

Cllr Steve Thomas, Deputy Mayor
Council Office
Neyland Community Hub
John Street
Neyland, SA73 1TH

Date: 14 June 2023

CC: all Neyland Town councillors

Dear Cllr Thomas,

RE Andrew Lye

We are writing to express grave concern at the baseless [allegations](#) of “antisemitic and anti-Muslim” sentiment directed at former Neyland Town councillor and mayor, Andrew Lye.

The allegations refer to a [2008 blog](#) written by Mr Lye, in which he questions the practice of religious genital cutting. On Monday 5th June, a vote of no confidence was mounted against Mr Lye and he has subsequently resigned.

There is nothing anti-Semitic or anti-Muslim in questioning the practice of non-therapeutic circumcision of children.

Indeed, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has [listed](#) it as a “harmful practice” and [urged](#) the UK government to ensure “no one is subjected to unnecessary medical or surgical treatment during infancy or childhood, guarantee bodily integrity, autonomy and self-determination to children concerned”.

Furthermore, a British judge has [described](#) circumcision as “more invasive” than some forms of Female Genital Mutilation and held it met the legal definition of significant harm under the Children Act 1989.

By characterising Mr Lye’s legitimate criticism of religious genital cutting as “antisemitic and anti-Muslim”, Cllr Rothero has unfairly smeared a fellow councillor – and at the same time made it more difficult to speak up for the rights of children.

In a free and open society, religious beliefs and practices must remain open to scrutiny and debate. Individuals should be afforded respect and protection, but ideas should not. Freedom of expression and social cohesion are harmed if criticism of regressive religious doctrine and harmful practices are branded anti-Semitic or anti-Muslim and considered beyond the bounds of reasonable public debate.

Please find attached briefing notes on non-therapeutic male infant circumcision and ‘Islamophobia’ for further information.

With kind regards,

Stephen Evans

Chief Executive Officer, National Secular Society

David Smith

Chief Officer, 15 Square