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Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
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Dear Committee Secretary

Submission to the Senate Inquiry about the Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No 2) (Senate Inquiry)

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee (**Senate Committee**) inquiry as to whether to establish a Commission of Inquiry or Judicial Inquiry (**Judicial Inquiry**) into Antisemitism at Australian Universities. Given the fact that my role as Special Envoy to combat antisemitism (**Special Envoy**) was only established on July 9, I appreciate that you might consider this September 6 submission.

Summary

In preparing this submission to the Senate Inquiry I thought it would be helpful if I obtained some first-hand testimonies from university students, academics and professional staff to understand the gravity of the situation. My office has interviewed more than 65 Jewish students, academics and staff at universities (those wanting to give testimony continue to contact my office and once my full complement of staff is in place I will continue to meet them). Their testimonies, and the data¹ from other surveys demonstrates a truly alarming increase in antisemitic incidents and discourse at Australian universities in the lead-up to, and particularly since, the October 7 massacre by Hamas in Israel. As you can read from a summary and extracts from their testimonies (**Appendix 3 – Testimonies**) the situation is very grave and indeed much more serious and alarming than I expected.

Antisemitic behaviour is not only present on many campuses but is an embedded part of the culture. Universities have not taken appropriate action to denounce and suppress it: it has become systemic. The Jewish students are traumatised and feel isolated and unsafe. They are not participating as they should in university life. They have been told by their university administration to stay home for their own safety. This normalised antisemitism is incredibly dangerous to our society as it is an attitude and behaviour that eats away at the fabric of the mission of the tertiary sector. To date university leadership is either in denial about how serious and normalized antisemitism has become on their campuses or has not received information as to the seriousness of the situation (bad news does not travel upwards) or has failed to truly understand what constitutes antisemitism and has responded by placating activist forces. This contrasts with the growing realization of universities overseas that strong measures

¹ Jewish University Experience Survey: July 2023: [Jewish University Experience Survey - Zionist Federation of Australia \(zfa.com.au\)](https://www.zfa.com.au); 'New research shows widespread antisemitism in universities and online', ABC, 14 August 2024: [New research shows widespread antisemitism in universities and online - ABC News](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-14/new-research-shows-widespread-antisemitism-in-universities-and-online/103456789).

must be taken (See **Appendix 4 - Efforts aimed at accountability at foreign universities for antisemitic discourse and incidents**). As US universities open for the new academic year I expect more US universities will adopt the policies and stances of NYU, Columbia and California.

The situation on Australian university campuses must change. The sector needs to respond to the seriousness of the situation. As I have heard from Jewish students, academics and staff, they will only speak of their experiences to trusted advocates like my office or to a forum like a Judicial Inquiry that can take evidence in private and maintain confidentiality. They have no confidence currently in other institutions like the Australia Human Rights Commission (**AHRC**) to approach their evidence with impartiality and appropriate respect. This calls into question the ultimate efficacy of the Government's referral to the AHRC to study racism at universities including antisemitism.

Another issue that has been raised with me is concern that foreign funding seeking to skew the mission, values and roles of universities may be operating in Australia as has been the case in other Western countries. Universities have been very opaque in their answers regarding this issue.

These four concerns in particular are all reasons for this Senate Committee to call for a Judicial Inquiry:

1. Universities are in denial about the seriousness of the situation and have failed to recognise the embedded culture of antisemitism causing Jewish students to be traumatised, feel unsafe, stay away from campus and not partake equally in educational opportunities and failed to act appropriately;
2. The need to take testimonies in private;
3. The need to thoroughly investigate any foreign funding designed to undermine the universities' mission and values based on upholding truth, democratic and equal opportunity; and
4. The almost universal view expressed by Jewish community representative bodies that a Judicial Inquiry would help the situation by at least listening to community concerns and recommending change.

I do believe that Judicial enquiries or Royal Commissions can bring about important societal change, particularly when the culture in important institutions has caused the institutions to deviate from their purposes and not serve society. This was seen to be the case with the banking sector and although the process was painful the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry resulted in important and meaningful change.

In this case universities, important institutions responsible for the development and maturation of Australian values in our next generation, appear to have an embedded culture of antisemitism and their leadership (with a few notable exceptions) seem not to appreciate this reality. This will impact not just the future of the Jewish community, but as the proverbial canary in the coal mine, also our future as a democratic and free and open society.

Embedded hatred cannot be allowed to foster. It must be called out so that Australian values and our cherished way of life may triumph and it will be important that any Judicial Inquiry be conducted in a manner which respects privacy of testimony and controls extremist outbursts.

In calling for a Judicial Inquiry I am conscious that any such enquiry (should the Senate Committee make a positive recommendation) and implementation of any recommendations will take some time. The situation on campuses is far too serious just to wait for this. From the testimonies I am really concerned about the febrile situation on some campuses and the emotional and physical safety of Jewish students. I therefore detail in this submission a series of other measures that I believe should be recommended to be implemented IMMEDIATELY. Some will require the support of government which I implore consider them urgently.

I therefore commend to the Senate Committee a range of other more immediate measures that should be recommended as well (See **Section 2 – Recommendations for more immediate action** and **Appendix 5 - Recommendations**). These are all measures that universities could take immediately.

Introduction

(a) The role of universities

Tertiary education, when provided in a safe environment conducive to learning, thoughtful and thought-provoking debate, and rigorous, evidence-informed scholarship, develops individual potential and whole of society potential.² As the former Deputy Chancellor of the University of New South Wales from 2010 to 2019, I have personally seen how the proper delivery of education in a premier tertiary setting can enhance individual and societal outcomes. Racism is inimical to the culture that tertiary settings must foster if they are to produce world leading and diverse scholars and change-makers and our democracy is to be sustained and thrive.

(b) The role of the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism

The office of the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism (the **Special Envoy**) was announced on 9 July 2024 in order to address antisemitism in the domestic Australian context, and assists and advises the Government by:

- Providing advice to the Prime Minister and to the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs to inform policy development, legislation, campaigns (in accordance with the Australian Government Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns by non-corporate Commonwealth entities) and programs that will go to effectively combatting Antisemitism and social cohesion factors that drive the behaviour across online and social media, traditional media, and within education, arts, culture and industry sectors
- Promoting public awareness and understanding of the impacts of Antisemitism by highlighting diverse Jewish Australian identities, the ongoing contributions of

² [What you need to know about higher education | UNESCO](#)

Jewish Australians to the building and progress of Australia, and combatting stereotypes and misinformation in communication channels

- Engaging with public and private sector stakeholders across whole of society and utilising research and data to identify the drivers of Antisemitic behaviour
- Supporting efforts to address systemic and interpersonal racism (including Antisemitism), hate speech, discrimination and divisive language through public education and awareness, through engaging in media opportunities, facilitating roundtables and participating in public discussion with the support of the Department of Home Affairs
- Identifying ways to strengthen broad social cohesion, including fostering inter-faith dialogue, for all Australians
- Undertaking other related tasks that may be necessary from time to time.⁴

The role of the Special Envoy is informed by the Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism (please see **Appendix 1A & 1B – Summary and Global Guidelines**).

The educational sector is identified as a key area in the Special Envoy's Terms of Reference because education is the single most important means of combating antisemitism, but it also poses the single biggest challenge if education does not embody critical analysis and independent thinking. As demonstrated below, in the tertiary educational space, other efforts aimed at promoting accountability in some contexts have not addressed antisemitism, and therefore this submission advocates for a range of measures to be recommended and then urgently actioned by government and universities.

(c) The unique nature of antisemitism

As noted above, it is important that universities are a safe space for learning and exchange of ideas. Racism of any type is abhorrent and prevents universities from fulfilling their essential role. And yet, we know that not all types of racism are equally prevalent in Australian universities at present. Public manifestations of antisemitism have been disproportionately high compared to manifestations of racism against other communities on campus.³

Antisemitism is a unique type of racial hatred that is not broadly understood. It is an ancient hatred based on disinformation and misinformation, and its building blocks are antisemitic tropes⁴ that can be subtle yet extremely pervasive. History has shown that in times of economic insecurity, antisemitism bubbles to the surface and becomes socially acceptable. Antisemitism has always been stubborn and shape-shifting, and it is not sufficiently responsive to policies instituted to deal with racism more broadly.⁵ It is an insidious hatred that is currently being fanned by social media and if it is not

³ See the ECAJ's Annual Report on Antisemitism in Australia 2023, pp.142-144: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/ECAJ-Antisemitism-Report-2023.pdf>; Jewish University Experience Survey: July 2023: [Jewish University Experience Survey - Zionist Federation of Australia \(zfa.com.au\)](https://www.zfa.com.au/jewish-university-experience-survey); 'New research shows widespread antisemitism in universities and online', *ABC*, 14 August 2024: [New research shows widespread antisemitism in universities and online - ABC News](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-08-14/new-research-shows-widespread-antisemitism-in-universities-and-online/103111110); and Julie Nathan, 'Comprehensive study of hate incidents in Australia – updated', *Executive Council of Australian Jewry*, 22 June 2023: » [Comprehensive study of hate incidents in Australia – updated \(ecaj.org.au\)](https://www.ecaj.org.au/comprehensive-study-of-hate-incidents-in-australia-updated).

⁴ [ADL Publishes New Guide to Antisemitic Tropes | ADL](https://www.adl.org.au/antisemitism); and [Antisemitic Tropes Chart \(facinghistory.org\)](https://www.facinghistory.org/antisemitism)

⁵ As Hadley Freeman argues, "Jews have always been a glitch in the binary of identity politics", see Freeman, Hadley, 'Blindness: October 7 and the Left', *The Jewish Quarterly*, Issue 256, May 2024, p. 69

countered at universities it could become so embedded as to never be able to be removed.

Some individuals and institutions may submit that any Judicial Inquiry would seek 'special measures directed at particular types of racism'⁶, but in fact what is being sought is the same level of awareness and accountability with regard to antisemitic discourse and incidents in tertiary settings as exists with respect to manifestations of other types of racism⁷.

1. Why a Judicial Inquiry

As set out in the 'Summary' section above, such an Inquiry would be able to:

- Compel witnesses to appear and documents to be produced.
- Take sworn evidence in private rather than anecdotal evidence.
- Control hostile witnesses who try to grandstand for political purposes in the same way as in a courtroom.
- Guarantee anonymity to witnesses if they seek it.

A Judicial Inquiry could examine the responses of Australian universities and the sector to the rise of antisemitism on Australian campuses, including whether:

- universities have adopted and implemented an appropriate definition of antisemitism for all purposes such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition⁸;
- universities have taken appropriate steps to recognise the specific and unique nature of antisemitism⁹, to deal with it, and effectively convey their opposition to it, to record instances of it and to provide adequate support arrangements for staff and students experiencing it (both on and off campus);
- the actions taken by the bodies set out in the Bill to protect Jewish students, academics, staff and visitors on campus have been adequate;
- the actions taken by university regulators, leaders, student and staff representative bodies, student clubs and organisations, and other groups on campus to protect Jewish students, academics, staff and visitors on campus have been adequate;¹⁰

A Judicial Inquiry would also allow Jewish students and staff to have their concerns heard.

⁶ Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2) Submission 176, Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, 23 August 2024: [Sub176 \(1\).pdf](#)

⁷ Please see the Executive Council of Australian Jewry's submission to the Senate Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill, 2024 (No. 2), 22 August 2024: <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=27302e1f-21ca-4821-8faf-5c04d669452b&subId=762155>

⁸ See International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance at: <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>. This definition of antisemitism has been accepted by the Australian Government and Opposition.

⁹ When referring to the 'unique' nature of antisemitism in the [Explanatory Memorandum on the Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill](#), the meaning imputed is not that antisemitism is any more odious than other types of racism, but rather that all types of racism are unique in their manifestations and are built upon their own particular false narratives.

¹⁰ Senator Henderson, Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024, Explanatory Memorandum: [ParlInfo - Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 \(No. 2\) \(aph.gov.au\)](#)

The answers to the above questions are critically important if we are to achieve cultural change at universities. Recommendations for change and real action will be important. As a recent Columbia University report noted, 'there is an urgent need to reshape everyday social norms' on many campuses. This is cultural change. We need to respect the differences among different racial groups and understand what antisemitism is.¹¹

A Judicial Inquiry would not be focused on an overhaul of the existing legislative protections under our domestic system for protection of people from incitement, vilification or discrimination on the basis of race, colour or national or ethnic origin, even if legal or policy reform may emerge as a necessary response to the scope of the problem. Rather, it would seek answers so that the endemic and systemic antisemitism at universities can be adequately addressed.

A Judicial Inquiry would afford a much deeper interrogation of the nature and scale of antisemitism at Australian universities than the proposed inquiry by the AHRC into racism on university campuses.¹² As outlined above, a one-size fits all approach to racism has not proven effective with regard to combatting antisemitism – if it had then the AHRC's 'Racism: it stops with me' campaign would have not coincided with a sharp rise in antisemitism; and distrust amongst the Jewish community - particularly students - towards the AHRC currently runs very deep due to the organisation's track record of not accepting a mainstream definition of antisemitism, not demonstrating an understanding of what antisemitism is, and not responding to antisemitism effectively.¹³ I note that the mainstream Jewish organisations, including the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, have declined to participate in the study, and have noted their concerns in their respective submissions to the Senate Inquiry. This is a very real concern and will impact the efficacy of the AHRC enquiry.

