

Turning Point:

The Victorian Jewish Community after October 7



Foreword

Earlier in 2025, the JCCV published the following reports:

- *JCCV-CSG Victorian Antisemitism Report 2024*
- *Defining Antisemitism: The Victorian Experience*

I am pleased to add this third report in our research series: *Turning Point – The Victorian Jewish community after October 7*.

The brutal October 7 attack by Hamas against Israel in late 2023, followed by a record rise in local antisemitism, has changed the Victorian Jewish community in many ways. These changes are detailed on the pages of this report.

As the peak body, we have the advantage of a true bird's-eye view of the Victorian Jewish community from which to put this research together.

I would like to thank and acknowledge the Community Security Group Victoria, Jewish Care Victoria, the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, Monash University's Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation and the Online Hate Prevention Institute for producing research which has been drawn upon in this report.

As well as collating insights from these other reports, *Turning Point – The Victorian Jewish community after October 7* considers the responses from long-form interviews conducted with 17 Jewish community leaders, who have led a diverse range of organisations over the past 18 months. I would like to thank each of the leaders who participated in the interviews.

While this report does not make any formal recommendations, the JCCV has been considering the findings carefully. Preliminary findings have already gone into the development of the JCCV's current strategic plan and related initiatives. This plan is detailed on our website www.jccv.org.au.

I urge JCCV member organisations, key Jewish partner organisations and key external stakeholders to read this report and consider how you and your organisation can best respond to the changes in the Victorian Jewish community.

Philip Zajac
President, JCCV

Executive summary

This report examines the changes that have taken place in the Victorian Jewish community after the Hamas attack on Israel which occurred on October 7 2023, and the subsequent war in Israel and Gaza. In the aftermath of these events in the Middle East, Victoria has recorded antisemitism at unprecedented levels.

This report draws on tabletop research, as well as in-depth interviews conducted especially for this report with Victorian Jewish leaders.

Social Cohesion

This report begins by examining social cohesion from the perspective of Jewish Victorians.

This section examines various environments where interviewees and reports observed a decline in social cohesion, including the arts, queer community, workplaces, and universities.

Mental Health

The next section covers mental health, drawing on previously published research by Jewish Care, as well as interviews. It details mental health impacts on all age groups. It also looks at the impact on community leaders during these challenging times.

Safety

The report then examines changes in security and safety considerations for the Victorian Jewish community following October 7.

Deeper Community Engagement

Next, the report covers community relationships. It makes the important finding that there has been an observable increase in Jewish Victorians' engagement with their community and in pride in the community. It details ways that this increased engagement has manifested. On the flip side, the interviews conducted indicate a shift towards disillusionment with political leaders and a decline in engagement with Muslim communities.

Media matters

Finally, the report notes research that shows higher-than-usual levels of media and social media consumption, along with their impacts.

Taken together, this report paints a complex picture of a community which has been deeply affected by trauma and isolation, leading many community members to involuntarily adjust their behaviours, including withdrawing from the broader Victorian community. At the same time, it highlights the enormous resilience of the Jewish community, which has come together with ongoing and ever-increasing pride in their Jewish identity and relationship with Israel and Zionism.

Methodology

The goal of this report is to build a mosaic of the Victorian Jewish community's responses to global and local events since October 2023. Primary research was undertaken through confidential in-depth interviews, as well as reviews of locally-produced, publicly available reports,¹ and a survey of relevant media.

Interview Consultations

This report draws on 17 interviews with leaders of active Jewish community organisations.

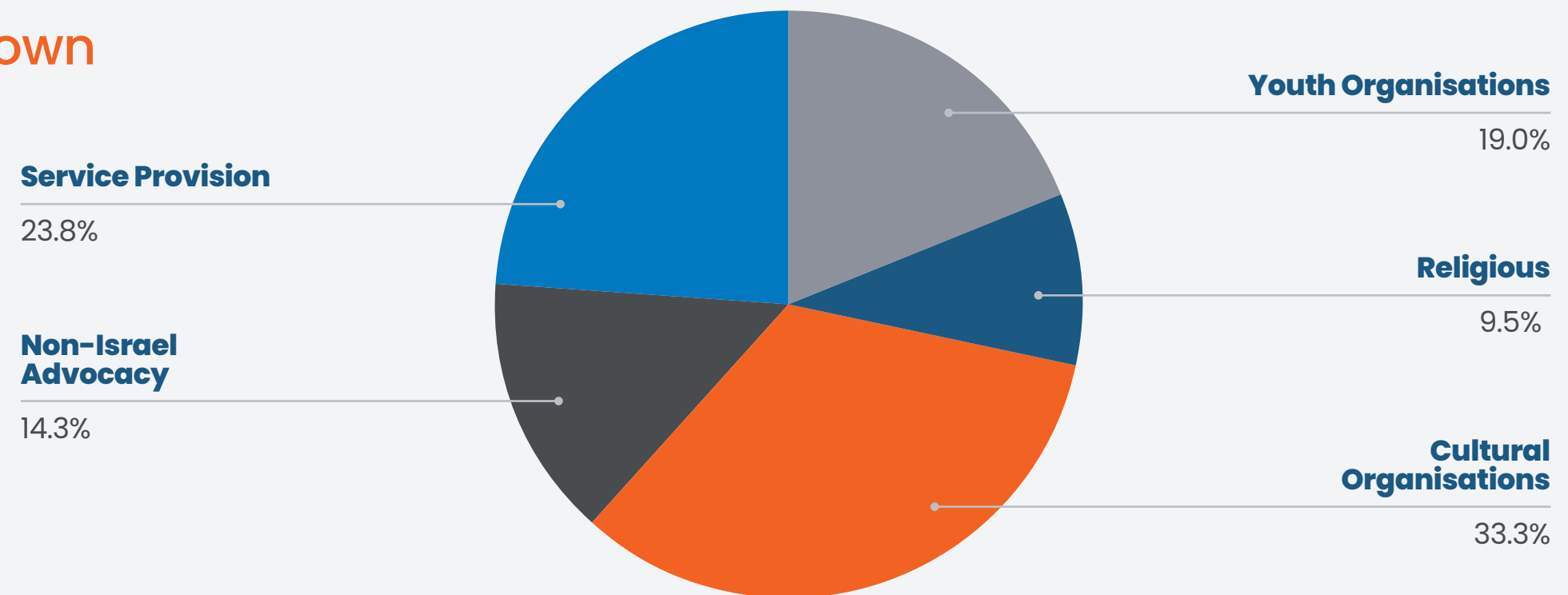
In selecting the organisations to be interviewed, several factors were considered.

1. The organisation and the representatives who undertook the interviews, must interact directly and consistently with Jewish community members.
2. The organisation must not be a dedicated Israel advocacy body.
3. The organisation should preferably be representative or umbrella bodies.²
4. Collectively, the organisations must represent diverse characteristics within the Jewish community. Diversity in terms of religious observance and sect, industry, and political affiliation were thoughtfully considered when determining who to interview.

¹ See Appendix 1. ² There are many constituent or member organisations who are represented by umbrella bodies. By interviewing representative bodies, we were able to gain insight into a wider range of Jewish experiences.

