform. I believe this letter was part of the reason the Castlemaine and Queenscliff gigs were both cancelled.

See below.

*Hello
I'm writing with great concern that you have a planned gig with Deborah Conway.
Conway is a self confessed Zionist. Someone who has publicly supported the current genocide in Gaza, where almost 100,000 people have been slaughtered since 2023. She has also made vile comments about children.
As a professional in the arts industry myself, and a child of the 90's, Conway was someone i was once in awe of - and I'd attend every gig, without fail.
Never again.
Your support for Conway is abhorrent and this gig should be cancelled immediately.
Alicia Gardiner*

Over time it became apparent that Gardiner, an actress represented by BGM Agency had sent this exact letter to every venue that had been advertised on our tour. In other words, every venue that Gardiner saw we were playing at received this ugly, slanderous letter.

Leon Zwier at ABL on our behalf wrote to Gardiner via her agent asking her to cease and desist and making the claim as she was causing us tortious interference.

In response we received the following from Gardiner's lawyer.

Our reference 15347
Phone +612 8216 3006
Email michaelb@marquelawyers.com.au
Your reference [011927599](#)

10 September 2025
Leon Zwier
Arnold Bloch Liebler
By email: lzwier@abl.com.au

Dear Mr Zwier
Alicia Gardiner - Deborah Conway and Willy Zygier

We act for Alicia Gardiner. We refer to your letter dated 8 September 2025.
The elements of the tort of interference in contractual relations include the occurrence of a breach of contract between the plaintiff and a third party, knowledge by the defendant that the contract exists, and intention by the defendant to induce or procure the third party to commit the breach.
Our client has none of the requisite knowledge or intention, nor have you alleged that there has been any breach of contract. You have not even identified the third party who you claim cancelled your clients' performance.
The assertion of law in paragraph 8 of your letter is wrong, as you must know.
Your clients' demands are rejected.

Yours sincerely
Michael Bradley
Managing Partner
4609420v1

Apparently it's perfectly legitimate for Gardiner to slander us and spread vicious propaganda about us which is, at the very least, suspected of causing us to lose income as well as cause reputational damage but she is permitted to hide behind her alleged ignorance.

On **10 September, 2025** Charlie Kirk was assassinated by a person on a nearby rooftop with a sniper's rifle.

On **18 September, 2025** I received a message on an ad we had put up for our show in Frankston.

In response a person named Peter Wright wrote "*Plenty of rooftops with a view around Young St in Frankston.*"

When I looked at his Facebook profile there were 3 people wearing a t-shirt that said "Now I have a machine gun ho ho ho". This is a piece of merchandise from the Bruce Willis movie Die Hard. But I didn't recognise that and seeing it in the context that I did, and accompanied by everything else that was going on, I felt at least I should report it to the police. As I said in my statement to the AFP in reference to Clementine Ford's

deliberately provocative posts - *Everyone I know in the Jewish community is suffering here. I'm worried that all it takes is one of her followers to view what she has posted and believe and act on what she is saying. When you vilify a group of people to the extent Clementine Ford has done, there is a risk of the possibility of planting the seed of vigilante justice in someone's mind who has not explored the complexity of the story and may act on this anger. I believe Clementine Ford is risking the safety of Jews in this country.*

I thought it possible that Peter Wright could just be that vigilante type that might be taking 'justice' into his own hands.

From: Deborah Conway <wzdc@deborahconway.com>
Sent: Sunday, 21 September 2025 2:51 PM
To: Bower, James <James.Bower@afp.gov.au>; Wilson, Kristen <Kristen.Wilson@afp.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Witness Statement [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

Dear James & Kristen,

I have just received an awful message on a Facebook ad we're running to promote a show in Young St Frankston on the 3rd October.

Someone called Peter Wright writes "Plenty of rooftops with a view around Young St in Frankston."

I take this to be a threat of violence. His Facebook profile features people with t-shirts that say "Now I have a machine gun Ho Ho Ho"

I take this very seriously, I understand that these matters can move slowly but I would appreciate if this person could be looked into before our October 3rd performance at Young St. Frankston.

I really don't want to become a martyr.

I look forward to your earliest response.

Many thanks

Deborah Conway

Attached are screenshots of both.

