



Australian Government

Australian Government response to the Parliamentary Joint
Committee on Human Rights report on the Inquiry into
antisemitism at Australian universities

TABLING MARCH 2026

Overview

The Australian Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (PJCHR) report on its inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian universities.

On 29 October 2024, the Australian Government referred the issue of antisemitism at Australian universities to the PJCHR for inquiry and asked the Committee to provide advice on steps that Australian universities and the sector can take to better protect Jewish students and staff from further harm. The PJCHR released its inquiry report on 12 February 2025 and made 10 recommendations.

The Australian Government agrees or agrees in principle with all 10 of the Committee's recommendations. The Australian Government notes the Committee's findings and recommendations complement a range of Government initiatives underway.

The evil act of terrorism and antisemitism perpetrated at Bondi Beach on 14 December, the first night of Chanukah, was an attack on Jewish Australians and an attack on all Australians.

We grieve for those whose lives were taken, we stand with their loved ones and friends. We vow that from this tragedy Australia will emerge stronger, more united and safer for all who call our nation home.

While antisemitism and extremism can lead to violence, violence is not the beginning of the harm they do. Abuse, prejudice and discrimination can take a devastating toll on the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

The Australian Government is fully committed to eradicating the root causes of antisemitism, extremism and prejudice, as well as working to prevent their terrible consequences.

That is why the Australian Government has established the Antisemitism Education Taskforce (the Taskforce), chaired by David Gonski AC.

The purpose of the Taskforce is to help the Australian education system prevent, tackle and properly responds to antisemitism. This includes relevant elements of the Plan to Combat Antisemitism developed by Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, Jillian Segal AO.

The Taskforce includes Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism and representatives from across the Australian education system: including early childhood education and care, schools and universities. Representation on the taskforce include: the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority, representatives of state and territory educational authorities, non-government schools, Universities Australia, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the interim Australian Tertiary Education Commission.

Initial areas of priority include implementation of the measures outlined below and identification of further measures needed to ensure the Australian education system is able to prevent, tackle and properly respond to antisemitism.

The Taskforce builds on a range of accelerated investments and new initiatives to tackle antisemitism in schools, including:

- a focused review of elements of the Australian Curriculum to identify opportunities to strengthen its capacity to support: a rejection of all forms of antisemitic thought and antisemitic actions, a deep understanding of Jewish Australians' history and culture, and a mature understanding and expression of Australian values;
- supporting the expansion of the Special Envoy's United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization teacher training into schools across Australia;
- extending and expanding the funding for Together for Humanity over 4 years to continue its work to build intercultural understanding and social cohesion in schools; and
- providing teachers and schools a new hub with access to free high-quality resources and guidance to strengthen social cohesion in schools, and combat antisemitism through new online resources.

The Taskforce also builds on a range of accelerated investments and new initiatives to tackle antisemitism in universities, including:

- strengthening the powers and penalties of TEQSA to ensure it is able to step in and act when it is justified in the public interest;
- strengthening Commonwealth higher education regulation to ensure institutions demonstrate a commitment to addressing racism, and ensuring the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency can monitor compliance;
- supporting the Monash Initiative for Rapid Research into Antisemitism (MIRRA) to expand its training program to deliver training to university staff and leadership on recognising antisemitism in universities across Australia;
- in February 2026, the Special Envoy attended the Education Ministers Meeting to provide an update on the Plan to address antisemitism and support a discussion about the role of the education system and school communities;
- establishing the Expert Council on University Governance which has provided the Education Ministers Meeting with principles to ensure universities are safe and welcoming;
- tasked the Australian Human Rights Commission to undertake the Respect at Uni Study, led by Race Discrimination Commissioner Mr Giridharan Sivaraman. The Study examines the prevalence, nature, and impact of individual and systemic racism in Australian universities and is engaging in significant consultation with university students and staff;

- appointing the National Student Ombudsman, a free and impartial service to investigate complaints from students, including antisemitism or any other forms of racism; and
- developing and releasing TEQSA Statement of Regulatory Expectations: Student grievance and complaint mechanisms on 3 October 2025 in the context of protests on university campuses.