Organisational Breakdown

The organisations interviewed can be broken down as follows:



Interviews took place over six non-consecutive weeks from December 2024 to February 2025. This approach ensures that responses were not influenced by the same global or local events, thereby capturing a more balanced range of perspectives.

The interview questions were divided into two sections³. The first section aimed to understand the day-to-day operations of the organisation, and how, if at all, this has been influenced by October 7. This assisted in gaining an understanding of how the community has been structurally affected by October 7 and its aftermath.

The second set of questions asked community leaders to reflect on their own observations of the community as they related to a series of themes.

These themes include:

- mental health
- the role of the media
- antisemitism and safety
- interpersonal relationships within and outside of the community.

Each interviewee was instructed to focus exclusively on firsthand accounts and to respond honestly if they were unfamiliar with a particular area.

Confidentiality:

The identities of the interviewees, the organisations they represent, and their responses will remain confidential for several reasons:

1. We are unable to guarantee the safety of any interviewees, many of whom have already been doxxed, harassed, boycotted and otherwise targeted.
2. Confidentiality ensured that interviewees felt comfortable answering questions honestly, often giving vulnerable personal accounts or offering critical feedback about their organisations, the media, the community and political parties.
3. Some interview responses mention individuals and institutions that have not consented to being named. Accordingly, we have deidentified all interview answers.

³ Questions can be found in Appendix 2.

Public reports

This report consulted seven publicly available reports produced.⁴

- *Community Consultation Report*, Jewish Care, 2024.
- *Australian Jews in the Shadow of War*, Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, 2023.
- *Senate Submission to the Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024*, Australasian Union of Jewish Students, 2024.
- *Jewish Community Incident Reporting on Victorian University Campuses*, Community Security Group, 2024.
- *Victorian Antisemitism Report 2023*, Jewish Community Council of Victoria, 2023.
- *The Jewish University Experience Survey*, Australasian Union of Jewish Students, 2023.
- *Online Antisemitism After 7 October 2023*, Online Hate Prevention Institute and the Online Hate Task Force, in partnership with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and The Jewish Independent, 2024.

Explanation of the term “October 7”

This report uses the term “October 7” as shorthand to refer to the Hamas attack on Israel, which took place on October 7, 2023, resulting in the loss of 1189 lives, 7500 casualties and 252 hostages. In subsequent weeks, Israeli armed forces entered Gaza to seek to neutralise Hamas, the terrorist organisation behind these attacks. Following unrelenting attacks from Lebanon, Israel’s armed forces engaged militarily with Hizballah on their shared border.

With the exception of a few weeks, the conflict remains ongoing at the time of publication, although a ceasefire is now in place on the Israel-Lebanon border. As of the time of publication, more than 50 hostages were still held by Hamas and thousands of Palestinians had lost their lives.

This period was accompanied by an unprecedented rise in antisemitism in Victoria, in both the number of reports and the severity of incidents. This rise is documented extensively in the Victorian Antisemitism Reports of 2023 and 2024⁵.

Acknowledgements

Interviews were completed by Paris Enten, who also drafted this report on behalf of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria. The report was project managed by Naomi Levin.

We acknowledge all those who were interviewed for this report and the other research that fed into it. We particularly acknowledge the pain and distress caused to them by witnessing or experiencing antisemitism and/or discrimination.

This report was developed with funding support from the Victorian Government to understand and combat antisemitism in Victoria.



⁴ For further details on each of these reports, please see Appendix 1. ⁵ [Victorian Antisemitism Report](#)

Social cohesion

SUMMARY

- Jewish Victorians have been excluded – or have felt the need to retreat – from diverse areas of public life, workplaces, education and queer spaces due to rising antisemitism.
- This has been most acutely felt in the creative industries.

Social cohesion is a concept that lacks a clear definition but according to work undertaken by the Scanlon Foundation and Monash University, there are five key indicators of social cohesion in Australia. These are: belonging; worth; social justice and equity; participation; acceptance and rejection, legitimacy⁶. Interviews undertaken for this research indicate significant dissatisfaction from Jewish Victorians in all of these areas.

In many cases, Jewish people reported voluntarily withdrawing from aspects of their lives in order to avoid harassment, racial targeting and antisemitic attacks. In other cases, Jewish Australians are being involuntarily isolated and excluded from the communities that they have lived in and dedicated themselves to for decades.

⁶ SMI: The Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion

Artistic spaces

Media reports have profiled a number of Jewish artists whose livelihood has been impacted by antisemitic attitudes since October 7. These include visual artist Nina Sanadze⁷, singer Deborah Conway⁸, musician Joshua Moshe⁹ and author Lee Kofman¹⁰. Nearly 600 local Jewish creatives, artists and academics had their personal details published online under the banner of “genocidal Zionists” due to their membership of a community chat group. As a result of this ‘doxxing,’ interviewees report that Jewish artists have been contacted by venues, employers, or co-workers and told that they “no longer align with [their] values”, leading to contract cancellations. If we consider this through the lens of social cohesion, their participation and acceptance suffered significantly.¹¹

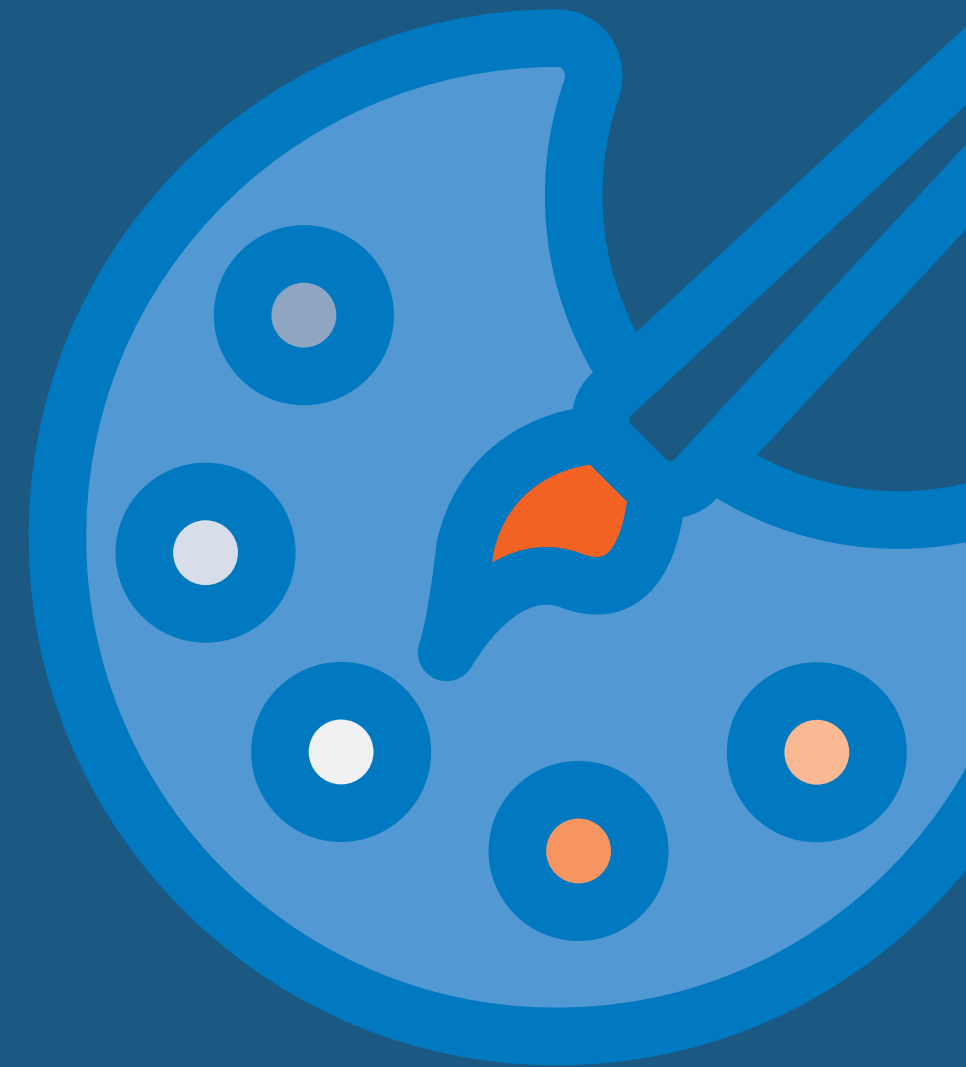
More than half of all interviewees indicated that Jewish professional creatives had been disproportionately targeted over their background.