UNOFFICIAL

Hi Deborah,

Thanks for this. As this does not relate to the matter we are investigating, I will ask that you submit a report of crime so that the AFP can make an assessment.

https://forms.afp.gov.au/online_forms/report-commonwealth-crime#:~:text=Call%20000%20or%20your%20local,is%20imminent%20or%20in%20progress.



Peter Wright

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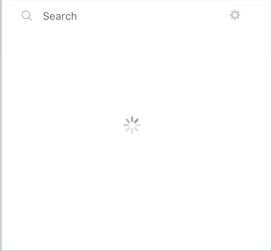
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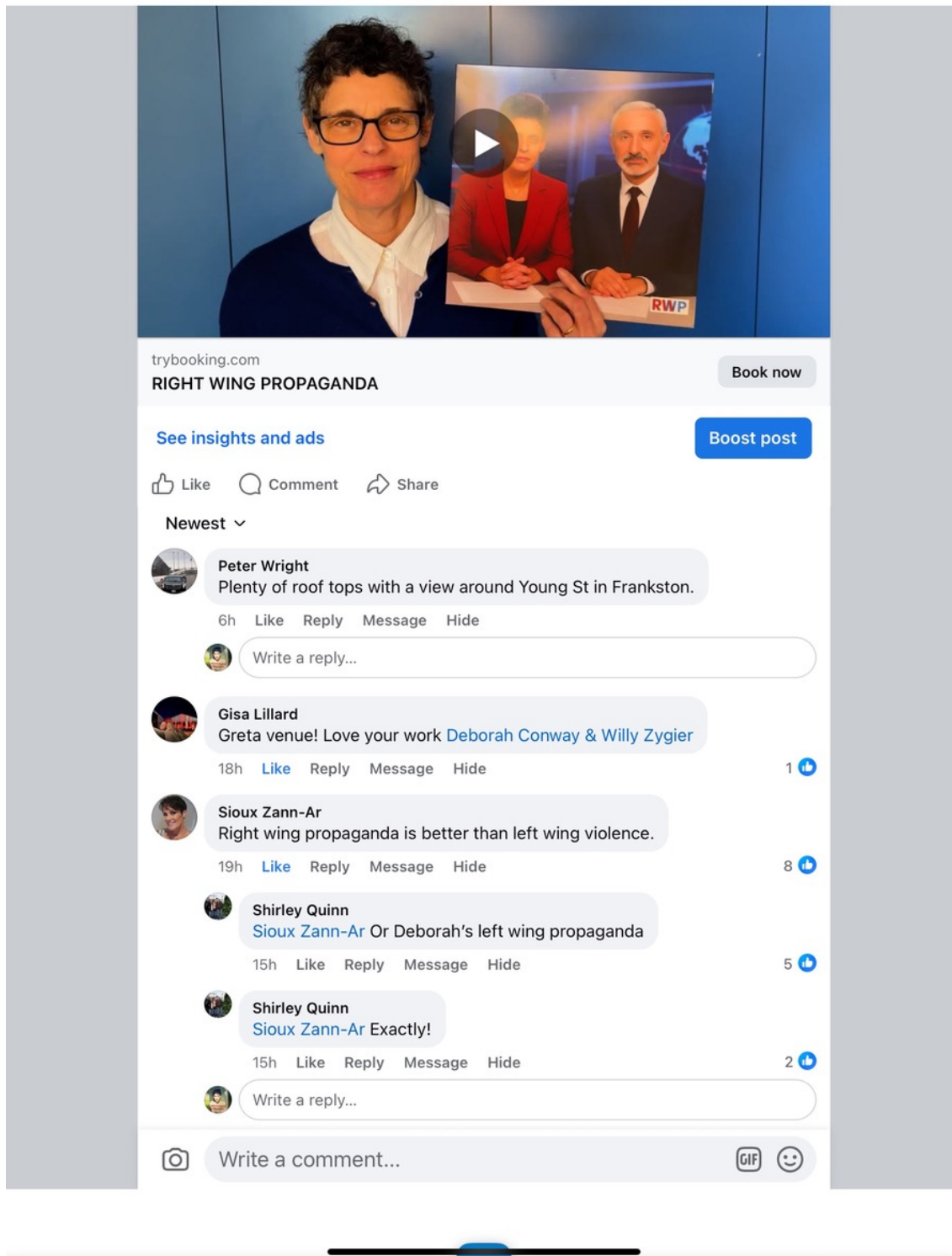
Reels



Notifications



Menu



I reported the incident at my local police station. The constable on duty pointed out the Die Hard connection. Noted it in his book and I heard nothing more about it.