(a) Lack of transparency regarding responses to incidents

A key question for this Senate Inquiry must be how as a society we might arrive at the truth regarding the scale and manifestations of antisemitism on campuses and whether the universities have responded or can adequately *without* a Judicial Inquiry taking place.

To that end, I note how resource intensive and difficult it is to obtain such information at present. Several Jewish organisations and other stakeholders have utilised Freedom of Information (**FOI**) and Government Information Public Access (**GIPA**) regimes to seek documentation from universities about their engagement with and correspondence about antisemitism at their institutions. Time and again, it is alleged

¹¹ Taskforce on Antisemitism, *Report 2: Columbia University Student Experiences of Antisemitism and Recommendations for Promoting Shared Values and Inclusion*, Columbia University, August 2024, p. 4: [Task Force on Antisemitism Report 2 \(columbia.edu\)](https://www.columbia.edu/taskforce-on-antisemitism-report-2)

¹² The original subject of the proposed study and Report, as shaped by the Universities Accord (Recommendation 33), was 'Conduct a survey into the prevalence and impact of racism across the tertiary education system'. A specific study of antisemitism at universities was not originally contemplated in the original design of the study, but added afterwards.

¹³ Please see the Executive Council of Australian Jewry's submission to the Senate Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill, 2024 (No. 2), 22 August 2024: <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=27302e1f-21ca-4821-8faf-5c04d669452b&subId=762155>

universities obfuscate answers and deliberately evade provision of the sought after information.¹⁴

In my office's interviews with university students, academics and professional staff, individuals routinely encouraged my office to utilise the FOI and GIPA regimes, with some even suggesting questions that could be raised in order to tease out information about antisemitic conduct that they had experienced or had knowledge of and which they had shared with my office. They did this because they felt that such conduct had not been adequately addressed by the universities that they studied at or worked at, but the academic or professional risks were too high for them to publicly raise these failures.

Alas, I believe we are unlikely to be able to obtain confirmatory information on these matters through the FOI and GIPA requests process. Such requests to universities tend to face very significant delays and are returned with swathes of sought-after information caveated, redacted or withheld. In some instances, different responses come from different parts of the university. The AHRC does not have the powers to delve into this issue or obtain the evidence that would be most informative.

The very significant labour and resource-intensive task of seeking to acquire meaningful information from universities about issues such as 'their consideration of IHRA, their engagement with antisemitism on their campuses, their expenditure on managing protests which exclude Jews on the basis of their religious beliefs or how they have engaged with requests from other government agencies'¹⁵ is unlikely to be fruitful without a Judicial Inquiry to compel the release of such information.

(b) Foreign interference

It is a matter of national importance that as a society we determine what influences have contributed to building an embedded antisemitic culture at universities over the last couple of decades. A Judicial Inquiry would be able to subpoena the relevant documents and would require senior management at universities to give evidence on matters concerning any foreign funding and influence.

Some staff interviewed by the Special Envoy's office on condition of confidentiality have pointed to their universities' ability to replace funding from Australian Jewish benefactors – which in some instances has been withdrawn on account of reportedly antisemitic conduct - with foreign funding.

In addition, the vast majority of interviewees answered affirmatively when asked the following question:

"Was there anything about the experience you had that might suggest it came from outside actors (i.e. not students, not staff or other employees of the university/school)?"

¹⁴ Pinczewski, Jack, submission to the Senate Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill, 2024 (No. 2), 23 August 2024: <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=92e5e063-02ca-4ca2-bb00-c7985282b8a9&subId=762289>

¹⁵ Pinczewski, Jack, submission to the Senate Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill, 2024 (No. 2), 23 August 2024: <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=92e5e063-02ca-4ca2-bb00-c7985282b8a9&subId=762289>

Students, academics and professional staff at a leading university have pointed to obvious signs of outside involvement and interference in their university's encampment. A large-scale journalistic investigation reported that an organisation that is proscribed in several foreign countries including the United Kingdom and Germany has been active in that university's encampment.¹⁶ This issue needs to be investigated further.

(c) Partial Responses

Some universities have realised the severity of what is happening and have started to conduct their own inquiries. For instance, the University of Sydney is embarking on an external review of policies and processes (I have not yet seen the terms of reference for that review).¹⁷ It is unclear whether or not this review will bring about cultural change. At the same time, the university has set up an Investment Policies Review Working Group chaired by Dr Simon Longstaff AO, as part of a settlement to end the encampment on campus¹⁸.

2. Recommendations for urgent action

As noted in the above summary, Jewish students are feeling unsafe, are suffering mental health issues, have been told to stay away from campus. Urgent action is needed. I intend to work on the following measures with Australian universities immediately. However, strong recommendations from the Senate Inquiry in the areas outlined below and supportive action from government are needed to encourage universities to act now. The situation on campuses cannot just be left to the recommendations of a Judicial Inquiry, however necessary that might be.

(a) Best practice policies

Many universities' policies regarding student and staff conduct are a patchwork quilt of at times conflicting ideas which depart from domestic and international legal obligations or misstate the boundaries between academic freedom and hate speech. Some universities have strong policies in place in respect of conduct, including in the areas of freedom from discrimination and racial vilification – some of which were introduced post October 7 - while others do not. Please refer to **Appendix 2 (University policies)** for a summary of universities' responses to inquiries from my office regarding which policies they currently have in place relating to staff and student conduct.

It is important that universities adopt best practice and introduce policies that give them the ability to discipline people whose conduct is antisemitic. While many universities may think their policies reflect best practice – and they look to the US and UK for best practice - they may not be best practice. Universities may also be unaware of the extent to which many US universities have reformed their policies in light of greater public scrutiny of antisemitic conduct taking place on their campuses (Please see

¹⁶ Juanola, Marta, Worthington, Anne, and McKenzie, Nick, 'Hate comes to university campus but hides its face', *The Age*, 16 June 2024: [Israel Hamas: Hate comes to university camp but hides its face \(theage.com.au\)](https://www.theage.com.au/news/israel-hamas-hate-comes-to-university-campus-but-hides-its-face-20240616-pz6q6v)

¹⁷ [External review invitation to make a submission - The University of Sydney](https://www.theage.com.au/news/israel-hamas-hate-comes-to-university-campus-but-hides-its-face-20240616-pz6q6v)

¹⁸ [Joint statement on the University of Sydney \(ecaj.org.au\)](https://www.theage.com.au/news/israel-hamas-hate-comes-to-university-campus-but-hides-its-face-20240616-pz6q6v)

Appendix 4 - Efforts aimed at accountability at foreign universities for antisemitic discourse and incidents). Another point of difference is that Australian universities are funded by the federal government to a much larger extent than many private US universities¹⁹, and it is therefore feasible and necessary that the Australian Government demands they put in place best practice policies.

I intend convening roundtables of universities to discuss best practice policies, but my office would welcome any commendation from the Senate Committee to the Australian Government in this area.

(b) The National Student Ombudsman

As can be seen in **Appendix 3 - Testimonies**, Jewish students and staff have experienced systemic antisemitism, and this has impacted their ability to have an equal education or even to be on campus. Students and staff are intimidated and unwilling to complain to universities because they lack trust that their university is taking complaints about antisemitism seriously or they fear retribution in some form. An Ombudsman should be established to handle complaints and address the issue of underreporting. I note that I have already made a recommendation to the Minister for Education, the Hon. Jason Clare MP, that any ombudsman's office set up to manage complaints of sexual violence and harassment on campus²⁰ either be given an expanded remit and qualified resources to manage complaints about antisemitism specifically or an independent Ombudsman for racism with expertise in addressing antisemitism be established. The response to my office has illustrated the fact that at present student, academic and staff complaints have not been appropriately responded to. Telling students, academics or staff to stay at home is unacceptable.

In recent years tertiary settings have been under the microscope for other unlawful conduct and human rights abuse such as sexual violence and harassment. The Australian Human Rights Commission's *Change the Course* report²¹ found that women and other minority groups were more likely to experience incidents of sexual assault and harassment on university campuses. The report also identified patterns of behaviour by tertiary institutions with respect to reported incidents of sexual assault and harassment, namely, that institutions have **frequently dismissed survivors' experiences, failed to take proper steps to respond to reports or have punished survivors for reporting.**

Following the release of the *Change the Course* report, and the introduction of measures responsive to the problems identified in the report, the 2021 National Student Safety Survey²² found that the Australian university sector continued to fail in reducing campus sexual violence or in holding university institutions to account. This led to the University Accord process being established, which gave rise to the

¹⁹ [How universities are funded – Universities Australia](#)

²⁰ [Independent National Student Ombudsman to improve student safety | Ministers' Media Centre \(education.gov.au\)](#)

²¹ [Change The Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Harassment | Australian Human Rights Commission](#) and *Change the Course: National report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities 2017*, Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017:

https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/AHRC_2017_ChangeTheCourse_UniversityReport.pdf

²² Heywood, W., Myers, P., Powell, A., Meikle, G., & Nguyen, D. (2022). *National Student Safety Survey: Report on the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault among university students in 2021*. Melbourne: The Social Research Centre: [NSSS | 2021 National Student Safety Survey](#)

introduction of the *Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education* in February 2024²³. This plan proposes seven key actions including a National Student Ombudsman.

These same patterns of behaviour identified in the *Change the Course* report are exhibited with respect to the way that universities are handling reported incidents of antisemitism. Lessons to be learned and changes implemented should not be limited to incidents of sexual assault and harassment and may reasonably be extrapolated with respect to universities' management of antisemitism and other forms of racism.

(c) The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) was established under the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (TEQSA Act) as the national regulator of tertiary education in Australia. The principles underpinning the regulation which guide TEQSA are regulatory necessity, reflecting risk and proportionate regulation.²⁴

The Higher Education Standards Framework 2021 informs TEQSA's work by setting out the standards registered tertiary education providers must meet regarding student and staff safety and wellbeing, academic freedom and corporate governance. Registered tertiary education providers are responsible for managing their own risk but must demonstrate and take proper measures to ensure that they are legally compliant, including with respect to Commonwealth, state and territory laws relating to safety, anti-discrimination and anti-vilification.²⁵ Under the current regime, TEQSA is not empowered to make a legal determination about whether tertiary education providers are operating in accordance with the law, and it is limited to imposing administrative sanctions in the event of non-compliance.

While TEQSA established a regulatory response group following the "rapid escalation in protest activities and associated risks at Australian university campuses"²⁶, it has not been able to inquire beyond whether universities had appropriate response mechanisms in place.

As of 17 July 2024, 598 reports of complaints had been reported to TEQSA by tertiary education providers, with most complaints being concentrated in the major urban areas.²⁷ This does not mean that antisemitism is confined to universities located in urban areas. At universities located outside of urban areas, where there are few Jewish students, academics or staff, there are likely to be less reported antisemitic incidents because there are fewer impacted individuals to raise complaints, and complainants are more conspicuous. Interviews by my office with students at

²³ See Australian Government Department of Education, [Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education - Department of Education, Australian Government](#)

²⁴ See the TEQSA's submission to the Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2) Submission 153, August 2024: <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=6518c325-f966-470b-a18c-0942cca8c69d&subId=762332>

²⁵ TEQSA website, accessed on 29 August 2024: [How we regulate | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency \(teqsa.gov.au\)](#)

²⁶ See the TEQSA's submission to the Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2) Submission 153, August 2024: <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=6518c325-f966-470b-a18c-0942cca8c69d&subId=762332>

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 5.

universities with significantly smaller Jewish populations seem to attest to how serious the problem of antisemitism is, irrespective of whether the staff or students have ever met a Jew. For instance, the testimony of a student from the University of Wollongong identified several unrecorded antisemitic incidents. The culture of intimidation and marginalisation appears to be such that students are not inclined to come forward and raise complaints.

The data TEQSA has published regarding the number of concerns received by TEQSA indicates that TEQSA is being drastically underutilised, which may stem from:

- its inability to impose anything other than administrative sanctions on universities;
- a lack of awareness of the existence of TEQSA or what actions it might be able to take in relation to complaints about universities; or
- Uncertainty about confidentiality or likelihood of action.

The Jewish community has not seen any positive action from TEQSA to improve the festering of antisemitism on university campuses despite a small number of complaints being made over the years.

As Special Envoy I intend working with TEQSA to see if more can be done by it to ensure Codes of Conduct are enforced or to examine whether their powers need to be enhanced. These are several recommendations noted in Appendix 5 that would be helpful if endorsed.

(d) The Universities Accord and Report by AHRC

The Universities Accord aims to devise recommendations and performance targets to improve the quality, accessibility, affordability and sustainability of higher education.²⁸ One of its five priority areas is “Work with State and Territory governments and universities to improve university governance. This measure will help improve the capacity of universities to strengthen responses to issues including industrial relations compliance, workforce management and student safety.”²⁹ The Universities Accord gave rise to:

- the *Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education* in February 2024, and
- a Report on the prevalence and impact of antisemitism, Islamophobia, the experience of First Nations peoples and racism at universities,

As noted above, I have concerns regarding the efficacy of an investigation by the AHRC that explores the issue of antisemitism at Australian universities given the lack of trust in its processes by impacted Jewish students, academics and staff. I also have concerns about a general report on multiple forms of racism. I do however commend the Universities Accord’s emphasis on recommendations and performance targets as a means of improving the problem of antisemitism in tertiary institutions.