Some Jewish artists reported that they had stopped working in the creative industry, hoping that by flying under the radar now, they can preserve their work for the future. Others are choosing to maintain their career while hiding their Jewish identity, refusing to sacrifice the many years of investment, education and reputation building. Another artist described, “if the only option is to leave [the industry] or fight, I want to fight and sacrifice everything,” expressing an inability “to choose between being Jewish or artistic.”

A representative of a Jewish cultural organisation interviewed for this report expressed immense disappointment at the artistic community’s response to October 7, stating, “October 7th happened, by October 9th or 10th, the entire arts community turned on Jewish artists and creatives.” This was especially difficult for many Jewish artists who had considered themselves artists first, and Jewish second, as they were suddenly being treated as Jewish before all else. Another interviewee lamented that she had been on artistic boards for many years, and was suddenly told that she made other board members uncomfortable, as she was “the Zionist in the room.”

Jewish artists described themselves as “petrified, shocked and terrified,” stating their “peak bodies turned out to be antisemitic”.

Interviewees also reported avoiding artistic spaces, including shows, theatre, festivals and exhibitions. In some cases, this is because the individual or someone close to them had been doxxed or harassed,¹² leading them to fear being targeted. Jewish attendees at artistic events or spaces are increasingly choosing to go in larger groups to enhance their sense of safety, security, and deter potential confrontations.



⁷ My cancellation only made me more determined to speak out, Nina Sanadze ⁸ If I have to pick a hill to die on, exposing antisemitism among ‘the good’ is the one, Vic Alhadeff ⁹ Jewish creatives tell Israel haters: ‘see you in court’, theaustralian.com.au (subscription needed)
¹⁰ Hate: on becoming a ‘bad Jew’, Lee Kofman ¹¹ SMI: The Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion ¹² See ‘Workplaces’ on page 10.

Case Study: Yentl

The presentation of *Yentl* by Kadimah Yiddish Theatre, an apolitical Melbourne-based Jewish theatre company,¹³ epitomises the environment in which Jewish creatives have been working.

Kadimah produced *Yentl* across three seasons in Melbourne and Sydney. However, the two seasons presented after October 7 2023 saw *Yentl* targeted due to supposed connections to Israel. It must be noted that the story was written by a Polish-American author in Yiddish in 1962, and the production has no connection to Israel.

In March 2022, *Yentl*'s Arts Centre Melbourne season saw full house audiences, attracting both Jewish and non-Jewish patrons, rising together in spontaneous standing ovations. *Yentl* was nominated for nine Green Room Awards, winning four.

In March 2024, *Yentl* was presented by Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre. However, Kadimah was confronted with the challenge of navigating a range of new threats against the production. Promotional posters for the

show were defaced, Malthouse Theatre staff threatened to resign over the organisation's hosting of the production, and Malthouse marketing and publicity strategies for *Yentl* were reduced to minimise risk. The impact was exacerbated by an unfortunate programming clash, resolved at the eleventh hour, where a creator involved in the doxxing of 600 Jewish creatives was scheduled to appear on the Malthouse Outdoor Stage on *Yentl*'s opening night.

In the first week of the Malthouse season, attendance decreased markedly due to safety concerns among both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. Non-Jewish audiences also felt that attending *Yentl* might be perceived as 'taking sides' in the Middle East conflict.

Nonetheless, the production of *Yentl* was critically acclaimed, attracting interest from two leading commercial producers to stage a 5-week season of *Yentl* at the Sydney Opera House.

On opening night of the Sydney season, *The Weekend Australian* published a substantial

article with the headline, "*Yentl* reclaims stage after Opera House rage".¹⁴ This coverage made further connections between a Jewish cultural performance *Yentl* and October 7 politics. Organisers believe this contributed to low ticket sales, with fewer than 50% of seats sold.

The Sydney season of *Yentl*, like those before it, received many rave reviews, and six nominations in the prestigious 2024 Sydney Theatre Awards,¹⁵ winning one.

This extremely high standard of critical acclaim demonstrates that the low box office numbers were not due to any poor performances on the part of the production of *Yentl*. Instead, it strengthens the anecdotal evidence that the Jewish play, with a universal message, was conflated with the conflict in the Middle East. It puts Jewish and non-Jewish production staff in the difficult position of staging an objectively excellent performance—one that audiences avoided due to perceived safety and political concerns.

¹² See 'Workplaces' on page 10. ¹³ Kadimah Yiddish Theatre kindly allowed the JCCV to tell their story, despite the threats of safety which many arise. ¹⁴ The Australian: *Yentl* reclaims stage after Opera House rage; this "Opera House rage" refers to protests which took place outside the Opera House, in which mobs chanted "where's the Jews?" in the days following October 7. These protests caused Jews to be advised to avoid the area. ¹⁵ These nominations were in the categories of Best Production, Best Direction, Best Performance in a Leading Role, Best Performance in a Supporting Role, Best Costume Design and Best Stage Design.

Queer spaces

Amidst rising antisemitism, LGBTQIA+ Jews sought support from queer organisations, but encountered “anti-Israel, anti-Zionist, and to some degree, anti-Jewish messaging.” In the *Jewish Care Community Consultation Report*, one queer respondent described feeling like they are being forced to “choose between being queer and being Jewish” saying that it had become “so lonely”. Others participating in progressive spaces outside the Jewish community noted they cannot find a “safe space” because they feel expected to act as a “spokesperson for all Jews ... to defend or explain Israel’s action”.

