

UNSW submission – Inquiry into antisemitism in New South Wales

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Portfolio Committee No. 5 – Justice and Communities inquiry into antisemitism in New South Wales.

About UNSW

UNSW is a world-leading research and teaching-intensive university, known for innovative, pioneering research and high-quality education with a longstanding global impact. Since our foundation in 1949, our aim has been to improve and transform all lives through excellence in research, outstanding learning and teaching experiences, and a commitment to advancing Australia’s economic growth and prosperity.

UNSW ranks in the top 20 universities in the world, with more than 70,000 students and over 4,200 higher degree research candidates. UNSW is proud of being ranked first in Australia for graduate employment outcomes, as well as being consistently recognised as the AFR’s Most Employable University. We have one of the best graduate outcomes for Australian students in relation to employability and highest average salaries across the sector.

As a leading Australian university, UNSW is committed to ensuring the University is always a safe place for students and staff to learn, teach, research and work.

Safety on campus

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 on campus represents ‘best practice’, enabling our 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 rise of antisemitism over the past 18 months 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, respectful behaviours and case studies or links to antiracism and religious vilification policies.
 - Ensuring senior staff meet regularly both proactively and reactively with 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 have seen or experienced or something that does not 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.

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 in the process of rolling out antisemitism training for the University leaders and frontline staff after working closely with the Group of Eight (Go8) universities to develop the training modules, following the pilot 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. 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 was an active participant in the Go8 working group convened to work on an improved antisemitism definition for Australian universities. In February 2025, Universities Australia (UA) made the decision to increase steps across the sector to tackle antisemitism including implementing recommendations by the Federal Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights regarding the development of a workable definition. UA determined the most effective path to achieve this was to ensure the Higher Education Standards (HES) more completely addressed issues of antireligious vilification and racism. As part of this request, UA provided its adopted working definition, based on the Go8 definition, to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA, the Commonwealth higher education regulator) so that TEQSA could work with the Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) to increase antireligious vilification and racism provisions in the standards and, with this definition as a starting point, to address antisemitism through the HES. Any definition incorporated in the standards would be consistent with and harmonised with the French Code on freedom of speech in the Standards, which would also ensure operational workability. We look forward to operationalising this outcome of the updated standards, including the refined definition on antisemitism, 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 to Combat 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.