In early July 2025, Premier Artists booked us a show for **7 November, 2025** at the Brunswick Ballroom. As soon as the show went on sale the 'interested parties' spread the word and the venue became the target for

some of the worst instances of intimidation. At a completely different show at the same venue for a musician called Emily Lubitz (who also happens to be Jewish) on **24 July, 2025**, a number of protesters turned up to protest our upcoming show in November. The venue owner, Andrew Kay, called us in for a meeting to explain that he had to protect his staff who were being pressured by their peers to boycott our show and he had a duty of care to protect them first and foremost. He told us he wouldn't cancel the show immediately but chances were he would cancel it eventually. Kay was good to his word. The protests became more intense, I believe they were happening every fortnight and the venue manager Will Ewing, was starting to receive threats to his own and his family's personal safety. It was horrendous. I finally received a call in September from Will to say that the protests has attracted a 70 odd strong crowd, that they were wearing balaclavas, banging pots and pans together, entering the front bar and filming the staff. I was told the police were in attendance but deemed the protest peaceful and moved no-one on.

The gig was cancelled although ticket buyers were not informed until closer to the event. The website simply announced "allocation exhausted", ie sold out.

From: Will Ewing <will@brunswickballroom.com.au>

Sent: Friday, 5 September 2025 1:13 PM

To: Keith Ridgway <keith.ridgway@premierartists.com.au>

Cc: Frank Stivala <fas@premierartists.com.au>; Frank Stivala (Assistant) <fsasst@premierartists.com.au>; Andrew Kay <andrew@akaaustralia.com.au>

Subject: Deborah Conway

Hi Keith,

It was great speaking with you earlier—thanks so much for taking the time to chat over the phone. I really appreciated the opportunity to connect, even under these challenging circumstances.

As I mentioned, the situation has escalated to a point where proceeding with Deborah's scheduled show on November 7th is no longer viable. While we have managed online harassment and boycotts in the past, the recent large-scale protests outside the venue, combined with a much larger demonstration planned for November 7th, have raised significant concerns. Based on the turnout of around 70 people at the August protest, I anticipate we could face as many as 300 protesters on the night. This poses a serious risk to property and, more importantly, to the safety of our staff.

Although we are a medium-sized venue, we don't have a large staff. However, after recent events, five of them have expressed their unavailability for the 7th, citing safety concerns.

I spoke with Deborah recently, and we have agreed not to move forward with the show on the 7th.

There's no need to make a public announcement. We can reach out to ticket holders when Deborah feels the timing is right, informing them that a reschedule is being planned. We'll also let them know they are eligible for a full refund, and can share Deborah's website and details of other upcoming shows where they can see her and Willy's launch.

Thanks again for your understanding and support.

Will

Will Ewing

Venue Director & Head of Programming

Brunswick Ballroom

will@brunswickballroom.com.au

There was also an Instagram page associated with these protests merribek4palestine which attracted the worst kind of anonymous trolling, venomous and fuelled by hate and misinformation.

https://www.instagram.com/p/DQknyJmK9_A/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==



https://www.instagram.com/p/DQqFA70AfyT/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==



The venue for our **9 November 2025** gig was in Archie's Creek. The owners had been targeted by Alicia Gardiner in July, their promotion was targeted constantly by the online trolls and a further group called BassCoast4Palestine, <https://www.instagram.com/basscoast4palestine/> also on Instagram, targeted the audience.

When we arrived at the venue for our show we were instructed to park behind the venue out of sight. The police in attendance were sympathetic, understanding of the situation and there to protect us. There were police out the front of the venue and police inside as well - basscoast4palestine had been drumming up business; the flyer below calling for people to "feel free to use this information to inspire any action you believe is justified" with a devil emoji gave the the venue owners reason to be prepared for any disturbance, possibly violence. Audiences ran the gauntlet of protesters out the front. Once inside things were calm, though we could all still hear some drumming from outside.

As we were backstage about to commence the show we could here a disturbance out where the audience were. One guy who had purchased a ticket came to the notice of the police inside and before he was ejected he started yelling accusations of my complicity in the "*deaths of hundreds of thousands of babies, children and woman slaughtered in the genocide*". The protester was quickly dispatched outside by the police in attendance and there were no further disturbances. There is a sample of the back and forth that went on between the organiser Travis Thompson and others on our FB page.