Participation in broader queer events was also impacted, with Jewish delegations to Pride events in Melbourne in 2024 and 2025 accompanied by massive security, facilitated by both the Community Security Group and Victoria Police. Participants reported feeling physically ill from fear that an attack might occur in the weeks leading up to these events. One participant reported that someone made a gun gesture at them while they participated in Pride activities with Jewish community members. The heightened security risks have placed a significant burden on the Jewish volunteers coordinating these delegations.¹⁶

Workplaces

The *Jewish Care Community Consultation Report*¹⁷ highlights that some participants had lost their livelihood due to antisemitism, threats and doxxing. This includes Jewish employees who have left non-Jewish businesses due to antisemitism, and Jewish businesses that have lost revenue due to antisemitic targeting.

Jews working at non-Jewish businesses

A Jewish community program that offers employment services reported that, for the first time, it received calls from community members who already had jobs, but sought to move to find a Jewish employer, due to antisemitic conduct in their workplace. Some interviewees who remained in their jobs expressed feelings of betrayal, discomfort, or disillusionment within their sectors.

A rabbi reported that many of their congregants feel “awkward” and “scared” at work. For instance, some congregants have co-workers who are attending rallies in which antisemitic statements are chanted, and they feel unsafe raising it with them, so they endure it quietly. Others felt uncomfortable putting up Hanukkah¹⁸ decorations among Christmas decor, or were told to remove religious jewellery while their coworkers wear non-Jewish religious symbols.

Jewish-owned businesses

An interviewee who catalogues reports of antisemitism relayed that they had received 69 reports of antisemitic incidents taking place within or outside Jewish-owned businesses since October 7. Within this number, a small number of businesses have been targeted repeatedly, including a Jewish retailer in the CBD whose shopfront was smashed, graffitied with offensive slurs and their non-Jewish staff threatened on numerous occasions, usually before or after pro-Palestinian demonstrations on Sundays.

Other business owners have had media coverage of the impact of antisemitism on their business, including Tim Cohen, who operated a wine bar in Brunswick East.¹⁹ Cohen publicly released a video on his social media in which he described how the antisemitism he suffered resulted in him not renewing the lease on those business premises and leaving him “truly broken”. He recalls being told, “we don’t need your kind here,” amongst other things, “since October 7, 2023.”

Despite these highly public antisemitic incidents at Jewish-owned businesses in the CBD and inner-north, the majority of antisemitic incidents at Jewish businesses occur in suburbs with a large Jewish community, namely the inner south-east.

¹⁶ This work includes managing internal divisions, increased security precautions for all events and meetings, and new and increased advocacy work, necessitated by antisemitism within the queer community. ¹⁷ See Appendix 1. ¹⁸ Hanukkah is a Jewish festival, known as the ‘Festival of Lights’ which lasts for eight days in December, and in 2024 it overlapped with Christmas. ¹⁹ [‘We don’t need your kind here’, *australianjewishnews.com*](https://www.australianjewishnews.com.au/we-dont-need-your-kind-here/)

In one interview, a Jewish workplace reported that prospective staff who had been hired to begin work in 2024 broke their contracts because they claimed that “their values no longer aligned” with those of the institution in the immediate aftermath of October 7.

An apolitical Jewish organisation, which is not outwardly Zionist, reported that staff experienced antisemitism in the form of verbal harassment, threatening mail and emails, and protest marches outside their buildings. As a result, staff have been reluctant to wear lanyards and uniforms that identified and associated them with the organisation.

Melbourne CBD

Jewish Victorians have reported avoiding going into the city due to antisemitic signs, graffiti, or intimidation and harassment, particularly when pro-Palestinian rallies are taking place.

During interviews, service providers reported receiving calls from Jewish individuals seeking advice on the safety of visiting the city, even when planned demonstrations were occurring.

This has been especially the case for Jewish families, who do not wish to expose their children to antisemitic signage.

One educational institution reported having significant concerns about taking 14-15-year-old students on a city excursion in early 2024, due to pervasive safety and security issues. This sentiment deeply damages the ability of Jewish Victorians to participate in broader public life, for example, using public transport, attending sporting or cultural events or shopping in the city.

Sports

In sports, no increase in antisemitism has been reported compared to pre-October 7 levels. However, there has been a need to prioritise team ethics and professionalism, so as not to invite any unwanted attention or antisemitism. There has also been a security recommendation that Jewish sports teams wear their uniforms at all times, including at training, so as to make it easier to identify non-team members. This has caused anxiety for some, who feel safer when they are not visibly identifiable as Jewish.

Students

Antisemitism on Australian university campuses was well documented even before October 7. The Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS), the peak representative body for tertiary Jewish students in Australia and New Zealand, released a report in July 2023 titled *The Jewish University Experience Survey*.²⁰

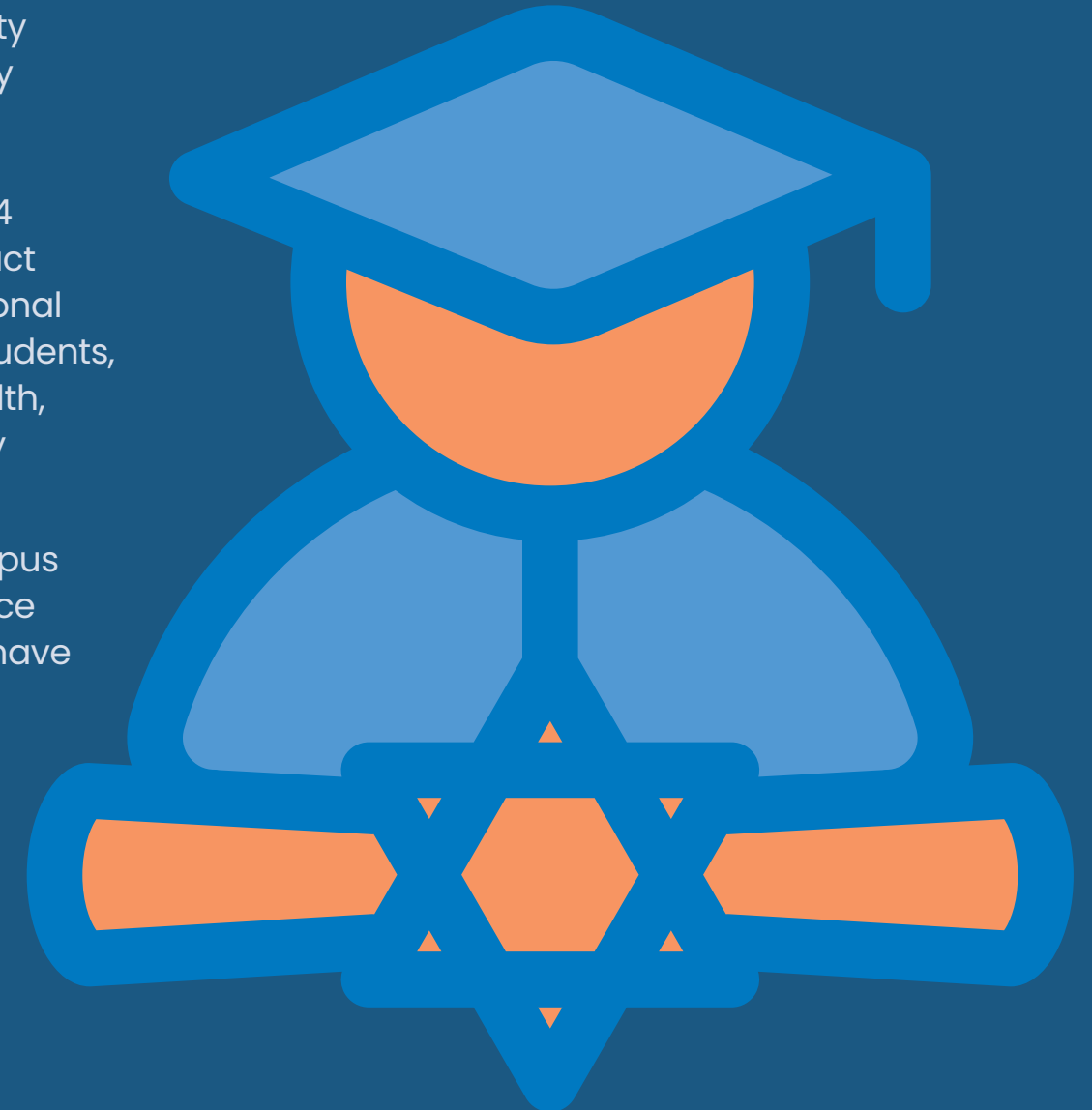
This report showed that prior to October 7, 64% of students surveyed experienced at least one antisemitic behaviour in their time at university, with 88% of these incidents occurring within 12 months of being surveyed. Since then, AUJS has made various public statements expanding on the impact of October 7 on university students²¹.