²⁸ [Australian Universities Accord - Department of Education, Australian Government](#)

²⁹ [Australian Universities Accord - Department of Education, Australian Government](#)

(e) National database and hotline for racist incidents and discourse

Currently, in Australia there are only three communities which have a reporting and documentation system, and which produce reports on hate incidents against their community - Jewish, Muslim and east Asian. Each report collates a specific number of incidents which occurred over a particular time-period. However, the characteristics of the incidents included in these three reports vary to such an extent that it is extremely difficult to gauge the true level of hate incidents any particular minority community is facing.

The main three reports are: the Executive Council of Australian Jewry's Antisemitism Report (produced annually since 1990); the Islamophobia Register Australia's (IRA) Report '[Islamophobia in Australia](#)' (four reports produced); and the Asian Australian Alliance's (AAA) 'Covid-19 Coronavirus [Racism Incident Report](#)' (first report).

Each of these reports brings its own characteristics in four distinct ways:

1. the criteria used to determine whether an incident is a hate incident or not
2. the categories used to classify different forms of hate incidents
3. the levels of transparency of the actual incidents, and
4. the time frames of the reporting period.

In addition, all the above-mentioned reports have different or unknown criteria for inclusion/exclusion as a hate incident, different data categories (notably, two reports include online discourse as incidents while one report excludes online discourse), different transparency levels of incidents, and different time frames of reporting periods. The reports also differ in their methodology for data collection, data analysis, and organisational support and authors.

Such differences and discrepancies in each of these three community reports mean that the overall situation regarding hate incidents impacting these groups cannot be accurately compared without very intensive analysis of points of commonality. If the Australian government and universities and other stakeholders are to be at all effective in combating antisemitism and other forms of racism, then there must be a repository for standardised and consistent reporting of hate incidents and hate crimes occurring in Australia.

The ECAJ and other peak state bodies in the Australian Jewish community have long advocated for a standard uniform national system across Australia. Uniformity in data collection – including criteria, categorisation, transparency, time frames - is best achieved through a national system.

This uniform national system could be operated by police or other government services, such as in the [United Kingdom](#), [United States](#) and [Canada](#), which have systems in place where hate incidents are reported, and the data compiled. An alternative to police or other government agencies is a system of third-party reporting (TPR), whereby a non-government organisation, usually with government funding, takes reports of hate incidents, often through an online portal, and compiles reports. Third-party reporting organisations include [True Vision](#) and [Stop Hate UK](#), both in the

UK. These third-party bodies can act as a conduit to reporting incidents to police by forwarding the reports on.³⁰

There are many parallel steps that must be undertaken in tandem with instituting a uniform national database, including formulating definitions of what constitutes hate incidents and hate crime, and embarking on fit for purpose training initiatives of stakeholders who are involved in the reporting and enforcement stages. I do recommend that a national and uniform database be established. In the interim, prior to the establishment of a national database, I recommend that a national hotline is instituted for university students and staff so that data about racist incidents at universities can be captured, as this will help give impetus to a national database and also provide a safe space for those impacted by racism, including antisemitism, to report such incidents. This hotline would need to be linked to the relevant state and federal policing bodies as well as community organisations who are appropriately qualified to provide support to those impacted. I understand that Jewish student organisations have sought such a hotline for some time.

(f) Definition of antisemitism

The office of the Special Envoy fully supports the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism (**IHRA Working Definition**), as do most democratic countries including Australia.³¹ When I recently represented Australia as Special Envoy at a global meeting in Buenos Aires in July, I met with other envoys in jurisdictions including the USA, Argentina and Canada. There was a consistent view at that meeting that one cannot counter antisemitism without an understanding of what it means, and that the best definition is one that has been worked on over many years with sustained input from experts and Jewish communities around the world. The Global Guidelines referenced earlier, signed by Australia, also support the wide adoption of the IHRA definition.

The IHRA Working Definition has broad bipartisan support in Australia and is the only definition of antisemitism that has been officially endorsed by Labor, the Coalition and various Independent MPs, as well as by the national roof body, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (**ECAJ**), Jewish State and Territory roof bodies and many other organisations that are representative of the mainstream Australian Jewish community.³²

I endorse the position adopted by the ECAJ in its response to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee during the inquiry into right-wing extremist movements in Australia³³, namely that the IHRA Working Definition recognises that

³⁰ The Special Envoy would like to credit Julie Nathan for her article on this point: Nathan, Julie, 'It's time Australia set up a national hate crime database', Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 8 September 2020. Please also see: Schiappapietra, Davide, 'Australia has no national hate crime database, but here's how to build one', SBS, 19 March 2019: [Australia has no national hate crime database, but here's how to build one | SBS Italian](#)

³¹ Why international acceptance of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism is growing: Explained by two of the original drafters, ECAJ, 10 November 2021: <https://www.ecaj.org.au/why-international-acceptance-of-the-the-ihra-working-definition-of-antisemitism-is-growing-explained-by-two-of-the-original-drafters/>

³² Please refer to the ECAJ's Response to Adverse Comment: 'ECAJ responds to mischaracterisation', ECAJ, 17 July 2024: [ECAJ responds to mischaracterisation](#)

³³ 'Response to adverse comments by Jewish Council of Australia at inquiry into right-wing extremist movements in Australia', Executive Council of Australian Jewry, 16 July 2024: [Executive-Council-of-Australian-Jewry-Response-to-adverse-comment.pdf \(ecaj.org.au\)](#), p.8

*“denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor” can, “taking into account the overall context”, amount to antisemitism. It should be obvious that this formulation does not automatically characterise as antisemitic any criticism of Israeli laws and policies, whether on the grounds of alleged racism or otherwise.*³⁴

Australian universities have generally not adopted the IHRA Working Definition due to strong pushback from academics, whereas it is much more widely adopted overseas. For example, in the United Kingdom, the IHRA Working Definition has been embraced by dozens of universities.

I note also that at least two of the most prominent Australian universities' Academic Boards have rejected the IHRA Working Definition on the basis of two qualifying statements proposed by the UK Home Affairs Select Committee without appreciating that both statements have subsequently been considered and rejected by the UK government. Furthermore, there are obvious shortcomings with having Academic Boards at universities make a determination about the adoption of the IHRA Working Definition insofar as such bodies do not have any student welfare consideration function.

Notwithstanding the above comments, I acknowledge that whatever the definition adopted, if the culture of a university is endemically antisemitic, a definition will not alone remedy that issue. Nevertheless, I would like to work with the universities in a good faith exploration of a useful definition of antisemitism, perhaps based on the IHRA Working Definition but Australianised. I note in this context the working definition of antisemitism adopted by Columbia University. It is important that a definition of antisemitism is agreed and adopted to provide a bright line for policies, disciplinary procedures, reporting of the database and action of the database. One cannot expect to reduce or combat antisemitism if it is not defined.

(g) Training

In order to bring about cultural change at Australian universities it is very important that training of staff, academics, officials and students take place. This is what has already happened on many campuses in relation to addressing the problem of sexual violence and sexual assault. Students have been trained to understand the importance of consent and staff have been trained to deal with reported incidents. Similar initiatives must be implemented to train students and staff about how to report and respond to racism, including antisemitism. Universities in the US have put training programs in place (see **Appendix 4**). I intend to work with universities to implement training modules, and request that the Committee recommend that universities consult with my office regarding the implementation of appropriate training in response to the surge in antisemitism.

³⁴ *Ibid*

Conclusion

I believe that for the reasons outlined above urgent action is needed by universities around Australia to deal with embedded antisemitism. Universities are important places where not only are life skills obtained, lifelong contacts made but the culture of a nation fostered. A culture that excludes one group, intimidates, traumatises and makes them feel unsafe is contrary to the mission of universities and contrary to the best interests of the nation.

Serious and meaningful action must be taken. The recommendations I have made in Section 2 for immediate action are all doable and can be encouraged by this Senate Committee.

I have also set out in Section 1 arguments as to why a Judicial Inquiry is also needed to deal with embedded antisemitism on campuses. Serious change is needed and I do not believe universities appreciate how serious the situation is. It is likely to deteriorate further unless material action is taken and universities draw important boundaries between acceptable free speech and behaviour and unacceptable Jew hatred. Judicial Enquiries or Royal Commissions have managed to bring about important institutional change and, if set up appropriately, I believe could do so in this grave situation.

Yours sincerely

Jillian Segal AO

Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism

September 2024

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Appendix 2	Australian University Policies
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Appendix 4	Examples of US Universities new policies and training programs
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APPENDIX 1: Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism

On 17 July, the Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism (**Global Guidelines**) were introduced by concerned states, special envoys, national coordinators and representatives tasked by their governments to counter antisemitism (the Global Guidelines are reproduced directly below).

The Global Guidelines are legally non-binding and include policies to monitor and combat antisemitism which are recommended for adoption across all societies, irrespective of whether they have Jewish populations or not.

The Global Guidelines emphasize the importance of clear and principled leadership to denounce antisemitism expeditiously and without politicization. They also clarify the central importance of identifying and defining antisemitism, highlighting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (**IHRA**) Working Definition of Antisemitism used by over 40 United Nations Member States since its adoption in 2016.

All other aspects of the Global Guidelines are highly relevant to how universities should address the surge in antisemitism. They provide a lens through which a Judicial Inquiry should assess responses by key stakeholders to antisemitism on university campuses. For instance, the Global Guidelines recommend engaging social media in order to combat antisemitism, which is something that all universities could be doing more effectively, including promoting reporting and complaints mechanisms and condemning antisemitic incidents and discourse publicly.

The Global Guidelines have been deployed by other Governments and stakeholders to address the increased incidence and ferocity of antisemitic incidents and discourse on university campuses abroad, with some successful examples of interventions set out in **Appendix 4 - Efforts aimed at accountability at foreign universities for antisemitic discourse and incidents.**

GLOBAL GUIDELINES FOR COUNTERING ANTISEMITISM

17 July 2024

Concerned states, special envoys, national coordinators, and representatives tasked by their governments to counter antisemitism, in cooperation with international bodies, offer the following best practices, which have proven to be effective guidelines in formulating public policy.

These legally non-binding guidelines, adopted in Buenos Aires, Argentina, include policies to monitor and combat antisemitism that can be implemented and adapted to a wide variety of national, regional, and cultural contexts.

We urge all states and international bodies, as well as civil society, to embrace and use these practices, many of which already form the basis of regional and country-based action plans. These guidelines can be applied everywhere, not only in societies with Jewish communities.

SPEAK OUT – Governments and political leaders should denounce antisemitism swiftly, clearly, and unequivocally, whenever and wherever it occurs. This applies to the domestic and international arenas, including regional and international organizations.

AVOID POLITICIZATION – Antisemitism can appear across the political spectrum and should be rejected without political bias and regardless of its origin.

ADOPT and IMPLEMENT – Governments and international bodies should adopt and implement strategies and action plans that engage all relevant ministries and public authorities at all levels of governance. This should be done in consultation with Jewish communities, civil society, field researchers, and other relevant stakeholders. Such policies should be assessed periodically and updated as needed.

APPOINT and EMPOWER – Governments and international bodies should consider appointing national coordinators, special envoys, or designated officials. Such officials can proactively address antisemitism as a cross-cutting public policy challenge and should be provided with the necessary authority, empowerment, and resources to be effective.

UNDERSTAND and DEFINE – In order to combat antisemitism, governments need tools to understand its various manifestations. The legally non-binding “International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism” is an important internationally recognized instrument used by over 40 U.N. member states since its adoption in 2016. In addition, hundreds of sub-national public authorities, universities, sports bodies, NGOs, and corporations rely on it.

PROTECT – There are few roles more central for governments than the security and welfare of their populations. Jewish communities are targets of physical threats and attacks from both foreign and domestic sources. Governments, working together with Jewish communities, should provide appropriate protection and security enhancements that safeguard and sustain Jewish communal life. Religious freedom and protection also encompass safeguarding unhindered religious practice.

COLLECT – Policies should be in place to support the uniform collection of data documenting incidents of antisemitism as well as the perceptions of antisemitism among Jewish communities and the broader public. Such information, drawn from community-based sources, when possible, allows for evidence-based understanding of trends and sources.

ENFORCE – Enforcement of hate crime and anti-discrimination laws is critical and should take place within legal frameworks that protect civil liberties and human rights, such as freedom of expression. Enforcement conveys the broader message that antisemitism is unacceptable, has consequences, and cannot be tolerated.

EDUCATE – Education is vital for identifying and countering antisemitism, including Holocaust remembrance and countering Holocaust denial and distortion, an especially pernicious form of antisemitism. It has also proven effective in sensitizing law enforcement. Education about Jewish culture and contributions to society demystifies Jews and Judaism. Many countries and intergovernmental organizations have linked their efforts against antisemitism to broadening appreciation of Jewish heritage and fostering Jewish life.

CULTIVATE A WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY COMMITMENT – Countering antisemitism requires a whole-of-society commitment that includes the active participation of civil society. Collaboration; bridge-building; nurturing trust among faith, civic, and cultural leaders; and fostering mutual understanding are essential, particularly since antisemitism is not solely a threat to Jews. It can endanger

members of other minority groups, democratic values, and national security and stability.

