

STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY ON ANTISEMITISM

Thank you for inviting me to be here as part of this important inquiry into antisemitism on Australian campuses.

As Vice Chancellor Terry has said, our approach during the encampments was framed around the important balance between freedom of speech and protection of vulnerable communities. This balance is crucial to democratic functioning and in my view it worked well to bring the encampments at UQ to a peaceful conclusion.

My new role as Pro Vice Chancellor for Campus Culture and Leadership is to enhance social cohesion on campus.

A key part of that responsibility is an Antiracism Commitment, a multi-part initiative that will touch all parts of our university community and examine the way we work across multiple areas. It brings together some existing approaches, but with significant updates for the contemporary environment.

In the wake of the encampments and some of the other dismaying incidents we have seen around Australia, our antiracism commitment will begin with training and education around antisemitism.

UQ has been working with the Group of 8, and with Special Envoy Jillian Segal, on a definition of antisemitism. We have also been working with our colleagues on education and training around antisemitism. We intend to:

- Implement a three-hour, in-person workshop on antisemitism to senior executives in mid February
- Offer a two-hour, in-person workshop on antisemitism to Heads of School during the third week of March
- Roll out this version of training to all senior leaders and first responders by the middle of the year
- Implement a mandatory, online antiracism module for all staff and students by Semester Two.

Assessing the effectiveness of these measures will be undertaken by adding a specific question to our annual pulse survey and increasing public reporting on racism including antisemitism.

In the background, we are fine tuning our complaints system. We already have a one-stop-shop for complaints including racism, but we are developing a QR code like the one used by the University of Melbourne, for ease of access. The new training will ensure cultural competence behind the scenes, including in antisemitism, for those who respond to allegations. We currently report on complaints internally, to Senate; going forward, we expect to move these to an annual public report.

Finally, specifically for students, we are standing up a seminar series called “Dialogue Across Differences” that seeks to provide greater understanding around the issues surfaced through the encampments, including antisemitism, and to model respectful engagement.

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