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Senate votes 56-12 in favour of

Both major parties have backed a motion in the senate opposing the use of the pro-Palestinian phrase 'from the river to the sea'.

The Australian Senate has voted 56 to 12 in favour of condemning the phrase

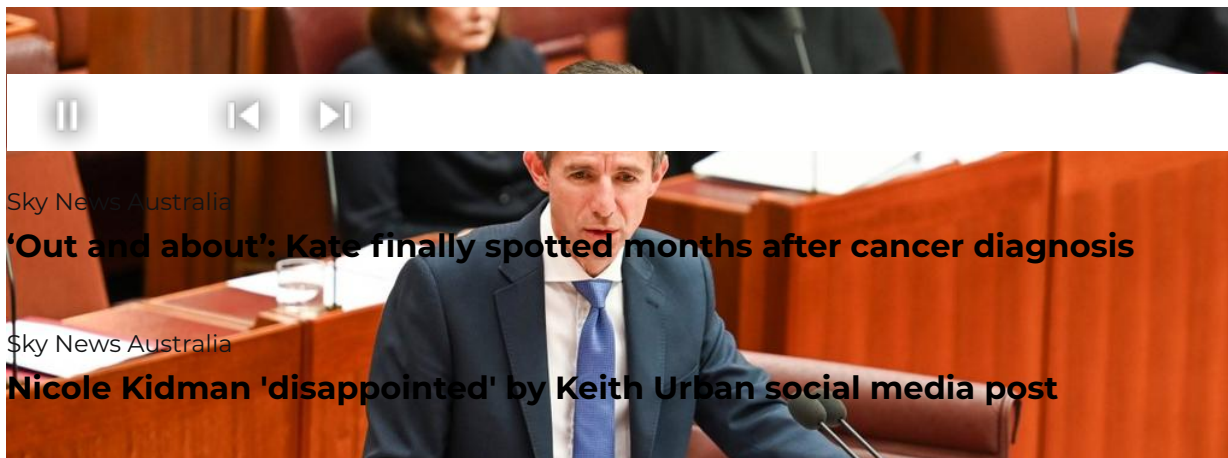
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Recommended Senator Dayman was not present for the vote on Thursday while all Labor Senators voted in favour of the motion.

The motion, which was introduced by shadow foreign affairs minister Simon Birmingham, condemns the slogan because of the insinuation that Israel should not exist.

Mr Birmingham labelled the slogan as "antisemitic" and said it had "no place" in Australia.



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Simon Birmingham introduced a motion in the senate to condemn the phrase "from the river to the sea" on Thursday. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Martin Oldman

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"Antisemitism manifests itself in many ways," Mr Birmingham told the senate on Thursday.

"Attacks are often made via expressions of hatred, via threats, via

intimidation. These include the use of chants and phrases like calls for antifada and the chant 'from the river to the sea'.

"We have seen in our country, as in far too many other places around the world, the increasing use of these chants, of these phrases. Let us be very clear, they call for violence, they stand against the existence of the state of

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Israel," Mr Birmingham said before independent Senator Lidia Thorpe, who vehemently opposed the motion, began shouting at the Shadow Minister.

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He continued: "Such chants and phrases have no place in the type of political debate we like to see in our country nor in the expression of free will we should encourage and enable in our country."

Australia comment

"They have no place because of the way in which they are used to encourage division, to inflame hatred and through acts of antisemitism. We should, we must stand against acts of antisemitism in all of its forms and that includes the requirement to stand against language that fuels, drives and underpins antisemitism."

Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong endorsed the motion and encouraged Australians to come together and "respect each other's humanity".



Senator Penny Wong has backed a motion to condemn the phrase "from the river to the sea" in a senate motion on Thursday. Picture: NCA NewsWire / Martin Oldman

"We all need to be peacemakers," she said. "I stand against prejudice, discrimination and hate speech. And I always have.

"We have been consistent in our position against antisemitism ... against Islamophobia."

Ms Wong also called out Israel's ground offensive in Rafa alongside the controversial phrase.

"We want to do what we can to break the cycle of violence... we want a two-state solution. The phrase 'from the river to the sea' is not consistent with a two-state solution," she said.

Of the 12 Senators that opposed the motion, all were in the Greens except independent Ms Thorpe.

Greens Foreign Affairs spokesman Jordan Steele-John noted the rise in the religious bigotry since the October 7 attacks and Israel's invasion of Gaza, but opposed the conflating of antisemitism and criticism of Israel.



Senator Thorpe was among the 12 senators to oppose Mr Birmingham's motion to condemn the phrase "from the river to the sea". Picture: NCA NewsWire / Martin Oldman

"Within in Australia and across the world there is a rise of antisemitism and Islamophobia that must be called out," he said.

"(But) the attempt to frame criticism of the state of Israel's policies as antisemitic is utterly inappropriate."

However the Greens' opposition to the motion met the disapproval of more than those in the senate with the co-CEO of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry Alex Rychin praising Mr Birmingham's move.

He said the Australian Jewish Community was "grateful" for the motion and extended thanks to the senators who had "the decency to vote for it".





Manager of Opposition Business Paul Fletcher says Labor Senator Fatima Payman is “completely at odds” with the Prime Minister over her use of the ‘from the river to...

"The Greens stand in shame but that's nothing new," Mr Ryvchin said.

"But it is sad that motions setting the record straight on racist, annihilationist and violent slogans are even needed. Those who chant it are the enemies of peace."

"How do they propose to establish an Arab Palestinian state from the river to the sea? Only through more war, more misery and suffering.

"If they cared a jot for peace and the future of the Palestinians they would join us in calling for the end of Hamas and the resumption of the peace process."

Mr Ryvchin's point was echoed by shadow veterans' affairs minister Barnaby Joyce who called upon the PM to take the controversy of the phrase up with Ms Payman.





Shadow Assistant Regional Health Minister Anne Webster says Prime Minister Anthony Albanese needs to deal with the "discord" in his own party.

"It has to be incumbent upon the Prime Minister to talk to Senator Payman and say... 'do you understand exactly what you're saying'," Mr Joyce told Sky News' Kieran Gilbert before reading out a statement from a former serving member of the SAS.

"I can't convey how unheartening this sort of thing is," Mr Joyce read from the unnamed soldier.

"We've seen this evil ideology up close and fought it overseas and now it's even in our parliament. Labor and the Greens should all hang their heads in shame," he said before acknowledging most Labor senators voted for the motion.

The shadow veterans minister went on to slam the phrase "from the river to the sea" itself, which, under Hamas, would mean the destruction of an Israeli state, Mr Joyce claims.

"From the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, and with the oversight of Hamas, means that you will have an absolute slaughter of the Jewish people," he said

"They will be annihilated... Remember, Hamas is backed by Iran and also involved with Hezbollah. These people don't talk about an Israeli state.

"So back when the Labor Party decided to back a UN resolution for a Palestinian State, you're supporting it in the realm of Hamas that doesn't believe in Israel. It's just ludicrous."

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