ENGAGE SOCIAL MEDIA – Antisemitism, like other forms of group hatred and disinformation, is widespread and mutating online. It has real world consequences and can lead to radicalization to violence. Stakeholders should oppose antisemitism online, stay educated on evolving trends, increase transparency about antisemitic content, assess impacts on vulnerable communities, and find solutions, within the context of existing legal frameworks.

STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION – Coalition-building and international cooperation are paramount to effectively monitor and counter antisemitism. In an interconnected world where hate respects no borders, transnational cooperation can identify threats, raise awareness, broaden the use of best practices, and more effectively and proactively coordinate responses.

Appendix 2: University policies

My office contacted all major Australian universities to ask which policies they currently have in place relating to staff and student conduct. Their responses are summarised below.

Of the 13 universities (36.1%) that had or were putting in place targeted policies relating to staff and student conduct:

- Two universities adopted a definition Antisemitism
 - In January 2023, one university adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism. (University of Melbourne)
 - In June 2023, one university adopted a working definition of Antisemitism without its eleven examples and the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism as guidelines. (La Trobe University)
- One university put in place a detailed 'Racial harassment' definition to include, but not limited to:
 - a. the display of racist cartoons, posters and graffiti, use of hate symbols, or distribution of offensive racially-oriented material
 - b. repeated jokes or derogatory comments that make reference to ethnicity or racial characteristics
 - c. derogatory remarks about a person's accent, culture, customs or religious observances
 - d. denial of historic harms or abuses
 - e. racially oriented abuse or name-calling
 - f. negative stereotyping of particular ethnic groups
 - g. accusing an individual or group of being responsible for a real or imagined wrongdoing based on their racial, cultural or ethnic background
 - h. repeated irrelevant reference to a person's racial, cultural or ethnic background
 - i. practical jokes based on race or directed only at members of a non-majority ethnic group, or bullying, intimidation, exclusion or physical violence, on the basis of the cultural or ethnic background of the recipient. (Curtin University)
- One university classified graffiti as an example of race-based harassment and noted in its policy that 'active bystanders' can have an especially important role in combatting racism and religious vilification. (University of NSW)

Further notes:

- One university indicated that it had received complaints of alleged bias in relation to course materials associated with the Gaza conflict. (University of Melbourne)
- One university undertook additional engagement with the encampment representatives, which resulted in a Disclosure, Divestment and Ethical Investment Memorandum of Understanding with the student body in relation to the universities research activities. (This is sensitive as it relates to research relating to weapons).

Twelve universities (33.3%) had undertaken increased engagement with students and/or community.

Specific examples of engagement by universities included:

- Frequent meetings between the university leadership and the Student Guild, from the outset of the encampment.
- Meetings between the university leadership and the Presidents of the Guild, Palestinian Students' Association, Chief Rabbi and State President of the Jewish body as well as other concerned students/staff.
- Undertaking regular communication and offering support to staff and students during the encampment.
- Establishing dialogue with the students of the encampment over the three month period.
- Working closely with faith communities as part of the university's 'Spiritual Support and Inclusion Action Plan'. This included:
 - Writing to all students reminding them about support for staff through the University's EAP and Student Counselling.
 - Reaching out by the Wellbeing Team to specific groups to remind them of the support services available and how to access the support services.
 - Keeping the community aware of developments through a webpage regarding concerns on campuses, in relation to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.
 - Remaining in close communication with representatives of groups affected by current events, including their Jewish students, to discuss their concerns.
- Working with the Jewish Students' Society (in the case of one university) to put in place:
 - Approval by the Academic Registrar for the use of a personalised letter from the Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS) as evidence of eligibility for Special Consideration.
 - Dialogue about the conflict in Gaza which included representatives from the university's Jewish student community. The Rabbi of the synagogue, who is one of our University's longstanding chaplains, provides direct links to the community.
 - An email to all staff and representative student groups in July 2024 communicating updates and that encampments are not permitted.
- Working with representatives from Camp Shalom, Muslim Students for Palestine, Student Union and staff regarding the Anti-racism commitment (in the case of one university).
- Convening working groups to consider possible changes to policies covering use of flags, advertising, social media etc (in the case of one university).
- Other examples include meeting regularly with local communities to ensure messages of support, consultation with Office of General Counsel, the Senior Executive etc.

Seven universities (19.4%) had undertaken other initiatives which include:

- Significant new investments to directly address antisemitism, build social cohesion, strengthen dialogue, and help to reduce tensions on campus and in the broader community.
- Encouraging students to report concerning behaviour, all Jewish students and those impacted by the protest were provided with preapproved 'Special Consideration' to ensure they would not be disadvantaged in their studies, offered remission of debt and removal of the failure grade for Jewish students. The university also started an Anti-Racism taskforce to work on an over-arching Anti-Racism strategy including the development of Anti-Racism training modules for students and staff.
- Ensuring that the university's security undertake a higher level of vigilance on campus for racial violence incidents, and all staff working within the University's student accommodation residences are trained to understand cultural sensitivities and de-escalation practices. There was also a dedicated to develop and implement Respect Campaign, to raise awareness about the University's commitment to inclusivity, diversity and respectful behaviours.
- Instituting a number of initiatives including:
 - Shutting down the encampment - In August 2024, 20 students received disciplinary notices for contravention of the Student Conduct Policy and 4 staff have been subject to a range of actions arising from contraventions of the Appropriate Workplace Behaviours Policy as a result of the building occupation and in accordance with the University's usual performance and disciplinary procedures.
 - Committing to develop and deliver a suite of anti-racism and cultural competency education programs for students, staff and leaders.
 - Introducing a fast-track response for removing offensive posters, stickers and graffiti on campus.
 - For Jewish students - activation of revised eligibility for Special Consideration for students, activation of the Student Support Fund to directly support students affected by these events, with a one-off non-repayable grant of \$1,000 (students may be eligible for further Financial Aid as the situation evolves), increased awareness of the supports and resources available through Counselling and Psychological Services and the University Health Service, and providing a room for members to use as a private safe space on campus, especially throughout SWOTVAC and the exam period.

APPENDIX 3: Analysis of interviews of university students, academics and professional staff

From 5 August 2024 until 6 September 2024, my office interviewed 65 university staff, students and academics from campuses across Australia, with most interviewees residing in Victoria (c.35%), NSW (c.51%), the ACT (c.9.2%), unspecified state (c.1.7%)*¹ and Queensland (c.3.1%). Approximately half of those interviewed are students.² Despite attending or working at different universities, in many respects there were similarities between:

- the experiences they described
- the type of antisemitic incidents and discourse they had experienced
- how their complaints were handled, minimised, ignored or rejected
- the impact on their psychosocial wellbeing and physical safety

My office intends to continue conducting interviews and gathering additional evidence to provide to the Senate Inquiry and any future Judicial Inquiry.

In my opinion these testimonies indicate that systemic antisemitism is occurring on Australian university campuses. This is causing Jewish students to feel isolated and unsafe and not be afforded the educational opportunities that they are entitled to. This experience of racism is amplified for those students and staff who are both Jewish and Israeli, and it is the case that Israeli staff and students are experiencing intersectional racism, which is directed at their national identity as well as their racial identity. Further, I believe that the universities themselves do not understand or appreciate the unique, embedded and normalised extent of this particular type of racism, and cultural change is needed.

I would like to thank every interviewee for their forthright recount of their experiences on campus. Your courage in coming forward will help achieve change.

(a) Methodology

The interviews were marketed as follows:

“Share your Experiences of Antisemitism with the new Antisemitism Envoy

Jillian Segal AO in her new position as Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism would like to hear from students, academics and staff who have experienced antisemitism on university campuses to inform her work combatting antisemitism in Australia and to help formulate her submission to the Senate Inquiry into Antisemitism on University Campuses.

¹ This signifies that the data has been de-identified further than elsewhere due to sensitivities relating to the identity of the interviewee.

² Some interviewees were employed as staff at universities while also completing doctorate or masters programs.

If you would like to organise an interview with the office of Ms Segal, please click on the link below.

All interviews will be conducted confidentially. This is a vital opportunity to have your voice heard and contribute to the fight against antisemitism.

Interview Details:

Dates: now until 6th September (if you can't fit in an interview before the deadline for the Special Envoy's submission to the Committee please still book an interview as all testimony is valuable)

Locations: Zoom, or in person by request

Duration: Each interview slot is 30 minutes

[The link to book interviews was provided].

We are also happy to take testimony of non-Jewish students or staff at universities who have witnessed antisemitism.'

The interviews were advertised by word of mouth; on the social media or communications of the ECAJ; the social media or communications of some of the state peak Jewish bodies; and in a newsletter sent to constituents by the Federal Member of Parliament for Wentworth, Allegra Spender MP.

Every interviewee was allocated a 30-minute timeslot to talk with a representative of my office. The interviewer would briefly describe the purpose of the interview: to gather information about the experiences of Jewish students, academics and professional staff at universities across Australia who felt they had encountered antisemitism, in order to inform my office's work combatting antisemitism in Australia and to help formulate my submission to the Senate Inquiry.

Interviewees were told that their personal data would be de-identified, and that to the extent that any information such as their subject of study, faculty, physical location of work or study or other information made them identifiable, then it would be removed from their testimony unless they expressly requested that the information be publicly disclosed in my submission. To that end the interviewees were told to flag to the interviewer any information that made them identifiable which they were not comfortable having published in my submission. Interviewees were also told that if they wanted to ensure that particular information that they shared with their interviewer was not disclosed in my submission, then they should state "off the record" prior to providing that information to the interviewer.

Due to the very significant risks to interviewees' academic grades, professional standing, career opportunities, physical and emotional wellbeing, and their livelihoods, the majority of the information that emerged from interviews needed to be de-identified *and* treated as confidential, meaning that I am unable to publicise some of the most harrowing and confronting parts of many of the testimonies. It is my hope that I will have the opportunity to provide this information to a Judicial Inquiry if one is called in the future, subject to the consent of the interviewees. Any Judicial Inquiry should be

empowered to hear evidence confidentially without witnesses needing to fear reprisals. Many interviewees indicated that they would be willing to give evidence before a Judicial Inquiry provided they could do so confidentially.

Interviewees were asked to 'tell their story' to the interviewer, with the interviewer listening. Upon completion of their recount of anything that they wished to tell the interviewer, each interviewee was given six standard questions to answer. The questions were as follows:

1. Where did the incident / discourse take place (online, in class, on campus etc) and were there any online manifestations of it?
2. Was the incident / discourse reported to the university and Community Security Group (or to anyone else), and, if not, why not? Did you feel there was a satisfactory response?
3. Were you offended, insulted, humiliated or intimidated by the act/s in question and do you believe that the act/s happened because you are Jewish / Israeli (please substantiate that belief)?
4. What was the emotional and/or physical impact of the antisemitic incident/discourse you experienced?
5. Was there anything about the experience you had that might suggest it came from outside actors (i.e. not students, not academics or other employees of the university/school)?
6. Were you treated less favourably, or not given the same opportunities, as others in a similar situation because you are Jewish/Israeli?

(b) Key findings

In collecting the testimonies I did not set out to conduct a broad survey. There are limitations to the information I gathered insofar as I have not yet been able to interview students and staff from all major universities, and nor can I say that their experiences are representative insofar as even within the same university a student's or employee's experience may differ considerably depending on their faculty or area of work. Other factors may influence the students', academics' or staff's experience, ranging from how socially active or involved in university clubs they are, to their age and background. However, clearly discernible trends emerged across the testimonies, and these trends highlight an overall picture that is concerning and requires urgent action.

Below is a summary of key findings from the interviews:

Location of incident / discourse and online manifestations

Every single interviewee, irrespective of their university, described the proliferation of posters and stickers on campus, many of which contained antisemitic content or anti-Israel content. They also noted the prevalence of similar graffiti and other signs that, to the overwhelming majority of interviewees, sent a message that Jews and Israelis were unwelcome. Two interviewees from the University of NSW, Sydney noted that their university was better at preventing and removing the posters or stickers than some other universities.

Eighty per cent of student interviewees experienced an antisemitic incident or discourse in a lecture or tutorial, and many of these individuals experienced such incidents or discourse in more than one lecture or tutorial and/or in other locations at the university. Nearly 70% of university staff, including academics, experienced an antisemitic incident or discourse in their immediate workplace – that is, with close colleagues - while all academics and staff interviewed said they witnessed manifestations of antisemitism on campus, which ranged from specific chants at encampments such as “F*ck off, Zionist scum” to antisemitic posters or stickers in their work environment.

Some interviewees were harassed or abused online, including through online petitions that named and targeted them. Of those whose classes had an online component, a common experience was that they felt isolated and ostracized because the online interactions amongst their cohort would invariably include antisemitic or anti-Israel discourse, or would lead to the formation of breakaway groups that focused on anti-Israel themes.

Reporting

Not a single interviewee who reported an incident or discourse to their university felt satisfied with how the reporting process was handled. Even when the outcome was that the offending lecturer, professor or student/s were subject to a disciplinary process, the interviewees felt that this was not conveyed to those who had been impacted by their dissemination of antisemitic or anti-Israel discourse or disinformation/misinformation. The interviewees also noted that when incidents or discourse were reported there was never any accountability demonstrated by the university or faculty, and the conduct was pinned on an individual even despite the interviewee feeling that such conduct had become normalised.