9:56 am Mon 10 Nov

Posts
basscoast4palestine

Follow

basscoast4palestine
Samora Pinderhughes · HOLD FAST (feat. The Healing Project Choir)



Outspoken Zionist and supporter of 'Israel' Deb Conway is playing in Archie's creek today 🤡🤡

Feel free to use this information to inspire any action you believe is justified 🤡🤡

What we're doing:

- call the Archie's creek hotel and encourage them to cancel the gig!
- Show up with us at 2pm with your flags 🇬🇧🇵🇸 to show that Zionist's are not welcome here!

Screenshot this and repost it tagging @thearchiescreekhotel

31 3 1 7

basscoast4palestine SNAP ACTION

Outspoken Zionist Deb Conway is playing at Archie's creek hall today at 3:00 🤡🤡



Travis Thompson

It's frustrating to be so wildly misrepresented when the message from those out front was so incredibly clear. We are against genocide. Deb Conway is downplaying the deaths of children, denying genocide, and obfuscating reality about those who are concerned. We want safety first everyone, including Jews. There is nothing more clear than the fact that Israel has never made Jews more safe, especially now.

17w Like Reply Hide

4



JayZee

Travis Thompson The problem with people like you is that in your bigotry towards Israel you want to confuse the accusation of genocide with the fact of genocide, while absolving the people of Gaza of all responsibility. The only possible outcome of the events of October 7 was war, there was no other outcome the perpetrators of that day could expect, or hope for. They prepared for that war by building hundreds of kilometres of tunnels yet not one child was put in those tunnels to keep them safe. This is the despicable war that Gaza wanted to fight, a war begun with indiscriminate slaughter, rape & kidnapping and continuing with keeping their children exposed, but racist bigots like you expect the Jews to care more for Gaza's children than the people of Gaza do. Israel can only fight the real war that was brought to them, not your imaginary, 'pristine' war, though more likely you would prefer that there was no war & the Jewish State just lay down & die. You're not the person of good faith you're trying to present yourself as & nor are you a person with any real solutions.

17w Like Reply Hide

2



Author

Deborah Conway & Willy Zygyier

"It's frustrating to be so wildly misrepresented". Travis I know exactly how you feel, you and your colleagues have been wildly misrepresenting me for 2 years. You have falsely embroidered, wrongly attributed, taken out of context, manipulated and just basically lied about what I have said & haven't said, what I've done & haven't done and even what I've thought. How dare you assume to know what I think!

Your group & many others which you may or may not be affiliated with (though you all seem to share the same bogus facts) have dragged my name through this genocidal slur for years. To say that I have supported genocide is defamatory, to say I have supported the deaths of 100's of thousands (!) of Palestinian women, children & babies" is defamatory and a blood libel in a long string of blood libels your cohort has aimed and fired at me. Your accusations are not based on a shred of truth. Just the product of your fevered hatred of anyone who believes that Israel has the right to exist & to defend itself.

17w Like Reply

2



Travis Thompson

Deborah Conway & Willy Zygyier Thanks for this response. I can imagine that you do feel misunderstood. We are operating on what we can find publicly from you. We've watched the interviews and listened to what you've had to say. We disagree with your positions, hence our actions and engagement.

Your last statement here is a perfect example. The idea of Israel having a "right to exist" seems simple but there is a difference between a state existing and a state instituting an apartheid, removal, and occupation of people. This is the "existence" that Israel insists it deserves. We disagree that any demographic--be it Muslims, Christians, Jews, or any other group--has a right to that.

We will continue to oppose the public platforming of anyone who advocates for a world where any state (including Australia) can do or support things like what Israel has done for its entire existence.

17w Like Reply Hide



JayZee

Travis Thompson your arguments to **Deborah Conway & Willy Zygyier** avoids all history & nuance but fair enough, this is Facebook, many real books have been written & still can't express the full complexity of the situation. It all boils down to this. Israel is the homeland of the Jews & if you wish to get rid of it, realistically you are hoping the last 2 years will be the forever status quo. The millions of Jews of Israel will not disappear or give themselves up to a polity that has shown no ability to accommodate them other than to wish for their destruction.

