

Submission on the Senate enquiry into the bill to establish a judicial enquiry

29<sup>th</sup> July 2024

I am a retired doctor, whose alma mater was the University of New South Wales. During my career, I was a conjoint lecturer at the University and hosted many medical students in my practice. I am familiar with the intricacies of university life and university campus dynamics.

I am horrified at the intimidation, verbal and physical abuse, colonisation of parts of the campus, incitement to violence with calls of “death to Israel” and “death to Zionists” and much worse. These were perpetrated by students who thought it was “cool” and “woke” to dress up in a kaffiyeh and participate in mob rule. I found even more disturbing the fact that these mobs were led and incited by terrorist group representatives who had nothing to do with the University of Sydney but had infiltrated to stir up activism. To my amazement I saw some university staff either take part actively, or encourage or wilfully ignore the cruelty that was taking place on the campus of the University of Sydney.

My biggest disappointment was with the Vice Chancellor and the heads of the University. I watched in amazement as they at first wilfully ignored, then tried to rationalise and put into “context” this sort of activity citing “freedom of speech” and “freedom of peaceful demonstrations”. Intimidation, thuggery and colonisation of university campus grounds and university halls were conveniently overlooked. The fact that all this activity was aimed at Jewish students on the assumption that they all supported Israel, clearly amounted to anti-Semitism.

Jewish students are entitled to their opinion about the Middle East war just as Arab students are entitled to theirs. On a university campus there are many differing opinions about many things, none of which lead to intimidation and thuggery by mobs. The Jewish students on campus have nothing to do with what’s happening in the Middle East and their opinions about the war, whether they support Israel or not, is nobody’s business unless they wish to express them. Even then it should amount to nothing more than a difference of opinion. I used to wonder what the University’s response would have been if a similar group had set out to demonise gays, transsexuals or people of colour on the University campus???

I am deeply disappointed in the inactivity of Sydney University’s Vice Chancellor and the pathetic attempts at rationalisation and obfuscation to justify their failure to uphold the University’s moral and legal obligation to protect the rights of all students, including Jewish students.

Finally, the agreement negotiated between the University of Sydney and the terrorists should be condemned unconditionally. As clearly stated by the terrorist representative, the agreement reached both justified their illegal activity and emboldened further demonstrations if other demands in the future are not met by the University. The University Vice Chancellor on the other hand thought that this negotiated agreement was a “gift” to the Jewish students.

I therefore strongly support Julian Lesser's bill to establish a judicial enquiry into anti-Semitism at Australian universities.