In some instances interviewees felt they had no option but to go to the police to seek assistance, and on occasions this proved effective but only because the university came under heavy pressure. Interviewees tended to have a view that their universities were focused on minimising negative publicity and neutralising legal risks, rather than proactively managing a situation to prevent racial vilification, discrimination or marginalisation.

Racial vilification

Eighty-six per cent of interviewees felt that they had been racially vilified and in one instance an individual had brought legal action which had concluded in their favour. Some interviewees noted that they did not have a particular connection with Israel, but still felt offended, humiliated, insulted and intimidated by incidents or discourse that they experienced, highlighting that these incidents or discourse were therefore antisemitic even if the perpetrators claimed such incidents or discourse were ‘anti-Zionist’.

Some of the types of racial vilification included being spat at by people in the encampment even when just approaching to have a calm conversation; being photographed or filmed without consent and finding that footage or the image appeared online with identifying information and/or threats; being abused online on account of the individual’s Jewish identity or suspected Zionism; having the front of one’s home vandalised with Nazi or Hamas symbols; being pushed out of accommodation by roommates on account of being Jewish and/or a Zionist; being humiliated in class for expressing a Jewish or Israeli perspective and many other examples.

Involvement of outside actors

The majority of interviewees noted that they had personally witnessed the presence of outside actors in the anti-Israel or antisemitic activity that they had observed. Some were able to point to correspondence or media coverage from their universities proving this. Interviewees all noted the proliferation of antisemitic and anti-Israel posters and stickers around campuses which come from outside organisations. In the case of the University of Sydney, many students and academics pointed to the investigation which had demonstrated the involvement of Hizb-ut Tahrir in the encampment³, as well as their own personal experiences evidencing involvement of outside actors.

Discrimination

One interviewee successfully brought a case for discrimination against their university employer, and another interviewee was successful in a complaint to the university which resulted in it taking disciplinary action against the perpetrator of the conduct that formed the subject of the complaint. Several others identified less favourable treatment on the basis of what they perceived to be their racial or religious identity, but were reluctant to report it or did not receive a satisfactory or any outcome from reporting such conduct. Some complaints remain underway.

Many students reported self-censorship, stating that they adopted positions in their essays or assignments that they did not believe in because they believed if they had taken a position reflective of their views, however well-substantiated by evidence, they would have suffered a decline in their grades and hostility in their courses.

³ Juanola, Marta, Worthington, Anne, and McKenzie, Nick, ‘Hate comes to university campus but hides its face’, *The Age*, 16 June 2024: [Israel Hamas: Hate comes to university camp but hides its face \(theage.com.au\)](https://www.theage.com.au/news/israel-hamas-hate-comes-to-university-campus-but-hides-its-face-20240616-pz6q6p.html)

Several students reported being penalised for being Jewish or Israeli, either by:

- failing an assignment or course or performing well below their average grade because they refused to take the same position on an issue concerning Israel as their lecturer or tutor had publicly adopted, and their Jewish or Israeli identity was known to their lecturer or tutor;
- being refused special accommodations they had requested or being made to wait until the very last minute for notification as to whether they would receive special accommodations, when their requests were linked to:
 - o their suffering as a result of October 7, including direct proximity to family members or friends who were murdered, raped or taken hostage,
 - o their trauma as a result of an antisemitic experience, or
 - o religious observance,

with such requests identifying them as a Jew.

Normalisation of antisemitic rhetoric, dehumanisation and marginalisation

Many students, academics and staff noted that once their colleagues or teachers learned they were Jewish or realised they had a Jewish or Hebrew name, they asked them what their views were on the current government of Israel, Israel's conduct in the war, and Israel's 'occupation/apartheid/genocide/ethnic cleansing'. Those who experienced this line of questioning all pointed to the questioner being in a position of relative power to them, either as the person grading their work, supervising their studies or being a senior colleague/manager. While this was subtle and those interviewed could not say definitively that their grades or career prospects would have suffered as a result of their answers, there was a threatening undercurrent to such questioning – particularly as in many cases the questioners had already made their anti-Israel or antisemitic views known on social media or in public settings such as staff meetings – and it made them feel uncomfortable particularly because it played on the 'dual loyalty' antisemitic trope.⁴

Other students reported sitting in lecture halls where the lecturer would demonise Israel and dehumanise Israelis and/or Jews and they would feel powerless to say anything and fearful of the consequences if they did.

All students interviewed reported that their social circles had shrunk and that they had greater difficulty befriending non-Jewish students once their Jewish identity was known to those students. Students who challenged academics' statements in lectures or tutorials reported being ostracised by classmates.

Students at ANU and University of Sydney in particular identified public messaging on materials that were widely disseminated which propagated antisemitic tropes such as the global domination/power trope.⁵

⁴ Antisemitic tropes chart, *Facing History and Ourselves*, accessed on 31 August 2024: [Antisemitic Tropes Chart \(facinghistory.org\)](https://facinghistory.org/antisemitic-tropes-chart)

⁵ *Ibid*

Trauma and poor mental health

Several students and staff who were interviewed reported seeking medical assistance and being prescribed anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medication to manage their response to the rise in antisemitism in their university environment. Approximately half of those interviewed were visibly teary during their interview.

Being told that the solution to increased antisemitism was to work from home or attend courses remotely

Almost all Jewish students and academics interviewed reported being told to work from home or attend classes remotely as a 'solution' to the increasingly pervasive antisemitism they were encountering at their universities. Many of them highlighted that this was not a practical option for them because of the strong in-person component to their course or job, or their need for human interaction and feedback. They saw this as being detrimental to their grades or to their career potential and felt that their invisibility was a double punishment on top of feeling intimidated, offended, humiliated and insulted on campus. Many undergraduate students interviewed - particularly those based in Victoria - reflected that they had already spent much of their final high school years in lockdown and that further isolation was inimical to their personal and professional development and psychosocial wellbeing.

Being trolled online or having media identifying them posted by other students

Some students reported being filmed or photographed without their consent when they refused to take anti-Israel materials or when they refused to engage with the encampment, only to find that the footage or photographs had been posted online. These posts were often accompanied by hate speech, and, in some instances, the students were named and trolled.

Another student described being trolled online at a university-related event in which their peers and university moderators could see them being trolled and no one did anything to support them.

A staff member was on the receiving end of a hateful online campaign on the basis of their identity.

Students making the decision to drop classes or change courses because of pervasive antisemitism

Students reported changing university classes or courses because of how pervasive antisemitism was. One interviewee reached out following the interview to seek a pro bono psychological assessment and supporting documentation for a request to move classes on account of a teacher expressing antisemitic views.

(c) Notable incidents and discourse

Many antisemitic incidents and an array of antisemitic discourse were disclosed throughout the interview process.

Some of the most notable incidents included:

- Students performing Nazi salutes to Jewish academics
- Students defacing the properties of Jewish students with swastikas, inverted triangles and other symbols connoting Jew hatred and a desire to eliminate Jews
- Students posting on class social media circles prayers to kill Jews, glorification of Hamas, denial of October 7 atrocities, intending to reach fellow students who they know are Jewish
- Professors and lecturers failing or giving significantly lower grades to students who identified as Jewish or Israeli and: refused to adopt an anti-Israel stance in assignments or exams, challenged the professor's or lecturer's view on Jews/Israelis/Israel, or sought special consideration as a result of October 7-related trauma or religious observance
- Being threatened or harassed at Australasian Union of Jewish Students stalls at various orientation and other university events, with phrases like "gas the Jews" or the ripping or disposing of the Israeli flag
- Students placing posters glorifying Hamas and the October 7 atrocities in areas to coincide with the presence of Jewish students in those areas
- Students describing being trolled at online university events by other attendees who knew they were Jewish or Israeli
- Students being harassed in person and online for congregating to discuss Jewish issues, even when such groups were left-wing in their ideology and 'pro Palestine'
- Students being spat on or pushed when their Jewish identity became known to those at their university encampment
- Academics being abused online purely because they are Jewish and not on the basis of their opinions regarding the Israel Palestine conflict.
- Students being excluded from LGBTQI+ groups or other societies on the basis that they are Jewish or Israeli
- Academics experiencing antisemitic remarks directed at them at work meetings.

Some of the most notable discourse included:

- Denial of October 7 atrocities by lecturers and students in group and individual settings
- Constant comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany or states that have committed the worst human rights atrocities, and false assertions of 'fact', such as that the International Court of Justice had found Israel guilty of genocide⁶

⁶ 'Former head of ICJ explains ruling on genocide case against Israel brought by S Africa', BBC.com, 26 April 2024: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-middle-east-68906919>

- Holocaust denial or minimisation
- Demonisation and dehumanisation of Jews and Israelis and denial of their fundamental rights
- Verbal abuse, harassment, and intimidation of Jewish students and staff
- Exceptionalism and singular focus with respect to Israel in subjects totally unrelated to the Israel Gaza war, such as architecture, Indigenous culture and history and medicine
- Invocation of the Blood Libel and other antisemitic tropes to allege that Jews and/or Israelis kill and enjoy killing non-Jewish babies, commit genocide and commit apartheid
- Students being publicly attacked for congregating to discuss Jewish issues or responses to rising antisemitism.

(d) Key quotes

Location of incident / discourse and online manifestations

- 'I can't switch off the all staff emails that come through the university official channels. For some reason, you have to receive them...They've now put something in place where things can be taken down or the chat can be closed. But that's not enough. It should be proactive. People who want to broadcast a message to all staff in the whole university. Surely it should have to be [that] you submit something, and then somebody approves it?' (*University of Sydney employee*)
- 'I found myself eating my lunch with that sign right there. And at one point I stood up and I said...that sign [effectively] says "no Jews allowed", so I can't eat my sandwich here.
That means that I'm alienated from my colleagues. I can't sit and have lunch with the rest of my colleagues. I have to separate myself.' (*De-identified employee of university*)
- 'You name it, I have seen it. Lots of violent content, Holocaust inversion, misinformation and disinformation, Jew hatred masked as anti-Zionism or as political content and much more. I am only seeing a tiny fraction of it for one thing because I don't tend to follow the people who are likely to be putting this stuff out there, and, in some instances I have stopped following those that do make their true views known, as have my Jewish friends. But also, some people have blocked me or I can't see all of their content, and I know I am really just seeing the tiniest fraction of the antisemitic content coming from my cohort and the medical profession. There are so many students posting antisemitic content.' (*Monash university student*)
- 'I've been to campus, there's been posters, graffiti, boycott Israel stickers... every single time so I go to work and the first thing that I do is pull down a bunch of posters and try and scrape off some stickers. And then I go to my office and people say how are you? And I have to say, I'm really good, even though I'm like, you know, crying on the inside.' (*Deakin university academic*)

Reporting

- 'That was an incident [referring to antisemitic conduct in class], but what was more concerning has been UNSW College's reaction to it. So initially I complained to my immediate supervisors. I said, I'm aware that this is a criminal offense...What's the protocol? Do you report it? Or do I report it? I received very little kind of support or serious attention from it. They said, "I will give them a verbal warning". They said, "Oh, you know, once a student swore in my class and that's similar stuff to this". Anyway, I wasn't impressed, so I went to the police. (*University of NSW employee*)
- 'I've just stopped reporting, because USyd allows everything.' (*University of Sydney employee*)
- 'The Science Library had a poster up that said "come learn about Hamas". You would think that being a banned terrorist organization the university would not tolerate events about Hamas. So I made a complaint through the online complaint platform about this poster, which was purporting to be an "informational session" but clearly was actually promoting Hamas or spreading knowledge about its ideology. It was covered up as an information session by the uni and there was no positive response. They came back to me to say there was nothing problematic about the event.' (*University of Sydney student*)

University's management of increased antisemitism

- 'There's been zero effort for dialogue, for reining in false information...to me, that is a signal of complicity, that they're letting it just bubble away. And it gets worse and it gets more extreme. You could take the point of view that it's good that the students want to be change makers. Now, what's the university doing to help them be peace builders? Why let them point to some group of people as the villains, and just let it keep going like that. They've got a responsibility. They're a university.' (*University of Sydney employee*)
- 'I have to confess on a personal level, every day I had to walk past big signs saying "Israel is genocidal", right? And that's pretty upsetting to see that that sits on campus 24/7 and is unchallenged. So I suppose that from my perspective, the university has bent over backwards to accommodate the student protesters and has allowed them to occupy the university lawns and exclude everybody else, and on the other hand, when Josh [Burns] speaks it decides that he has to squirrel away in the room so as to avoid the protesters'. (*University of Melbourne academic*)
- 'I think people outside the university community joining is less worrisome than the pervasive hatred of Jews that has spread through university life from lecturers to students. There is no regard for academic rigor/evidence/reasoned analysis/critical thinking when referring to Israel/Zionism. [There is] an acceptance of expressing antisemitic views, usually presented as anti-Zionism to make it less seem less pungent, which works for everyone except Jewish people (e.g. 'Zionist free zone', 'no Zionists on campus', 'nut-free, gluten-free, zionist-free museli bars', calling Jews 'Zios' as a derogatory term).' (*University of Sydney employee*)