Further information

TEQSA has also published a Sector Alert on Managing External Actors on Campus. This advice informs providers on management of risks presented by external actors, and provides a range of strategies and responses.

The Australian Government has conducted a review of the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act) reflecting its commitment to ensuring the higher education regulatory system is student-centred and meets contemporary student and community expectations. The review engaged a wide range of sector stakeholders to understand current and future challenges and ensure the regulatory framework is fit for purpose into the future.

The Australian Government has established the independent National Student Ombudsman (NSO) to investigate and resolve student complaints about universities, including complaints by Jewish students or about antisemitism. The NSO commenced operations on 1 February 2025 and will provide guidance to universities to improve their complaints-handling practices. The NSO has strong investigative powers and can make recommendations to a provider about the actions that should be taken to resolve a complaint. The NSO has the power to monitor a provider's implementation of its recommendations, as well as share information with relevant regulators to provide the basis for potential compliance action where necessary.

If a provider does not take appropriate action in response to NSO recommendations, the NSO is able to provide the Minister for Education with a copy of an investigation report for tabling in Parliament. The NSO reports annually on complaint volumes, complaints outcomes and compliance with recommendations.

In response to the Australian Universities Accord, the Australian Government commissioned the AHRC to undertake a *Respect at Uni: Study into Antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, and the experience of First Nations People*, led by Race Discrimination Commissioner, Mr Giridharan Sivaraman.

The final report was published on 17 February 2026. The report draws on the experience of 76,000 university staff and students and was developed in consultation with stakeholder groups and education providers.

The Australian Government has established a Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion, which will be led by former Justice of the High Court, the Hon Virginia Bell AC. The terms of reference for the Royal Commission include tackling antisemitism by investigating the nature and prevalence of antisemitism in institutions and society, and its key drivers in Australia, including ideologically and religiously motivated extremism and radicalisation.

Hearing from the Jewish Australian community will be important to informing recommendations from the Royal Commission relating to educational cultural institutions, and other sectors of Australian society. The Royal Commission will deliver an interim report to Government by 30 April 2026 and a final report by 14 December 2026.

Responses to recommendations

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights report on the Inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities

No.	Recommendation	Response
1	The committee recommends that university Vice Chancellors hold a formal meeting with Jewish student bodies and Jewish staff during semester one of 2025 to engage directly on their observations regarding antisemitism on their campuses. The committee recommends that Vice Chancellors should subsequently make a public comment on their work to combat antisemitism and regarding those meetings with Jewish students and staff.	Agree
2	The committee recommends that Australian universities should review their complaints procedures with a view to their simplification, including giving particular consideration to: establishing a single central office to receive and process all complaints; adopting a clear definition of antisemitism that aligns closely with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition; and providing for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.	Agree
3	The committee recommends that Australian universities should report on the outcome of complaints in a more transparent manner while maintaining the privacy of the complaints process. The committee recommends that such reports should include, where relevant, comment by the Vice Chancellor regarding their work to address antisemitism on campus.	Agree
4	The committee recommends that the government give consideration as to whether it is necessary to amend the <i>Fair Work Act 2009</i> to enable disciplinary or other action to be taken in relation to an employee (or a grant recipient where the <i>Australian Research Council Act 2001</i> and related legislation applies), where that person is found to have engaged in conduct which would breach Part 5.1 of the <i>Criminal Code Act 1995</i> , or section 18C of the <i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975</i> .	Agree
5	The committee recommends that Australian universities should publish regular de-identified reports setting out the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints, the number of complaints resolved since the last report and the timeframe for the resolution of outstanding complaints.	Agree