Jewish students faced the unique challenge of external actors on campus, including pro-Palestinian ‘encampments’ established at the University of Melbourne, Monash University, Deakin University, and La Trobe University starting in April 2024.

The Community Security Group (CSG) published *Jewish Community Incident Reporting on Victorian University Campuses*, which found that perpetrators of ‘serious incidents’ – including assaults, threats, and verbal abuse – were overwhelmingly individuals unaffiliated with the university. Incident reports spiked significantly in the month following the establishment of pro-Palestinian encampments in April 2024, with CSG receiving more than 50 reports per week—compared to just 11 incidents in all of 2023.

In our interviews, it became clear that university students have been making use of community mental health services at a high rate, as antisemitism significantly impacted students’ lives. This was also documented in AUJS’s 2024 submission to a Senate Committee: ‘The impact statements [in the report] highlight the emotional distress and anxiety experienced by Jewish students, with some reporting deteriorating mental health, academic performance, and overall university experience.’²²

The impact of antisemitism on university campus can also be felt by family members. One service provider explained that even where students have not been personally targeted by antisemitism on campus, parents are still anxious about their children to going to university. Another student described the “detached cruelty” which they witness when they see their friends post antisemitic content online which they would never express in person.



²⁰ See Appendix 1. ²¹ See Appendix 1. ²² [Submissions, aph.gov.au](#)

Case Study: Jewish university students

Sarah²³ was studying for a bachelors degree in 2024, and reports that within days of October 7, her non-Jewish friends posted “resistance is justified” on their social media in relation to the October 7 massacres in Israel.

Sarah recalled that at the beginning of her degree, prior to October 7, she was instructed to talk openly about her family’s heritage in class and was designated a “person of colour” due to her Jewish heritage. However, following October 7, “all of a sudden, this was gone,” and she was treated with hostility for her heritage. In our interview, she reflected on her early years at university, wondering whether she had “shot herself in the foot” by being so openly Jewish.

On another occasion, Sarah witnessed a peer putting up graphic posters about the Israel-Hamas war. When she expressed that she had family in the war, and found the posters emotionally triggering, she was asked “which side” her family was on. When she said her family was Israeli, she was surrounded by multiple people shouting at her.

Another student pointed out that Sarah had previously put up posters decrying antisemitism in Australia, and had complained when they were defaced. When Sarah clarified that they were not posters about the war, she was told that discussions about antisemitism were “clearly a dog whistle” for the war.

The cumulative impact of these seemingly small occurrences has led to feelings of anxiety, exclusion and insecurity for Sarah throughout her studies.

²³ The real name of the Jewish student in question is being kept anonymous to ensure her safety.

Mental health

SUMMARY

- Jewish Victorians have reported post-traumatic symptoms, and many have accessed culturally appropriate mental health services.
- Some Jewish Victorians have reported difficulty participating in regular activities, including attending school or work.
- Mental health challenges have been felt by Jewish Victorians of all ages.

The August 2024, *Jewish Care Community Consultation Report*²⁴ gathered diverse perspectives to better understand the varied and ongoing mental health impacts of October 7.

The *Community Consultation Report* found that immediately following October 7, the majority of participants experienced post-traumatic symptoms, including nightmares and intrusive thoughts, and difficulty engaging in everyday activities, such as work and school.

These sentiments were echoed in the interviews undertaken for this report, with various community organisations having set up mental health resources by October 8, intending them to be temporary. Religious leaders from across the religious spectrum also emphasised the “great need for mental health services” in relation to the events on and following October 7.

Religious leaders recalled congregants taking leave from work due to the distress caused by relentless daily antisemitism. For school children, the need for support was greatest during memorial and commemorative events. They described these events as re-traumatising, with many students requesting to be excused on mental health grounds.

Demand for culturally appropriate mental health care following October 7 has remained steady. One organisation has enlisted approximately 30 psychologists who voluntarily provided free weekly appointments. This organisation reports that this service has been steadily accessed by Jewish people from across the community in need of support. Another organisation provides free psychologist appointments three days per week, and they continue to be in high demand.

²⁴ See Appendix I.

One local communal advocacy organisation spoke of parents' extreme fear and anxiety around their children's safety. This fear and anxiety stem from incidents such as the graffitiing of "Jew Die" on a Jewish school in Burwood,²⁵ the firebombing of a childcare centre in Sydney,²⁶ and antisemitic graffiti on a Jewish school in Sydney.²⁷

There is evidence pointing to the emergence of new challenges among young Jewish Victorians, particularly the need for strong Jewish connections. Almost all organisations interviewed reported that youth engagement in communal life had doubled compared to October 7. For instance, one organisation had twice the usual number of school-aged children applying for a youth mentorship program, with all applicants citing the events of October 7 as their motivation, along with a renewed need to find meaning in their Jewish identity. This is also reflected in higher attendance of participants at youth movements, increased engagement at Jewish schools, and the average age of participants decreasing at almost all cultural organisations interviewed.

Finally, service provider organisations interviewed reported that Jewish elders have suffered heightened anxiety, as they feel they are reliving the catastrophic antisemitism that many experienced or witnessed in their youth.

One interviewee quoted an elderly member of their organisation as stating, "this is the third time in my life they've come for us."

The government has made welcome efforts to allocate resources supporting the acute and ongoing mental health needs of Jewish communities in Victoria following the October 7 attacks, including assistance for the general community and schools.²⁸ However, the mental health needs of the Jewish community are ongoing.