17w Like Reply Hide

I've enjoyed a 4 decade run of being an independent creative artist. I have made a lot of work I'm very proud of; I've directed festivals, performed on all kinds of stages, from lounge rooms to stadiums; I've been an integral part of both independent and commercial theatre offerings; I have written, recorded and produced music. I have mentored other artists in various capacities, including many woman who appeared in our productions of BROAD, a celebration of female singer songwriters that took place over 4 outings from 2005 to 2008. I have given many musicians opportunities when I was in a position to do so, ie in my role as Artistic Director of The Queensland Music Festival 2009 & 2011. I have worked hard at everything I have attempted and I hope brought pleasure to many, many people.

I have garnered accolades, including Gold & Platinum Awards, Aria Awards, the Don Banks Award, made a National Living Treasure, I have been inducted into Victoria's Hall of Fame and in 2020 I was made an AM Order of Australia for service to Music and the Jewish Community.

Being a Jew is at the core of my being, it is not an add on, it is not an ornament, it is not an option. It is my very essence. To be a Zionist is folded into this essence of my identity, it is not controversial to believe the Jews spring from our ancient land, to feel the deepest connection to its existence, to pray for next year in Jerusalem at every Passover, a phrase that has echoed down through thousands of years. Being a Zionist is not about supporting one government or one policy, it is certainly not about supporting dominion over our neighbours. It is about believing that the Jews have a deep, abiding and eternal connection to the land of Israel.

My husband and partner of 35 years is the son of Holocaust survivors, I have some understanding of that period in history. To be a Jew accused of supporting genocide after 6 million Jews were eliminated in the Shoah is a spectacularly sadistic slur.

Since **7 October, 2023**, my career has been largely eviscerated because I have stood up as a Jew and as a Zionist and not backed down in the face of the incredible lies and propaganda being flung around. My earning capacity has been almost obliterated, who would want to court such unwanted attention to platform a Jew who believes Israel should be allowed to exist, particularly when there has been so little support from law enforcement. I have virtually nothing in my gig diary in 2026.

My children have suffered because of me; by association they have been targeted on their social media platforms, my youngest daughter has been threatened, my middle daughter, a musician, has lost work. My reputation is shredded. I simply refuse to grovel before these bullies, therefore I am fair game. My industry has abandoned me, not a single show of public support against the tsunami of hatred I have faced. I am exhausted, emotionally wretched from the last 2 & half years of watching in disbelief the ever growing spiral of insanity that is fuelling this hate. I am suspicious when I'm in the wrong part of town or when someone I don't know approaches me, I stiffen until I know they are friend not foe.

And so we go, from Globalise the Intifada Chants, to River to the Sea Marches every weekend, to swastikas and Die Jew graffiti, to firebombed synagogues, to terrorising school children, to the deaths of 15 people celebrating the 1st night of Chanukah, the festival of light, on our iconic Bondi Beach. It is a thoroughly miserable situation authored at least in part by weak leadership and its refusal to confront the excesses of the everyday dehumanisation of Jews over the last two and half years in a myriad of ways, subtle and overt. Australia has paid an unacceptably high price for protecting people's rights to scream vile, Jew hate at their favourite age old scapegoat.

My hope for the findings of this Royal Commission are that there is a serious examination of what constitutes protection of the Jewish community vis a vis law enforcement; an examination of the line between free speech and incitement; what is the role of the Human Rights Commission that has been so completely missing in action these last 30 months and why that has been tolerated; what are our taxpayer dollars funding in our arts institutions and funding bodies; why are the Sydney Biennale, the Sydney Festival, the Adelaide Writer's Festival and Creative Australia given taxpayer's money to fund antisemitic content without examination, always carefully cloaking their excuses in the noble raiments of free expression and freedom of the artist? What are we allowing to be disseminated from the pulpit; how are Imams not arrested or deported for telling their followers that Jews are worse than pigs and monkeys? How has our national broadcaster been permitted to so consistently skew their reporting of the conflict in the Middle East to match more closely the output of what Al Jazeera is reporting than The Times of Israel, with little balance? For many decades now our political and cultural institutions have been allowed, maybe encouraged, to reinforce a particular slant and air biases against the Jewish state and the Jews.

I can't say I have much faith that something will happen from this inquiry but since I have just sat down and written more than 13,000 words I guess I'm still holding a shred of hope that someone is listening and someone can arrest this rapid terrifying descent into Dante's Inferno.

Before there are more innocent lives lost.