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## Nazi salutes to be punished with jail under Australian hate crime laws

Tough legislation brought in after rising anti-Semitism fuels attacks and threats on Jewish communities



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Members of the Jewish community and supporters at a rally in Sydney against rising anti-Semitism last month Credit: Steven Saphore/AAP

**Samuel Montgomery**

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Australia has imposed a mandatory one-year prison sentence for performing the Nazi salute as part of an effort to tackle rising anti-Semitism.

Further hate crime amendments passed on Thursday also introduced a

Further hate crime amendments passed on Thursday also introduced a minimum jail term of three years for financing terrorism and six years for committing or planning terrorist acts.

The overhaul comes amid a surge in anti-Semitic attacks, including the firebombing of a childcare centre and the setting alight of a synagogue – as well as the discovery of a caravan laden with explosive gel intended for Jewish targets in Sydney.

“I want people who are engaged in anti-Semitism to be held to account, to be charged, to be incarcerated,” Anthony Albanese, Australia’s prime minister, told Sky News. He had initially opposed mandatory minimum sentences for hate crimes.

The government’s hate crimes bill was first introduced to parliament last year, creating new offences for threatening force or violence against people based on their race, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, political opinion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status.



Anthony Albanese wants people engaged in anti-Semitism to be held to account Credit: Mick Tsikas/AAP

Last week, authorities in Sydney foiled a “mass casualty” attack on the Jewish community after finding a caravan laden with the explosive gel, which had the

community after finding a caravan laden with the explosive gel, which had the potential to create a 40-metre blast zone.

A list of potential targets from within the Jewish community was also found in the vehicle, which was parked at a residential property in Dural, a semi-rural suburb.

“This is the discovery of a potential mass casualty event. There’s only one way of calling it out, and that is terrorism,” Chris Minns, the premier of New South Wales, said at the time.

“There are ‘bad actors’ in our community, badly motivated, bad ideologies, bad morals, bad ethics, bad people,” he added.

The discovery came a week after a childcare centre near a Jewish school in Maroubra, Sydney, was firebombed and a month after a synagogue in Melbourne was set alight with worshippers inside.

Mr Albanese has been criticised by the centre-Right opposition party for being weak on crime and failing to address the rise in anti-Semitism.

“The prime minister has been dragged kicking and screaming to finally introduce tough legislation that will ensure there are real penalties for this behaviour,” James Paterson, a Liberal senator, told reporters in Canberra.

The Liberal-National coalition began calling for mandatory minimum sentences to be added to the hate crimes bill last month.

Tony Burke, the home affairs minister who introduced the amendments enabling the provisions late on Wednesday, said the changes were the “toughest laws Australia has ever had against hate crimes”.

“This is not about politics, this is about whether the Australian parliament believes it’s acceptable to advocate, threaten or commit violence against another person because of who they are, who they pray to or who they love,” he said.

Elon Musk prompted controversy after making a gesture which many likened to the Nazi salute in the hours after Donald Trump’s inauguration.



Performing the Nazi salute is illegal in Austria, Slovakia and Germany, with the latter having the power to impose a prison term of up to three years for the gesture, although offenders can be handed a fine or suspended sentence depending on intent.

In 2011, a 30-year-old Canadian tourist was handed a fine after being photographed performing the Nazi salute outside the Reichstag in Berlin, while a man was handed a suspended sentence of eight months by a court in the eastern city of Chemnitz for making the gesture at far-Right protests in 2018.

In most of the rest of Europe, including the UK, the salute is not in itself a criminal offence but can be considered hate speech if used for propagating Nazi ideology.

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