²⁵ Victorian MPs condemn anti-Semitic graffiti attack on Melbourne school, abc.net.au ²⁶ Sydney daycare centre torched in antisemitic attack, smh.com.au (subscription needed) ²⁷ Jewish school, house in Maroubra vandalised with graffiti in latest antisemitic attack, abc.net.au
²⁸ New mental health funding to support Victorian Jewish community, jewishcare.org.au

Community leadership

SUMMARY

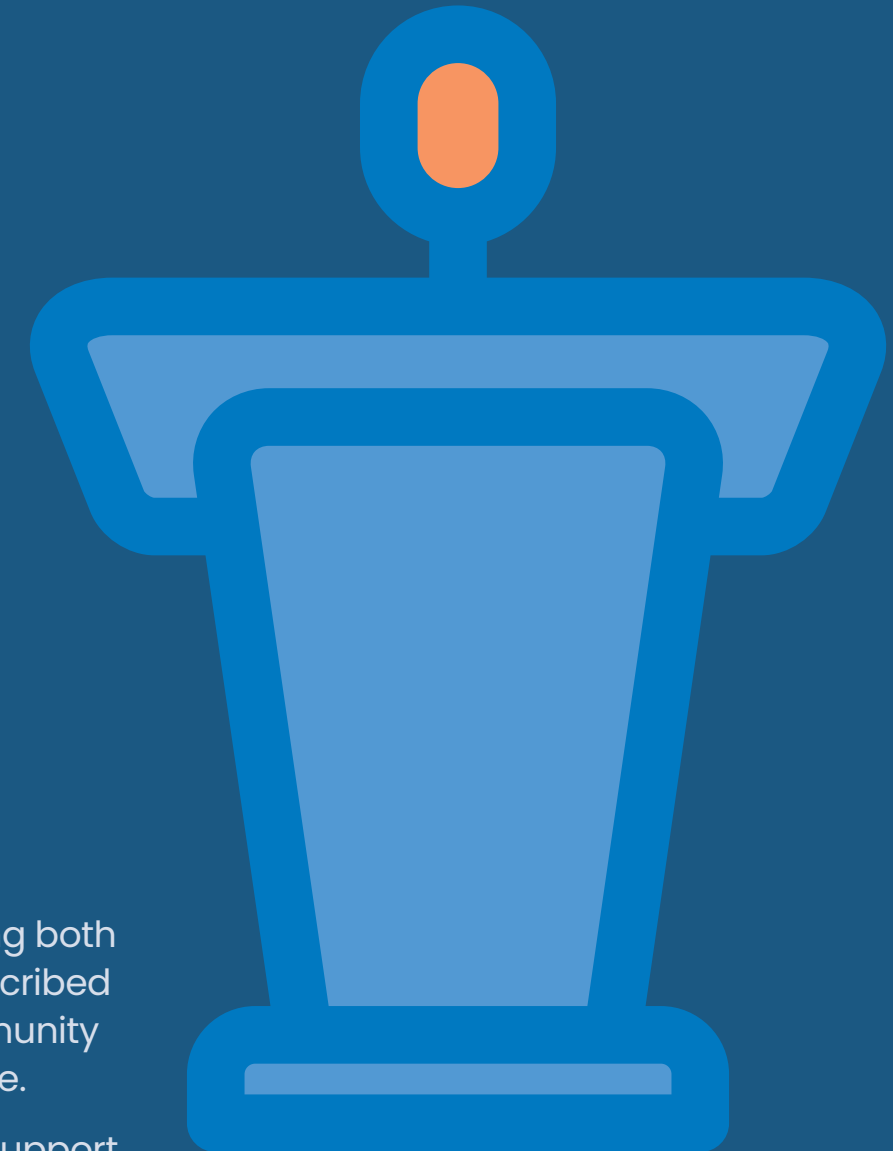
- Jewish community leaders reported a high level of personal strain in supporting the Victorian Jewish community at this time.

During interviews, leaders of community organisations discussed the immense mental load that they have carried since October 7. This has resulted in leadership burnout across nearly every organisation interviewed, affecting both paid and volunteer leaders. This has been described as a pervasive, “incredible fatigue,” with community increasing significantly in a short space of time.

For instance, increased demand for pastoral support has seen rabbis feel increasing pressure to step up and be a voice for their communities, while also feeling the need to remain impartial about the issues which affect them on a deeply personal level. One rabbi described this as a “heavy weight” that has fallen on the shoulders of all religious leaders.

Young leaders have expressed exhaustion from juggling school or university, work and community obligations. They are often called upon to act as a “youth delegation” to communal events,

in addition to their existing duties. Young leaders reported being called on to counsel and mentor younger community members without any formal training or experience, which has caused significant stress as they ask themselves whether they are doing their community justice. Additionally, young leaders appeared uniquely affected by antisemitism and vulnerable to internalising the harmful rhetoric of antisemites.



Safety

SUMMARY

- Community members and law enforcement alike have identified and responded to dramatic changes in the safety – and perception of safety – for Jewish people in Australia.
- Police taskforces have been established to specifically address antisemitism locally.

Monash University's Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation (ACJC)²⁹ reported that in the 40 days following October 7, 20% of Jewish Australian adults reported personally experiencing insults or harassment because they were Jewish, rising to 43% among those aged 18 to 29. This resulted in 22% of respondents being less open about their Jewish identity in public.

It needs to be remembered that while there is significant under-reporting of antisemitism, these findings were broadly corroborated by the JCCV *Victorian Antisemitism Report 2023*,³⁰ which found that 252 incidents were reported between October 7 and December 31 2023, an average of 21 per week, which was a 688% increase from the same period in 2022. Indeed, the three months following October 7 accounted for 69% of all antisemitic incidents in 2023.

A cultural organisation reported that when they host public events, they receive thousands of registrations from “Patrick Bateman” the fictional serial killer from *American Psycho*. This type of ‘trolling’ has been extremely demoralising for community organisations that are already under immense pressure to ensure community safety.

Another community leader summarised, “Our community has never known such an incredible need for security”.

Neither the ACJC Report nor the JCCV Report discusses digital or online antisemitism; instead this was explored in interviews. Rabbis reported receiving death and bomb threats on social media. In one incident, an individual threatened to blow up a rabbi's synagogue and cut congregants' heads off, which led to an arrest by counter-terrorism forces.

²⁹ See Appendix 1. ³⁰ See Appendix 1.

In response, Victoria Police introduced Operation Park to “oversee operational activities related to the Israel–Gaza conflict, with a focus on policing protests and demonstrations related to the conflict”³¹. Data released by Victoria Police in June 2024, indicated that 60 arrests were made through Operation Park, with the majority of reports to police relating to antisemitism³².

At a Commonwealth level, \$25 million was allocated to bolster Jewish community security infrastructure in October 2023, with a further \$32.5 million commitment in December 2024. These funds were allocated to Jewish community institutions around Australia for physical security infrastructure outside synagogues, Jewish schools and community buildings.

In December 2024, the Australian Federal Police deployed 21 police and analysts to the newly formed Special Operation Avalite to investigate antisemitism³³.

