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STATEMENT BY THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

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It always concerns me when the public face of fighting antisemitism seems to morph into a political campaign to get this government, that university, some political party, or media group to formally adopt the IHRA working definition of antisemitism.

When confronted with clear examples of hatred of Jews, I don't need a definition of antisemitism to tell me it's antisemitism and the same goes with most forms of racism. Anyone sensitive to the whiff of racism, Jewish or not, will already know antisemitism when it raises its ugly head. And the IHRA definition doesn't suddenly fill a gap, as if before IHRA, no one knew how to recognise antisemitism.

So the major issue from those who are pushing for the adoption of IHRA is to try to address antisemitism in the context of criticism of Israel.

The problem is that there is no simple way of judging criticism of Israel as being reasonable or unreasonable. Within the Jewish community itself, there would be no firm agreement on what the boundaries are of criticism of Israel and Israeli government policies. Those boundaries would be different depending on what part of the political spectrum informs ones perspective.

And from the perspective of Palestinians and their supporters, who will judge that robust criticism of the treatment of Palestinians will or won't ultimately be labelled as antisemitic?

For that reason, I think the various definitions such as IHRA and the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism should be pushed as tools which can be used to recognise and counter antisemitism without the political fanfare that accompanies IHRA in particular.