- 'The posts are extremely antisemitic and there seems to be no repercussions for the students even though they are the future medics who will treat people.'
(*University of Monash student*)
- 'If I refer to the ladies in the room rather than women, I get a slap on the wrist. [It's the same] If I refer to disabled people instead of people with disabilities. So all those things are relatively subtle. [The person saying them is] not meaning any harm, but because those people say you're offending me [it's taken seriously by the university]. But Jews aren't entitled to do that, so when they shout "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" and we say that's a call for genocide, because Hamas uses that as a call for genocide, we get, "I'm sorry that's not illegal". (*University of Melbourne academic*)
- 'At the moment I am doing Indigenous studies, and every place you look there'll be something related to Israel/Palestine and not Indigenous Studies. For history, you have to do an Australia unit and that's why I am doing this, and also I am interested in it. And every time the lecturer speaks it's about what is happening right now in Israel. And there is no way I could say that the comparison is meaningless even though it is.' (*University of Sydney student*)
- 'The vice chancellors have been called out for not doing enough about sexual harassment on campus, and have had to be proactive in dealing with it. [But when it comes to antisemitism] What Mark Scott said is, I have never done anything to encourage antisemitism on campus. I know you haven't done anything to [encourage antisemitism] but your job is to work against it, right? Your job is to create an environment in which people do not feel that they are frightened. You're supposed to be proactive at doing that.' (*University of Melbourne academic*)
- 'There were also various events such as the careers fair where people from Tel Aviv university were invited to attend and have a stall, and in the end they had to leave because they were intimidated and their security was at risk and the uni did nothing to help them stay secure or to challenge how they were being intimidated. It felt really wrong. These were just academics with no connection with the war in Gaza, and they were being targeted because they were Israeli or Jewish and for no other reason.' (*University of Sydney student*)
- 'They've got this romantic attitude towards their fond memories of the anti-Vietnam protest, so they remember those but the difference then is that it wasn't one student group against another, it was all the students acting together against authority, against the war. Jews were always welcome then.' (*University of Melbourne academic*)
- '[Manager] said that he is there for us 100%...We don't have to come into work. We can work from home. I said to him, I haven't done anything wrong... It shouldn't be me having to work from home... There should not be messaging around my workplace insinuating that people from my culture or from my country or from my homeland, are not welcome or should f^k off or should not exist.'" (*Deakin university academic*)

Vilification

- 'I think this is the takeaway, if there's anything that I think I bring to this conversation, is that I never consider myself a Zionist. Yet I feel attacked by the anti-Zionist things. And if the only thing that's the same between me and the Zionist students is a Jewish identity, then it is the Jewish identity that they're attacking.' (*ANU student*)
- 'Never before has anyone attacked me in in this ad hominem way because of my Jewish background, and it was personally defamatory. It completely misrepresented my views on the Israeli Palestinian conflict. I'm very well known ...as a strong supporter of a two-state solution' (*de-identified academic*)
- 'I don't see criticism of Israel as a problem. But what we're seeing on campus is not criticism of Israel. It's a call for Israel to be annihilated, for it to completely not exist. At the moment, the campus is plastered with posters that say, "we don't want your two states. We want all of 48", so that's the message that's consistently there. To me that is antisemitic, because there is only one Jewish country. So facing calls for its destruction is terrifying, and having to face that on a daily basis, I definitely feel like it's not safe for people to know that I'm Jewish.' (*University of Sydney employee*)
- 'I've been told by a colleague all the usual stuff: "there's definitely no evidence of systemic rape. But even if it did happen, they deserved it", which to me is the same as saying you deserve it. Of course, I take that personally.' (*University of Sydney employee*)
- 'You're in a [*]. That's a place of truth and historical fact, and it's just extraordinary that your colleagues are pushing these views and are not open to anything that you have to say, and are in fact, vilifying you.' (*University of Sydney employee*)
- 'Yes, yes, getting told you support genocide and you're a baby murderer if you support Israel's right to exist would tick all of those boxes.' [i.e. employee feels insulted, intimidated, offended and humiliated]. (*University of Sydney employee*)
- 'I saw a [non-Palestinian] colleague, a staff member, wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh on the 10th of October into class. And I saw this in the walkway. This wasn't a student. This was an academic. If I was a student in that class, how kind of frightened would I be?' (*University of NSW employee*)
- 'It's a very hostile space, you know, and it's ironic that it's considered to be one of the better campuses at present, you know, the way that they measure that is by lack of acts of physical violence, which I would say is not really a very good threshold.' (*University of NSW employee*)
- 'I have seen many other posts from students [in my cohort] which say things like 'Zionism is Nazism', there is no difference between Jews and Nazis. (*University of Monash student*)
- 'I was working at the AUJS stall and someone came past, like, a couple of guys and said, "gas the Jews", and were laughing at us and stuff...And at that point, there was no free Palestine or anything, because no one even knew about that yet, because it was before October 7'. (*University of Wollongong student*)

- 'I stopped speaking Hebrew on the phone to my mum when I was out of home, and I didn't mention where I was from in classes, or that I was Jewish' (*University of Sydney student*)
- 'Yes, I felt offended and intimidated once the encampment had been set up and there was constant chanting 'from the river to the sea' and 'Intifada' and that kind of thing because it's obvious what the implication of these things is. It is calling for the end to Israel and the wiping out of the people there. And the university kept telling us that these things mean different things to different people but really it is clear what it means and it was all over the place and it still is. That is a threatening thing to see at university and it makes you wonder what these people support and how far they would go.' (*University of Sydney student*)
- 'I don't think they said what they said because I am Jewish, but because they are anti-Zionists. But we know that anti-Zionism is antisemitism'. (*University of Macquarie student*)
- 'I went to a meeting as a Jewish student with my Jewish peers to talk about Jewish issues, and it was called a plot. It was just participating in democracy.' (*ANU student*)
- 'The old, "are you or have you ever been a communist?" Is now, "are you or have you ever been a Zionist?"', which is being formulated as a political test for Jews only, and it then becomes a very expedient and disingenuous political strategy of excluding people from debates so that the people with the extreme views win the debate by default, because the only people that are around and challenge them have been excluded. And again, it was clearly threatening, because these groups have a track record of targeting people personally and clearly their political agenda is to exclude people with alternative views from public life.' (de-identified academic)

Psychosocial impacts

Trauma, victimisation, depression, anxiety, stress, illness

- 'There's a really, really strong sort of pull to say that it's nothing. It's not against you. Nobody knows you're Jewish, and it's not against you. There's no threat to you personally. It's against Israel. And I find that really weird that at one and the same time, there's a tolerance of a certain amount of hatred, because it's so awful what Israel is doing. And on the other hand, that hatred doesn't exist. It's not even there. And even if it is, it's okay. It's cognitive dissonance'. (*University of Sydney employee*)
- 'So we're already at the point where Jewish students shouldn't choose the university based on the best course for what they want to study. They first need to check what's going to be safe for them. You know, in terms of psychosocial safety and even physical safety'. (*University of Sydney employee*)
- 'You know, it's depressing. I don't have the words...it takes the wind out of my sails. I feel so depleted. I feel so exhausted. Instead of having the space to mourn and grieve over what's happening in Israel, I'm using every ounce of my energy just to survive at work.' (*University of Sydney employee*)

- 'There's an economic impact...loss of work, and then the stress that goes along with going through [the legal]* procedure and that kind of thing.' (*de-identified employee*)
- 'I would say I am experiencing trauma. There has been disruption to my friendship groups and really anyone who is not Jewish is now less trusted by me and it is hard to know if they agree with what is being put out there. I am much more introverted now and I have chosen not to maintain some friendships. Then there are others who I will forever have a question mark against, and this is a big problem as they are my future colleagues.' (*University of Monash student*)
- 'Some weeks I didn't want to go to class because I had to walk through the protests, and they were often shouting and chanting and stuff happening outside my classroom while I was in class. So I was feeling pretty stressed out that whole time.' (*University of Sydney student*)
- 'Classes were close to the encampment and I did not go to uni much. Before the encampment started, the protestors were marching up and down, and that was very unpleasant hearing them on their loudspeakers shouting genocide and other false allegations, and it conjured up an underlying dread, and was clearly a case of double standards about Israel.' (*University of Sydney student*)
- 'After October 7 I hated going to campus and I felt fearful.' (*University of Sydney student*)
- 'I'm just disgusted and I feel so upset and it's impacting my everyday ability to do my work. And I feel really let down. I've worked so so hard to get to where I am. And I've gone above and beyond.' (*Deakin University academic*)
- 'It's already doing stuff to me physically, like I'm getting sick more often. I've got like, my eyes this because I rubbed them so often, at this skin, like coming off like my mouth is like, I don't know what's happening to it. I need to go to a doctor. But it's insane. Like my physical health is just going downhill and my mental health is going downhill because of what people have said to me. It's terrible how people have made me feel.' (*Swinburne University student*)

Isolation

- 'This is how these things happen. Because, you know, it just takes good people doing nothing, and actually, they probably genuinely fear repercussions for their own careers by speaking out, especially in a public setting, which is, of course, no excuse for not speaking out, but it just goes to show how societies move in a particular direction very easily and it becomes normalized.' (*University of Sydney employee*)
- 'I've seen a lot of panels and reading groups that have sprung up, a lot of them being 'anti colonial' reading groups, right? And the only [former] colony they talk about is surprise, surprise...Israel...Jews can't participate in university life because I can't go to any of these reading groups...or probably, more accurately, these reading groups would be hostile to me if I was there.' (*University of NSW employee and student*)
- 'It has provoked anxiety. The physical impact has been huge. I am on edge all the time and it just means I don't go out much anymore and I don't go much to my classes because I feel so uncomfortable. It has also caused tension in my relationship because...he will say, "can't we just put politics aside and have a

- nice time” when we are out with [anti-Israel] friends and I don’t know what to say because for me it isn’t politics, it’s in my heart.’ (*University of Sydney student*)
- ‘I think I feel so desensitized at the moment, because I just [got] so used to it, I’ve become so blank, I’d rather not make new friends. I’d rather just stay in my own bubble, because I’m scared of what you’re gonna say in a second, or that they’ll find out who I am and where I’m from.’ (*University of Sydney student*)
 - ‘And then I walked up to the queer tent, and they had seen us walk away from the [X] tent, and I’m queer, and I was very, very sternly told, “if you weren’t with them, you can’t align with us”. And from then it’s been a huge concept in my life that I think about and talk about, that if you sit in the left for whatever reason, if you’re queer, if you’re left leaning politically, you can’t exist as a Zionist in those spaces. You have to choose a part of your identity, you can’t negotiate it. It just exists as this.’ (*University of Sydney student*)
 - ‘I’m now the kind of student who just goes to uni to do my work, not to socialize. I don’t try to make friends anymore or to spend any extra time there’. (*University of Macquarie student*)

Concerns for physical safety

- ‘I now question my safety, the safety of my family, and the safety of my community, whereas I didn’t really do that before.’ (*University of Monash student*)
- ‘I definitely do feel an overwhelming sense of fear whenever I’m at uni.’ (*University of Sydney student*)
- ‘The encampment was really hard because you couldn’t just walk past it. It wasn’t just free Palestine. It was openly all the flags that you don’t want to see of terrorist organizations in the Middle East hanging around, just a lot of really bad chants and people that openly supported Intifada and would walk around and cheer these chants ‘Intifada’ and ‘from the river to the sea’, and lecturers that were joining. Exchange week was really scary to see. The Tel Aviv University representatives got attacked and had to leave.’ (*University of Sydney student*)
- ‘I don’t feel safe to speak Hebrew on campus, or anything that says that I’m Israeli or Jewish. That is a sign that I am not just intimidated, I think I’m genuinely scared what could happen, and also ashamed, which is hard to say and feel.’ (*University of Sydney student*)

Involvement of outside actors

- ‘Yes in my experience there were people at the encampment who were not part of the university community. I spoke to a couple of people who said they do not study or work at the university but were concerned about the situation in Gaza and saw joining the encampment as a way to help. Anecdotally as well there were people at the encampment who were totally disconnected from university rhythms, e.g. not knowing when the semester ended and exams started, asking when the students would be back, etc...I was able to observe this day by day.’ (*University of Sydney employee*)
- ‘At the encampment there was strong evidence of outside interference. Older people were infiltrating and stealing students’ identities. So much so that we got an email from Mark Scott telling us to carry our student ID on us and not share it

- with anyone because it was being used by people it did not belong to.’ (*University of Sydney student*)
- ‘One area of the encampment was left-wing students from SAW. Then there was an area for Muslims, who I guess felt they needed to show up. And then there was a corner, this hardcore radical Islam corner.’ (*University of Sydney student*)
 - ‘There was also the children’s gathering on campus which was awful, knowing that young children were chanting “from the river to the sea” and “Intifada” (*University of Sydney student*).
 - ‘I was kind of suspicious about why the tents [in] the encampment didn’t smell, and why it was very quiet at night. It’s because no one lives there. I gave up my freedom of movement to allow it, and I can’t cross the lawn because there was a tent there. I gave up that freedom for them to have their freedom of expression. Things got prioritized, and I was okay with that, so long as they were there. But they weren’t. They were just pretending to be good people.’ (*ANU student*)
 - ‘What we really need to understand is why this issue, above all others in the international arena, has galvanized students to the extent that it has. Some of it is group think, but I think we really need to understand this as the result of years of patient Palestinian advocacy on campus (some of which has been supported by Qatar).’ (*University of Melbourne academic*)