In addition, the Victorian and Commonwealth Parliaments passed significant legal reform to protect all minorities, with the Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-Vilification and Social Cohesion) Act 2025 (Vic), Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 (Cwlth) and Criminal Code Amendment (Hate Crimes) Bill 2025 (Cwlth).

The establishment of two dedicated police taskforces, new laws and record security funding indicates a recognition of the scale and depth of the challenges being faced by local Jewish communities to manage security and safety.

There is, however, a lot more to do, particularly in the online space.

Addressing complex physical security challenges has required significant effort, resources, and policy tools. Despite these measures, the Victorian Jewish community continues to face serious security threats, including physical assaults on identifiably Jewish individuals, destruction of Jewish institutions, and vandalism of sites connected to the Jewish community.

³¹ [Victoria Police Annual Report 2023–24](#) ³² [Statement from Victoria Police](#) ³³ [News Centre, afp.gov.au](#)

Deeper community engagement



SUMMARY

- There has been a significant shift in the way Jewish Victorians interact and engage with community organisations and activities.

The impact of October 7 on internal community relations has not been documented. Accordingly, the interviews play an important role in capturing how this unique time in the Victorian Jewish community's history is playing out within the community.

All but one interviewee expressed a significant and abundant increase in the engagement and pride within the community. While some Jewish Australians are removing identifying symbols when they interact with the wider community, internally, Jews of all ages, political leanings and religious backgrounds have been actively seeking out connection within the community.

This has manifested in a variety of ways, including:

- An increase in financial donations to Israeli and local Jewish charities;
- Synagogues reporting attendance at high rates, including among those who have never attended synagogue before;
- Increased observance of Jewish rituals and laws;
- Children becoming increasingly engaged with and interested in Israel;
- Jewish young people seeking out opportunities for nuanced discussions about Israel and Judaism;

- More events and functions across the Jewish community, due to increased attendance and demand;
- Jews of all ages and beliefs expressing increased interest in attending events about Israel; and
- Those who were previously unengaged with the community are now seeking connection with fellow Jewish people.

However, there have also been some difficult aspects of this renewed interest in the Jewish community as a result of October 7.

While the events which celebrate the positivity of Jewish life and culture have not decreased in quantity, for a time, they were outnumbered by those events which focus on antisemitism, October 7, the Israeli hostages being held by Hamas, and the Israel-Hamas war.

While these events allow people to come together and support one another, it has left many people feeling as though there is limited focus on the positive aspects of being Jewish. This has seen many organisations who do not focus on Israel reporting hardship in fundraising and attracting membership.

Additionally, with increased care and attention paid to this issue, tensions have flared on a micro level, especially between Jewish people of different generations. Many interviewees across the political spectrum reported family members with whom they ‘could not talk’ about certain topics—or whom they no longer spoke to at all. These relationship

breakdowns have been most prevalent between parents and children, whereas spouses and partners, and siblings, have remained steadfast in their relationships.

Interviewees described the difficulty parents face in accepting children who hold more progressive opinions than they do.

On the other hand, many interviewees have explained that those who are politically progressive feel “too left wing” for their family or community, and “too Jewish or Zionist” for the progressive communities to which they belonged prior to October 7. This trend is explored in the Jewish Care report,³⁴ in which one participant wrote, “I’m too left for the Jewish community. Too ‘Zionist’ for my non-Jewish friends. I’m stranded in the middle.”

Broader engagement

Every interviewee, regardless of their religious or political stance, expressed a degree of disillusionment in their relationships with individuals outside the Jewish community, including political, faith, and cultural leaders.

One interviewee suggested that this could be – at least in part – due to the collapse of multifaith and multicultural initiatives, in which Jewish people had always participated. They explained that following October 7, he believed Muslim

representatives no longer seemed willing to engage with the Jewish representatives, leading to the collapse of decades of collaborative work. Another interviewee noted that when their organisation attempted to re-engage with an interfaith dialogue group in which they had been active for many years, they were rebuffed. Many community leaders reported feeling as though their work had “dissipated into thin air,” leaving them uncertain about how to move forward.

Some interviewees also spoke about the impact of the rise in local antisemitism on political views and political engagement.

This has resulted in reported behaviours including:

- Change in media consumption;
- Desire to protest, in an attempt to ‘reclaim’ the city from other protesters; and
- Shifts in voting behaviour among lifelong single-party voters.”

³⁴ See Appendix 1.

Media matters

SUMMARY

- Research shows media and social media consumption and use rose significantly in the Victorian Jewish community.
- High levels of social media use were reported to negatively impact Jewish Victorians' well-being.

The ACJC Report conducted a survey of 7,611 Australian Jewish adults on November 10–17 2023, in the immediate aftermath of Hamas' attack on October 7.³⁵ The report documented a very high level of news consumption, finding that 98% of Australian Jewish adults were following Israel–Hamas news closely or very closely, and 81% were talking about it on a daily basis.

Since then, the *Jewish Care Community Consultation Report* has described a 'compulsive or consuming need to engage with media,' which remains widespread among the Jewish community. The most distressing aspects of this engagement can be categorised as follows:

1. Exposure to visually graphic or horrific content depicting acts of terror or war; and
2. The cumulative impact of viewing antisemitic content, which is widespread on social media.

The impacts of compulsive social media consumption manifest in various ways. One community leader described a sense of "bewilderment that certain sentiments could be shared" by social media influencers they had previously admired. Another interviewee described being unable to switch off from social media, being up all night and unable to sleep, often feeling the need to respond to every antisemitic comment, until they became burnt out.

According to the Online Hate Prevention Institute, online antisemitism increased by 500%, following October 7. This was backed up in interviews, with one interviewee describing a "tsunami" of antisemitism.

³⁵ See Appendix I.

Following October 7, communal WhatsApp groups saw a significant increase in both creation and frequency of communication. Some groups included thousands of Victorian Jewish people seeking real-time information and discussions on Israel and the local Australian community. For many, WhatsApp has become another social media platform which people are compelled to monitor at the expense of their mental health. One interviewee described this as affecting their very “being”.

One interviewee emphasised the following:

“As a non-Jew, I have an ability to watch the news, follow WhatsApp, and make choices about it. But everyone from the Jewish community cannot escape it... There is no option not to watch it. People have children at school and university, and family in Israel, [some of whom] are hostages.”

This quotation references a well-documented trend³⁶, corroborated by several service provider organisations, that local increases in antisemitism tend to follow events in Israel. This led to some community members feeling the need to compulsively follow updates about Israel in order to remain vigilant in the face of increasingly violent antisemitism.



