

# UNSW submission – Inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities. This is a supplementary submission to our previous one provided 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)* in August 2024, and updates the Inquiry on additional measures undertaken by UNSW since our last submission.

There is nothing more important than the safety of students and staff on campus. It is our highest priority, and we are continually working to ensure that what we do at UNSW represents 'best practice', enabling our diverse student and staff population 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 understand 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.

Recognising the rising scourge of antisemitism over the past year across Australia, we have undertaken a range of measures to ensure our community including Jewish students and staff feel safe, welcome and supported on campus. This includes:

- University-wide consultation to upgrade and extend UNSW's Anti-Racism Policy to include Anti-Religious Vilification as well as updating our Code of Conduct to provide better protections against those experiencing vilification.
- Increasing actual safety through increasing physical security, including additional guards, additional patrols, increased security visibility, monitoring and removing any posted material which breaches our codes of conduct and increased connectivity with external law enforcement agencies.
- Increasing safety through measures such as:
  - Improved risk assessment of all UNSW events.
  - Revising UNSW's student onboarding training and orientation process, with specific focus on the UNSW Code of Conduct to let students know what they can expect of the University as well as what the University expects of them. This includes a deeper focus on inclusion on respectful behaviours and case studies or links to antiracism and religious vilification policies.

- Ensuring senior staff meet regularly both proactively and reactively with relevant groups such as staff, students, alumni and others, to listen and respond to issues and concerns around antisemitism.
- Balancing the rights to free speech with student and staff wellbeing by changing the way posters can be displayed at the University
- Dramatic increase in and promotion of pathways to make complaints or raise concerns as well as significantly increasing the resources of staff who deal with such complaints.
- Regular communications from the Vice-Chancellor, supplemented by similar communication from leaders across UNSW.
- Increasing direct support for students and staff through a significant expansion of confidential counselling services and other similar programs.

In March 2024, we launched a SpeakUp campaign that encourages students and staff to speak up about something unacceptable they've seen or experienced or something that doesn't feel right. The campaign positions speaking up so the University can understand concerns, take necessary action, and help students and staff find the support they need.

### **New Measures**

In November 2024, we rolled out our online working@unsw training for all staff. This training aims to cover all forms of discrimination comprehensively under the umbrella of protected characteristics such as race, religion, ethnicity, and cultural background. The training links to the UNSW Anti-Racism and Anti-Religious Vilification Policy, which contains links to resources on antisemitism and islamophobia.

We are also working closely with the Group of Eight (Go8) on development of antisemitism specific training modules for staff. UNSW staff participated in the pilot of this training in December 2024. The training includes case studies tailored for various audiences, and involves working with leaders and staff on how best to implement measures to prevent and respond to antisemitism. The training will be implemented for senior leaders and frontline staff in student facing roles at UNSW in early 2025. These training packages have been developed under the leadership of Associate Professor David Slucki and the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University.

UNSW has been an active participant in the GO8 working group convened to work on an agreed antisemitism definition for Australian universities. We look forward to operationalising this definition in our policies and processes at UNSW.

There is no place in Australia – and in our educational institutions – for racism, hate speech or discrimination of any type, even when strong views are being expressed. UNSW generally has a positive and inclusive culture. However, we are not complacent, and we know there is more we must do to make people feel safe and included at our campus. We look forward to continuing to work with sector bodies, the Special Envoy into Antisemitism and other universities to improve our policies and practices, and better understand successful approaches to combat antisemitism.

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