Discrimination

- ‘I made a workplace complaint to the police about [X]* students [who performed Nazi salutes], and then suddenly, my contract wasn’t renewed.’ (de-identified university employee)
- ‘I didn’t get results back for that exam [one that the student applied for special consideration in light of documented mental health issues stemming from exposure to antisemitism on campus and trauma post October 7], but I did significantly worse in that subject than I did in all the other ones’. (*University of Sydney student*)
- ‘For most Jews, anti-Zionism, opposing the right of Israel to exist, opposing the right of Jews to believe that they should have their own state, is in fact, quintessential antisemitism, no matter what it’s covered up with. And that attitude is filtering into academia in deep ways. For example, the [X] union is a classic example of virulent antisemitism that’s been going on for a long time. And the only explanation [for their] complete preoccupation with Israel - because they only pass motions against Israel [is antisemitism]. So what actually has been happening is the [X] union has been a very convenient platform for anti-Israel forces. They have a platform, they have a big, wide mail list, and they have money. And it’s totally outrageous that they actually are effectively ejecting Jews from the union, Jews that want the protection of a union for the sake of their employment conditions, but they can’t stand a union that basically declares that one of their heartfelt, hard held beliefs – the right to self-determination - constitutes genocide.’ (*University of Melbourne academic*)
- ‘My opportunities to diversify my work are limited because I’ve made it known, hey, I’m Jewish, hey, I’m Israeli, and people just shy away from me now because I have an opinion that is not the right opinion.’ (*de-identified university academic*)

Normalised culture of antisemitism at universities

- 'It's pretty, pretty extraordinary that the only people that can't draw attention to antisemitism, specific racism directed towards Jews, are Jews.' (*University of NSW affiliate*)
- 'At the very same time that you have an ombudsman being appointed to investigate sexual violence on campuses, you also have motions being passed by bodies like the Student Representative Council at the University of Sydney, condoning violence, including violence against women in Israel, and promoting a culture that says that violence is legitimate as a form of so-called resistance, including in Australia, so that would not, you know, that could not happen against any other group. You know, if you try and imagine a motion that would condone violence against Indigenous Australians or trans people or gay people, at the very same time that a huge amount of government resources are being expended to curtail and report violence against those groups on campus is, to me, quite paradoxical and extraordinary.' (*University of NSW affiliate*)
- 'It's just a feeling of going on to a campus where you're just surrounded by posters. You know, you'd walk down the bridge that connects two sides of the campus on that city road, and it was always covered in posters about Palestine and 'genocide'. And everywhere you went, there were just posters, and you just didn't know who you would encounter that could say something antisemitic. It was like a fear of a potential negative interaction with someone. So as I said, it was a very intimidating environment.' (*University of Sydney student*)
- 'I feel unwelcome on campus because people are saying you're not welcome here, they're saying it very explicitly, right? It's just on the borderline of saying Jews out.' (*University of Melbourne academic*)
- 'The message is not that the university condemns these actions. The message is that the university kind of supports it, even if they're not supporting it [because they do not communicate any condemnation, and at most just remove antisemitic stickers and materials quietly out of hours].' (*ANU student*)
- 'Antisemitism is a cultural piece of Australia. If those people just fade away and you don't know that it's because of their actions, because they're not making an environment conducive to a positive educational environment. If you don't know that that is the reason why they left, then you feel just as under siege as you did before they left.' (*ANU student*)
- 'Universities are the Ground Zero today of the antisemitism, of the growth of antisemitism, and it's very fearful to think that the students that today are protesting and are getting increasingly radical are going to be the leaders sitting on the government benches in 20 years' time. That's terrifying, because they're actually developing a world view in which Israel and Jews are, in fact, the enemy. They're actually demonizing Israel as completely bad...and it's not very long before Jews are included in that dichotomy...and I think that's terribly, terribly dangerous.' (*University of Melbourne academic*).
- 'And university leadership has been, to a very large extent, hijacked by a trend that's been occurring over a long period of time, which is identity politics. Vice chancellors have also become not educators, but CEOs of organizations. And if

you're the CEO of an organization, your most important role is to keep the business going and keep the peace, and that's what they've done, right? They've abrogated their responsibilities as educators and taken on the responsibility of managers of large corporations and they've really neglected their key responsibilities of fighting antisemitism [and other discriminatory conduct and discourse].’ (*University of Melbourne academic*)

Lack of academic rigour and refusal to hear or debate other perspectives

- ‘Someone suggested a debate, and the lecturer said, “yeah, yeah, of course, but obviously, there's some things that aren't open for debate”, and he was obviously referring to [the Israel Gaza war].’ (*University of Macquarie student*)
- ‘If there's free speech for the students and the agitators 24/7 there should be free speech for one person to give their different perspective right?’ (*University of Melbourne academic*)
- ‘I think some of them [the students attending to support the Student Representative Council motion] have an element of hatred, but I just think that there's an element of misguidance, because they're just so brainwashed.’ (*University of Sydney affiliate*)

BDS movement and cancellation of Israeli and Jewish academics and speakers

- ‘So one of the most egregious [incidents] was an academic who had been invited to give a talk, a Dean of Engineering at the Technion. The students smeared him on social media as being genocidal and all that sort of stuff, and the university just capitulated and cancelled his lecture. And it's not the first time that that's happened, they claim that they didn't have time to arrange security or that sort of stuff. But since then, the students have just had their way every day...When this academic, this Dean of Engineering [was] removed from giving a talk, the reaction of [the] Vice Chancellor [was], what were people thinking inviting someone like that in this time?’ (*University of Melbourne academic*)

APPENDIX 4: Efforts aimed at accountability at foreign universities for antisemitic discourse and incidents

The array of responses by foreign universities, tertiary education regulators and other key stakeholders to the rise in antisemitic incidents and discourse is too extensive to cover in this submission, however, some examples of positive interventions that have the potential to lead to meaningful change in this area are set out below.

(a) The United States of America

A Los Angeles district court judge's ruling that the University of California, Los Angeles, must not allow student activists to prevent their Jewish classmates from accessing campus buildings has clarified that universities have a 'moral responsibility' to fight campus antisemitism.¹

On 19 August 2024, University of California President Michael V. Drake wrote to chancellors of all 10 campuses to enforce rules against encampments, protests and masking that shields identities. His letter covers:

- Camping or encampments: Policies must clarify that no person shall camp, set up or erect a campsite, or occupy a tent or other temporary housing structure on University property, unless specifically pre-approved.
- Unauthorized structures: Policies must clarify that no person shall erect, build, construct, set up, establish and/or maintain unauthorized structures on University property.
- Restricting free movement: Policies must clarify that no person shall restrict the movement of another person or persons by, among other means, blocking or obstructing their ingress or egress of roadways, walkways, buildings, parking structures, fire lanes, windows, doors or other passageways to university property, or otherwise denying a person access to a University facility or space.
- Masking to conceal identity: Policies must clarify that no person shall wear a mask or personal disguise or otherwise conceal their identity with the intent of intimidating any person or group, or for the purpose of evading or escaping discovery, recognition, or identification in the commission of violations of law or policy.
- Refusal to reveal identity: Policies must clarify that no person shall refuse to identify themselves while on University property to University officials who are acting in the performance of their duties in situations where assistance or intervention is needed.”²

At New York University (NYU) the Anti-Harassment Policy was modified to include 'Code Words' for Jews like 'Zionist', and to clarify that 'Individuals associated with NYU would violate that policy “when discrimination or harassment is based in racism, colorism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, sexism, transphobia, ableism and other

¹ Kessel, Zach, 'UCLA ruling clarifies 'moral responsibility' universities have to fight campus antisemitism', *National Review*, August 2024: [UCLA Ruling Clarifies 'Moral Responsibility' Universities Have to Fight Campus Antisemitism \(msn.com\)](https://www.nationalreview.com/2024/08/2024-ucla-ruling-clarifies-moral-responsibility-universities-have-to-fight-campus-antisemitism/)

² [Letter from President Drake - Chancellors - Policies Impacting Expressive Activity \(003\) - DocumentCloud](#)

forms of bigotry involving protected characteristics covered by the policy.”³ NYU offered examples of when the use of a ‘code word’ for Jews like “Zionists” would violate the university’s policies.⁴ According to interpretations of the revised policy, excluding Zionists from an open event, applying a ‘no Zionist’ litmus test for participation in any NYU activity, or calling for the death of Zionists is prohibited.⁵

At the federal level, a Republican-led House Committee on Education and the Workforce continues to hold hearings into antisemitism on campuses across the USA since the October 7 massacre. These hearings have been widely broadcast and have featured leaders of prominent universities such as Claudine Gay of Harvard University, Elizabeth Magill of the University of Pennsylvania and Sally Kornbluth of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology testifying under oath. Following the hearings at which Claudine Gay, Elizabeth Magill and Sally Kornbluth were questioned, the Committee on Education and the Workforce called for the resignation of the presidents and announced a Congressional investigation “with the full force of subpoena power” into the same issues. To date, Claudine Gay and Elizabeth Magill have resigned, as have other presidents of universities implicated for creating a campus culture that permits the normalisation of antisemitism.

The hearings have helped to promote a culture of accountability for increased antisemitism on campuses among the leadership of many universities in the USA. Several universities have since acted to reduce the likelihood of their campuses being the venues for antisemitic incidents and discourse. For instance, George Washington University has suspended its chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace and Students for Justice in Palestine and has put six other pro-Palestinian student groups on probation.⁶

(b) The United Kingdom

According to the half-yearly report of antisemitic incidents by the Community Security Trust (**CST**) in the UK, in the first six months of 2024 there were 96 antisemitic incidents in which the victims or offenders were students or academics, or which involved student unions, societies or other representative bodies.⁷ Of these, 44 took place on campus or university property and 45 were online. These figures are record highs and represent a sharp increase of 465% from the same period in 2023. Of the 96 antisemitic incidents to occur in the context of universities, 73% contained discourse relating to Israel, Palestine and the Middle East, disproportionately higher than the 52% of incidents that were not linked to the higher education sphere.⁸

³ [Statement by NYU Spokesperson John Beckman About Press Release of August 25, 2024](#)

⁴ Kessel, Zach, ‘NYU Updates Anti-Harassment Policy to Include ‘Code Words’ for Jews Like ‘Zionist’, National Review, 23 August 2024: [NYU Updates Anti-Harassment Policy to Include ‘Code Words’ for Jews Like ‘Zionist’ | National Review](#)

⁵ Kessel, Zach, ‘NYU Updates Anti-Harassment Policy to Include ‘Code Words’ for Jews Like ‘Zionist’, National Review, 23 August 2024: [NYU Updates Anti-Harassment Policy to Include ‘Code Words’ for Jews Like ‘Zionist’ | National Review](#)

⁶ Lapin, Andrew, ‘George Washington U suspends Jewish Voice for Peace chapter as colleges prepare for resurgence of Israel protests’, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 21 August 2024: [George Washington U suspends Jewish Voice for Peace chapter as colleges prepare for resurgence of Israel protests - Jewish Telegraphic Agency \(jta.org\)](#)

⁷ Community Security Trust, *Antisemitic Incidents Report January – June 2024*:

<https://cst.org.uk/data/file/e/d/Antisemitic%20Incidents%20Report%20Jan-June%202024.1722863477.pdf>

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 8.

Despite this significant increase, which echoes the phenomenon in Australia, the former and current prime ministers have consistently and strongly condemned antisemitism. On 9 May 2024, former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and the Education Secretary, Communities Secretary and Security Minister called on university leaders to adopt across all campuses a zero-tolerance approach to antisemitic abuse.⁹

Some universities and stakeholders in the tertiary education sector have taken a proactive approach to addressing antisemitism. For instance, at the University of Reading, a Statement from the Vice-Chancellor was issued on 13 June 2024 stating: “We are now working with the Reading Students’ Union to explore how we might provide more antisemitism awareness training to our community.”¹⁰ Universities UK published a strong letter of assurance for the Union of Jewish Students on 17 July 2024 exhibiting zero-tolerance for antisemitic incidents and outlining the actions of various universities to combat antisemitism. These have included notifying the police, suspending the academics or other individuals involved, and, in some cases, defunding societies that are failing to prevent harassment, hate crimes or racism.

The Office for Students, the equivalent English body to TEQSA, has a list of providers that have adopted the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism.¹¹ This would appear to be far more extensive than the proportion of Australian providers that have adopted the IHRA. This approach adopted by the Office for Students in this area is replicable by TEQSA and forms the basis of one of the recommendations in this submission (please see **Appendix 5 – Summary of Recommendations**).