³⁶ We tracked antisemitic incidents in Australia over four years. This is when they are most likely to occur, theconversation.com

Conclusion

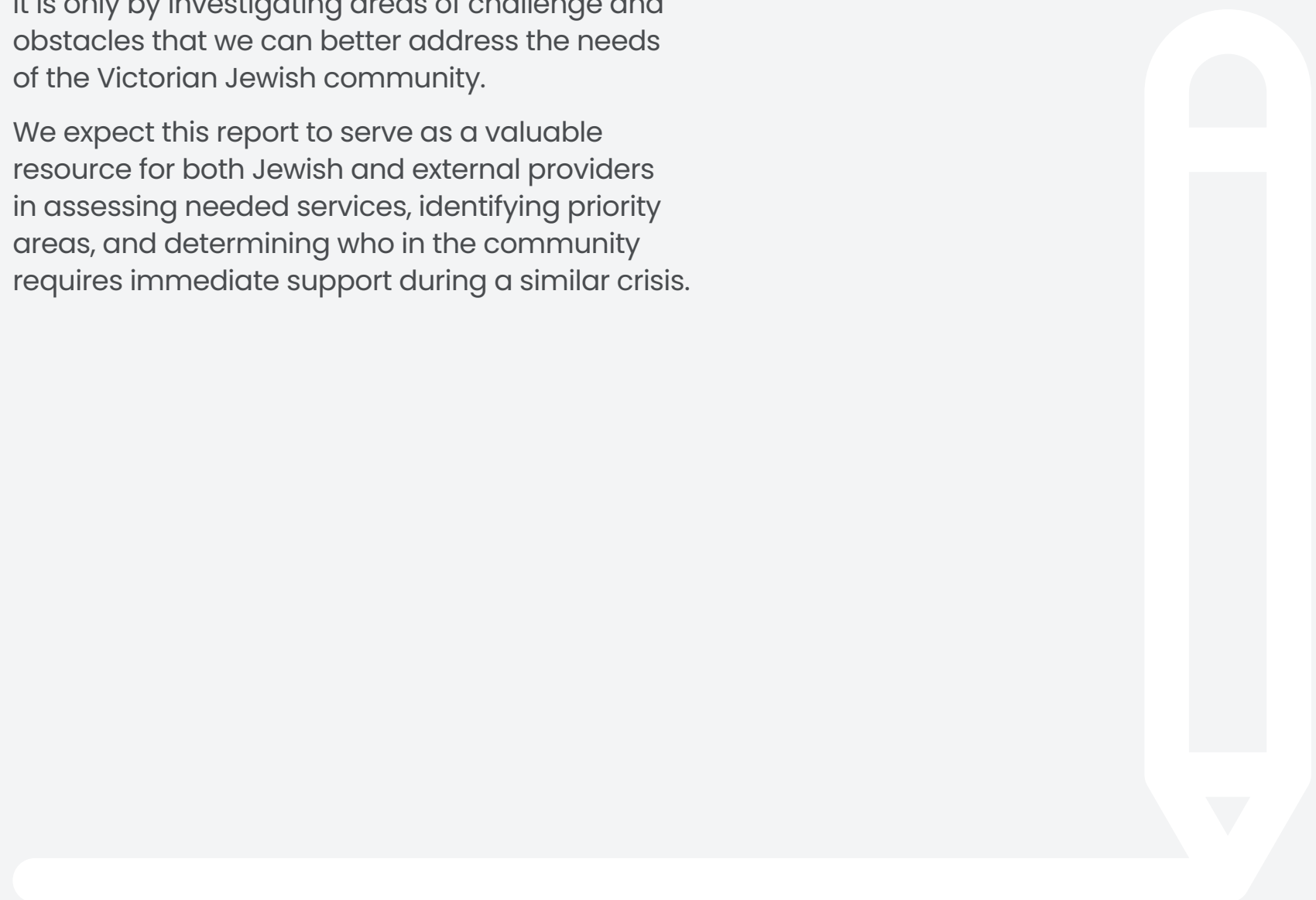
This report describes the key changes that have been observed in the Victorian Jewish community after October 7. It is for this reason that the report has been titled Turning Point. That date was a real turning point for Jewish people all over the world, including here in Victoria.

This report highlights key lessons about the effects of overseas crises on diaspora communities, the rise in local vilification and discrimination, the most affected sectors, and the widespread impact across all age groups.

Further exploration and research is needed into aspects of this report, and in some cases already underway by the JCCV and notably at Monash University's Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation. Specific areas that would benefit from further investigation include the longer-term impacts on mental health and individual and communal resilience. There is also an opportunity to develop crisis management strategies that can be implemented in the instances of future significant "turning points".

It is only by investigating areas of challenge and obstacles that we can better address the needs of the Victorian Jewish community.

We expect this report to serve as a valuable resource for both Jewish and external providers in assessing needed services, identifying priority areas, and determining who in the community requires immediate support during a similar crisis.



Appendix 1

The following publicly available reports have been used and referenced in this report:

Jewish Care Community Consultation Report:

In August 2024, Jewish Care Victoria released a Community Consultation Report funded by the South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network, which sought to better understand the varied and ongoing mental health impacts of October 7, 2023.

Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, 'Australian Jews in the Shadow of War':

The Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation conducted a survey of 7,611 Australian Jewish adults on November 10–17, 2023, on the initial impacts of Hamas' attack on October 7 and the aftermath.

AUJS Senate Submission to the Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024:

The Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS) is the peak representative body for Jewish university students across Australia and New Zealand. In August 2024, the Senate was open to submissions

on the Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2), which would allow for the establishment of a commission of inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities. This is AUJS' submission to this inquiry.

Jewish Community Incident Reporting on Victorian University Campuses:

The Community Security Group (CSG) Victoria prepared a report to provide insight into the diverse types of incidents involving the Jewish community on university campuses from the beginning of 2024. All statistics are provisionally accurate as of May 31, 2024.

Jewish Community Council of Victoria's Victorian Antisemitism Report 2023:

In collaboration with CSG, the JCCV released a report which detailed the antisemitism experienced by the Victorian Jewish community in 2023, with a specific focus on the surge in antisemitism from October 7 to December 31.

The Jewish University Experience Survey:

In partnership with the Social Research Centre, AUJS released a report which detailed the experiences of Jewish university students on Australian campuses in July 2023, prior to October 7.

Online Antisemitism After October 7, 2023

The Online Hate Prevention Institute and the Online Hate Task Force, in partnership with the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and The Jewish Independent provided a detailed report which details the different types and incidence of antisemitism across various online platforms. The sample of data in this report is made of 2898 items of antisemitism across 10 platforms, and can be compared with pre-October 7 data, and a similar report about Islamophobia, which uses the same methodology. This report was released in August 2024.

Appendix 2

These following questions were asked in each interview:

Question 1

Tell me a little bit about your organisation

Question 2:

What demographics of the community do you primarily service?

Question 3

Has your work changed since October 7? How? Why?

Question 4

Have you noticed any trends or changes in the community members that you work with directly? Some specific areas to ask about include:

- 4.1 News and media consumption
- 4.2 Security, safety and fear
- 4.3 Relationship with faith, Judaism and the community
- 4.4 Relationship with Israel
- 4.5 Mental health
- 4.6 Interpersonal relationships
- 4.7 Family

4.8 Non-Jewish friends, classmates and colleagues

4.9 Jewish friends, classmates, colleagues

4.10 Partners and spouses

Question 5

Have these changes been consistent since October 7? Or have they fluctuated?



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JCCV acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to the Elders, past, present and emerging.