6	The committee recommends that universities consider increased investment in research into antisemitism and opportunities for collaboration regarding current projects, having close regard to the work being undertaken by the Monash University Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation as an appropriate model.	Agree
7	The committee recommends that universities deliver ongoing training to students, staff and leadership on recognising and addressing antisemitism.	Agree
8	The committee recommends that the government give consideration to amending the <i>Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011</i> to provide TEQSA with enhanced powers to enforce compliance with the higher education threshold standards relating to student wellbeing and safety, as those standards are applied in practice by universities (e.g. through Codes of Conduct).	Agree
9	The committee recommends that government monitor the implementation of these recommendations and further recommends that the National Student Ombudsman review university practices to reduce antisemitism on campuses within twelve months of the tabling of this report.	Agree-in principle
10	The committee recommends that if, following a review of the implementation of these recommendations in consultation with the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, it is apparent that the response by universities has been insufficient, the government should give consideration to the establishment of a judicial inquiry.	Agree-in principle

Coalition Additional Comments

Recommendation 1. That the government establish an independent judicial inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities immediately

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government's response, as outlined above, reflects the range of actions the Government is taking to respond to the issues raised in this inquiry.

Recommendation 2. That the Australian Government amends the law so that all public universities are required to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government's response, as outlined above, reflects the range of actions the Government is taking to respond to the issues raised in this inquiry.

Recommendation 3. That Australian universities review and amend their hiring policies and policies relating to employee conduct to prevent and address antisemitic behaviour among academic staff.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government encourages universities to consider this recommendation in consultation with their students, staff, communities and other stakeholders.

Ms Kylea Tink MP Additional Comments

Recommendation 1. Universities should, for the purposes of addressing complaints of antisemitism relating to students or staff, adopt a definition of antisemitism that recognises the distinction between antisemitism and criticism of the Israeli Government and Zionism.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government encourages universities to consider this recommendation in consultation with their students, staff, communities and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 2. The government should adopt the Australian Human Rights Commission National Anti-Racism Framework.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government's response, as outlined above, reflects the range of actions the Government is taking to respond to the issues raised in this inquiry.

Recommendation 3. Universities should address antisemitism as part of broader strategies to reduce racism in all its forms.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government encourages universities to consider this recommendation in consultation with their students, staff, communities and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 4. The government should consolidate Australia's anti-discrimination legislative framework into a single, uniform Anti-Discrimination Act.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government's response, as outlined above, reflects the range of actions the Government is taking to respond to the issues raised in this inquiry.

Recommendation 5. Universities should adopt the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence six-part threshold test to appropriately distinguish between hate speech and protected expression in practice.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government encourages universities to consider this recommendation in consultation with their students, staff, communities and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 6. The government should introduce legislation to establish a Human Rights Act, as per the recommendation of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government's response, as outlined above, reflects the range of actions the Government is taking to respond to the issues raised in this inquiry.

Senator Lidia Thorpe Additional Comments

Recommendation 1. Universities in their approach to racism adopt a holistic anti-racism framework, jointly developed with representatives of all racialised communities.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government encourages universities to consider this recommendation in consultation with their students, staff, communities and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 2. For the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, a proposal that is supported by the Race Discrimination Commissioner.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government's response, as outlined above, reflects the range of actions the Government is taking to respond to the issues raised in this inquiry.

Recommendation 3. Universities should be guided by the 2020 Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism in their attempts to identify and fight antisemitism while protecting freedom of expression.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government encourages universities to consider this recommendation in consultation with their students, staff, communities and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 4. For the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights to conduct a review of the Australian Government's compliance with international human rights obligations in relation to the plausible genocide in Palestine, including adherence to orders from United Nations bodies and the findings and opinions of the International Court of Justice.

The Australian Government acknowledges the range of views presented to the inquiry and **notes** this recommendation.

The Australian Government's response, as outlined above, reflects the range of actions the Government is taking to respond to the issues raised in this inquiry.