



UNSW submission – antisemitism on campus

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee's inquiry into the *Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2)*.

There is nothing more important than the safety of students and staff on campus. It is our highest priority, and we are constantly working to endeavour to ensure that what we do at UNSW represents 'best practice', enabling our diverse student and staff population are able to have the best possible experience. We take our responsibility to create a campus where our students and staff can work learn, teach and live in a safe, respectful, open and tolerant environment very seriously.

We are acutely aware that a critical element of a safe and rewarding campus environment is one that is free from antisemitism, and other forms of racism, harassment, discrimination or intimidation.

In response to the current situation in the Middle East, as well as in response to representations made by Jewish students at UNSW and Jewish community representative groups, and more broadly, we have taken a number of actions, described below.

Firstly, UNSW's Anti-Racism Policy has been updated to include Anti-Religious Vilification, which included a period of consultation. The consultation commenced last year and the revised policy took effect from 7 February 2024. The policy was strengthened for two reasons:

- The existing policy and procedures were complex and needed to be made clearer.
- To ensure compliance with recent changes to the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977. The updated policy change includes express and clear protection against religious vilification. In doing so, the policy directly refers to the IHRA definition of antisemitism, among other materials.

UNSW has focused on providing support to affected students, staff and the broader community. We are aiming to increase both actual, as well as perceived, safety for our community with the launch of UNSW Safer Communities. In late 2023 Safer Communities was launched to continue to build on our efforts in addressing gendered violence, managing psychosocial risk, respect at work, and staff wellbeing focussing on the core pillars of early intervention, prevention and response.

Initiatives include (but are not limited to):

1. Sending an all-student and staff email stating UNSW will not accept racism, hate speech or inciteful behaviour and specifically calling out antisemitism and Islamophobia, as well as other types of racial or religious vilification, which have no place at UNSW and will not be tolerated.
2. Establishing a task force to consider and implement required actions to ensure all students and staff feel as safe as possible on our campus. The group meets regularly, with key leaders from across UNSW to actively monitor, respond and make proactive changes to keep the UNSW community safe, especially at this time. They are in close contact with law enforcement and

internal and external stakeholder groups. The group is making a number of policy and protocol recommendations and changes as well as investing in additional resources to enable the University to better protect our students and staff.

3. Regular communication at least every two weeks from the Vice-Chancellor and other senior offices of the University highlighting safety, wellbeing support mechanisms, complaint supports and reminding students and staff about behaviour expectations.
4. Ensuring senior staff meet reactively and proactively with relevant groups to respond to issues and concerns, including with Jewish communities.
5. Increasing physical security, including employment of additional guards, and increased connectivity with external law enforcement agencies. Additionally, weekly catchups with other university security managers have been scheduled to understand their impact/incidents.
6. Significant expansion of confidential counselling services and other similar programs for students, staff and their families to help address trauma and ensure our community feels safe.
7. Revising protocols relating to mounting of and clearing of posters, notices and other collateral to enable our community to express their views, while also keeping those views and conversations contained to specific locations across the campus.
8. Proactive open-source intelligence gathering around planned activities to ensure adequate security measures are implemented to address perceived risks, including increased social media monitoring.
9. Improved risk assessment of all UNSW events. Reviewing and updating risk assessments for relevant events based on experience, external advice and context.
10. Reminding the UNSW community about the "Speak Up" campaign which launched earlier in the year with a portal and system to encourage and enable reporting, including anonymous reporting, of wrongdoing, particularly racial or religious vilification, allowing the University to act swiftly. There is a link to complaints on the bottom of every UNSW webpage to allow easy access.
11. Improved processes and additional resources to deal with complaints and reported concerns more swiftly.
12. Post event reviews to look at opportunities to improve both the management of events and to address any potential or actual risk exposures identified during the event.
13. A new UNSW Code of Conduct and Values came into effect on 17 May 2024. The new Code was created following input from students and staff across the University, with a focus on providing clear parameters for respectful conduct and support to help navigate complex experiences. The code deliberately incorporates lessons from recent experiences.
14. Engaging in a series of sector-wide antisemitism forums led by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry to share best practice of support for students and staff experiencing antisemitism and strengthening inclusion.

We realise that addressing the scourge of antisemitism is a challenge that extends well beyond university campuses. Over recent months, there have been many instances (including a number that have been high profile) of antisemitism occurring around Australia.

We appreciate that solutions addressing antisemitism need to be broader in their focus than just universities. We acknowledge that universities will have an important role to play in a society wide



response, as educators of the next generation, and as a setting where conflicting ideas are often debated. This last point is especially relevant in terms of our role in applying the parameters for acceptable debate and protest on campus relating to the situation in the Middle East. We note that the government has already taken early steps in this regard, commencing a broader approach which seeks society wide change with the appointment of a Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism in Australia.

We appreciate the need to ensure our campuses are safe and rewarding environments, free from expressions of antisemitism. We remain in contact with other universities to understand successful approaches, acknowledging we all have unique communities, as well as keeping in close contact with relevant law enforcement to ensure we are kept abreast of the current situation. We would of course welcome, at any time, any concrete assistance that the government could provide us in dealing with the current situation.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to make this submission.