⁹ Press release: Prime Minister to call on university leaders to protect Jewish students, UK Government website, 9 May 2024: [Prime Minister to call on university leaders to protect Jewish students - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-to-call-on-university-leaders-to-protect-jewish-students)

¹⁰ Vice-Chancellor: Supporting our values with action, University of Reading, 13 June 2024: [Vice-Chancellor Supporting our values with action - University of Reading](https://www.reading.ac.uk/news/vice-chancellor-supporting-our-values-with-action)

¹¹ ‘Tackling antisemitism’, Office for Students, accessed 29 August 2024: [Tackling antisemitism - Office for Students](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-events/tackling-antisemitism)



REPORT #2

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY STUDENT
EXPERIENCES OF ANTISEMITISM
AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
PROMOTING SHARED VALUES
AND INCLUSION

TASK FORCE ON
ANTISEMITISM

AUGUST 2024



Report #2: Columbia University Student Experiences of Antisemitism and Recommendations for Promoting Shared Values and Inclusion

Task Force on Antisemitism¹

August 30, 2024

¹ This report reflects the research, analysis and drafting of members of the Task Force’s policy working group: Ester Fuchs (Co-Chair, SIPA and Political Science), Clémence Boulouque (Department of Religion), Jeremy A. Dauber (Department of Germanic Languages), Rebecca Kobrin (Department of History), and Deborah Valenze (Affiliate Co-Chair, Barnard College). Extensive analysis and input also was provided by the other members of the Task Force: Nicholas Lemann (Co-Chair, Journalism School), David M. Schizer (Co-Chair, Law School), Peter Coleman (Affiliate Co-Chair, Teachers College), R. Glenn Hubbard (Business School), Magda Schaler-Haynes (Mailman School of Public Health), Nir Uriel (Columbia University Irving Medical Center), Matthew C. Waxman (Law School), and Gil Zussman (Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science).

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Executive Summary

The demonstrations that roiled our campuses during the past academic year uncovered deep disagreements about the mission of our University. During those months, consensus around the University's formal rules and informal norms of behavior broke down, interfering with our charge to educate students and engage in research.

In addition, the testimonies of hundreds of Jewish and Israeli students have made clear that the University community has not treated them with the standards of civility, respect, and fairness it promises to all its students.

After October 7, many Jewish and Israeli students began to report multiple instances of harassment, verbal abuse and ostracism, and in some cases physical violence. Given the volume of these reports, the Task Force invited all students—not just Jewish and Israeli students—to tell us their stories. Over the course of the spring, nearly five hundred students offered testimonials, at over 20 listening sessions, which provided invaluable insights into the campus climate during these troubled times. These student stories are heartbreaking, and make clear that the University has an obligation to act.

This report recounts student experiences in a wide variety of venues—day-to-day encounters, including dorm life and social media; clubs; and the classroom. Unfortunately, some members of the Columbia community have been unwilling to acknowledge the antisemitism many students have experienced—the way repeated violations of University policy and norms have affected them, and the compliance issues this climate has created with respect to federal, state, and local anti-discrimination law. Many of the events reported in the testimonials took place well before the establishment of the encampments and the takeover of Hamilton Hall; the experiences reported during that period were even more extreme.

We heard about troubling incidents from a diverse group of Jewish students from across the political spectrum; and, even more pronouncedly, from Israeli students, whose national origin both make them members of a specifically protected class under federal law and frequently has caused them to be singled out for particularly terrible treatment.

Students also reported that their efforts to seek redress from the University for the hostility and bigotry they were encountering were often unsuccessful. Many students did not understand how to report these incidents. Although some faculty and staff responded with compassion and determination, others minimized the concerns of these students, reacting sluggishly and ineffectively even to the most clear-cut violations. Even students who had successfully reported an incident spoke of a recurring lack of enforcement of existing University rules and policies.

The experiences of these students demonstrated that there is an urgent need to reshape everyday social norms across the campuses of Columbia University. We need to promote a richer ethic of

pluralism, which would encourage greater tolerance of and respect for differences in religion, culture, and national origin. If we were really to succeed in promoting tolerance, students would come to understand and value these differences.

But we are a long way from there. The problems we found are serious and pervasive. We recognize that the University is not monolithic, and the environment at some schools is especially challenging. A wide range of responses is needed—indeed, a broader range than we discuss in this report (which focuses on training, defining antisemitism, reporting, and rules for student groups) and in our last report (which focused on the rules governing protests). We do not want to give the impression that the recommendations here are all that is required. We will address other issues in future reports.

In this report we draw on the many accounts shared with us over the past several months to produce a working definition of antisemitism. Instead of relying on an existing definition, we crafted a working definition that is rooted in recent experiences at Columbia:

Antisemitism is prejudice, discrimination, hate, or violence directed at Jews, including Jewish Israelis. Antisemitism can manifest in a range of ways, including as ethnic slurs, epithets, and caricatures; stereotypes; antisemitic tropes and symbols; Holocaust denial; targeting Jews or Israelis for violence or celebrating violence against them; exclusion or discrimination based on Jewish identity or ancestry or real or perceived ties to Israel; and certain double standards applied to Israel.

This working definition draws on experiences of many Jewish and Israeli students, who were on the receiving end of ethnic slurs, stereotypes about supposedly dangerous Israeli veterans, antisemitic tropes about Jewish wealth and hidden power, threats and physical assaults, exclusion of Zionists from student groups, and inconsistent standards. We propose this definition for use in training and education, not for discipline or as a means for limiting free speech or academic freedom.

This report also identifies significant problems in university policy and practice and makes recommendations for fixing flawed administrative systems, improving campus climate, and building consensus for a more inclusive and pluralistic university. Specifically, we recommend anti-bias and inclusion trainings for students, resident advisers, resident assistants, teaching assistants, student-facing staff, and faculty. In a community dedicated to freedom of speech and pluralism, we must prepare students with different views and backgrounds to engage with each other. We must encourage mutual respect, tolerance, civility, and an open learning environment.

We also recommend in-person workshops about antisemitism and Islamophobia, as well as a range of optional training and workshops for others in our community, including on implicit bias and stereotypes, bystander interventions, and having difficult conversations.

Given the urgent need to train administrators who play critical roles in responding to student needs, we also suggest a range of trainings in dispute resolution.

As part of this effort, we recommend that the Interim President and Provost establish a Cross-School Committee that includes all schools at Columbia, along with Barnard College and Teachers College, to share information and establish a baseline standard for trainings, workshops, and website information for all schools. The Committee should aim to overcome the problem of decentralization within Columbia, which is a barrier to maintaining common objectives across the many spaces shared by undergraduate and graduate students.

We also recommend that the University establish a repository for best practices in anti-bias and inclusion trainings and that it develop a plan for evaluating these programs.

Customized trainings aimed at specific constituencies are particularly important, including first year orientation and new student orientation for graduate programs—a recent area of focus for University Life—and new faculty orientation at all Columbia schools, including affiliate schools, Barnard College, and Teachers College. We recognize that University Life has been working to update and improve its training for student orientation.

We call attention to the need to train teaching assistants (TAs) in sensitivity to bias, exclusion, and antisemitism. Currently, the online course required for all Columbia TAs, available through the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) website, lacks guidelines on diversity, inclusion, and bias. TAs need guidance on how to respond to classroom scenarios that stray into discrimination and bias; currently, they are told that no single best practice exists. We recommend giving attention to topics related to race, religion, and national origin in all their complexity. We point to several excellent models offered by other universities in guiding TAs and first-time instructors.

Resident assistants and advisers (RAs) are another group in need of customized training; we offer suggestions for how RAs can foster better attention to inclusion, identification of bias, and elimination of harmful behavior signaling derision and hatred. RAs must fully understand their role as leaders in inclusion: they need to be prepared to listen with respect and to mediate conflicts.

In place of the confusing multiplicity of reporting structures that currently exist, we suggest ways of revamping procedures so that students are not discouraged from speaking with advisors and administrators about prejudicial treatment. Transparency and consistency in how we handle student reports of bias and exclusion are of the utmost importance if we want students to share their experiences. Our aim is for students to engage with faculty or staff who can resolve conflicts before situations rise to the level of legal violations. Antisemitism complaints deserve careful attention from deans and administrators, alongside all forms of bigotry and discrimination.

We also recommend ways to ensure that student groups contribute to the University's pluralist mission and comply with anti-discrimination law. Unfortunately, we have heard from many Jewish and Israeli students who have been excluded from student groups because of their Zionist beliefs. This is not acceptable. Student groups must be inclusive, with membership limited only for reasons connected to their mission. Student groups generally should not issue statements unrelated to their missions, so they can welcome students with diverse views and backgrounds. Groups also should have a robust consultation process before issuing statements or joining coalitions. To be clear, there should not be any limits on the free speech rights of a group's *members*. They must be free to speak about any issue as long as they are speaking *for themselves*, not for the group.

Introduction

The Antisemitism Task Force has heard the testimonies of hundreds of Jewish and Israeli students and it is clear that the University community has not treated them with the standards of civility, respect, and fairness it promises to all its students. As we reflect on the antisemitism revealed by their experiences, we realize that these interactions have affected the entire University community. The larger social compact is broken. University policy and individual practice must change if we are to fix the situation. Our research and the many testimonies of students point to a crucial need to alter the current campus climate.² That is the purpose of this Second Report of the Antisemitism Task Force.

We have gathered information according to the mandate we were given by Columbia's then-president, Minouche Shafik, Barnard's president Laura Rosenbury, and Teachers College president Thomas Bailey.³ We are offering recommendations based upon the extensive work we have done to date and we fully expect our Interim President Katrina Armstrong to lead a robust discussion on the broader problem of campus climate. We found that administrative structures intended to ensure that *all* members of our community respect each other, engage in civil discourse, and receive fair treatment in a dispute resolution process are not working effectively for Jewish students (or do not exist at all).

Some of our recommendations are focused on the specific problems facing Jewish students. Other recommendations, especially those concerning training, process, and procedure, suggest more general improvements on behalf of all students, any of whom may, during their years on this campus, face bias, discrimination, exclusion, or intimidation. Certain recommendations are straightforward and should be implemented quickly; others will require more extensive consultation and discussion. We have clearly identified those proposals which call for the creation of a broadly representative faculty, student, and staff committee aimed at developing consistent, clear, and transparent procedures and policies supported by the entire Columbia community, including Barnard College and Teachers College.

Listening sessions, reports to the Task Force, and messages to individual Task Force members provided us with important information about where students are experiencing discrimination, intimidation, harassment, exclusion, targeting, isolation, and fear of violent rhetoric. Equally important, we learned that students may not know how to report these problems—and often they want a less formal channel where they can receive advice about where and how to express concerns that may not rise to the level of a legal complaint. In some cases, they may be interested in an unbiased mediation process.

² See Peter Coleman, *The Great Reset* (Medium, 2024).

³ Announcing Task Force on Antisemitism. <https://president.columbia.edu/news/announcing-task-force-antisemitism>

In principle, the offices of the Deans of Students, the Ombuds, or the DEI offices should be the right places to go. But students reported uneven experiences when they went to these offices. Some administrators were uncertain about how to assign responsibility. Students were unsure of where to turn, and some felt that their concerns were not taken seriously. Indeed, we have heard that students have been referred to counseling and psychological services—which they correctly understood as implying that they just need to learn to accept and cope with antisemitic experiences.

In addition, if a student's complaint is about bias in a club or in the classroom, the student might feel uncomfortable pursuing the issue, especially if key players in the process (e.g., student activity boards, department chairs, deans of students, professors, teaching assistants, etc.) have taken public positions at odds with those of students who otherwise would complain. We recognize the complexity of these issues and we understand the imperative to protect academic freedom; but harassment that takes place in the classroom is still harassment. Students' efforts to defend themselves should not be handled differently in such settings. They should be mediated in processes that are free from bias. Moreover, when it comes to the matter of impartiality and fairness, we need to ensure that publicly expressed positions by a faculty advisor, program director, teaching assistant, or resident adviser do not obstruct the mediation or conflict resolution process. In our First Report⁴, we focused on the legal obligations of the University to prevent discrimination and harassment under Title VI, as well as state and local anti-discrimination law. It is important that all parties understand the law and the legal protections afforded students. But reliance on the law would suggest that the University is failing to create an inclusive campus environment.

This report provides recommendations to the Interim President for improving policy and practice in accordance with our mandate. These recommendations draw directly from the research we have done on existing policies and practices in schools across the University and consultations with many administrators, faculty, and students. We have been encouraged by the fact that the administration is already making some changes in university policy and procedures to achieve the same goals as the Task Force.

The recommendations in this report focus on training and workshops; a definition of antisemitism for these educational programs; reporting mechanisms; and the rules governing student groups. As we noted above, the recommendations here and in our prior report, which analyzed the rules governing protests, are not intended to be comprehensive. We will address other issues in future reports.

⁴ <https://president.columbia.edu/content/report-1-task-force-antisemitism>

It is our contention that we can improve campus climate by (1) addressing what our students are actually experiencing; (2) improving our understanding of where these experiences are happening; (3) addressing the adequacy of our procedures for reporting experiences of bias and exclusion that do not rise to the level of a legal violation; (4) improving our intra-judicial mediation and fair conflict resolution processes; (5) staying true to the University's pluralist values and encouraging interactions (and hopefully friendship) among people who disagree; (6) protecting all students from discrimination; (7) ensuring that student groups are governed in ways that are consistent with these aspirations; and (8) designing anti-bias trainings and procedures through a process that develops broad consensus among all members of the community, including students, faculty, and student-facing staff.

APPENDIX 5: Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee recommends a Judicial Inquiry into antisemitism at Australian Universities be established.

Recommendation 2: That all universities work with the Special Envoy to adopt best practice policies which are fit for purpose in combatting antisemitism, and ensure that such policies are implemented.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that the terms of reference and resources and expertise of any **National Student Ombudsman** to improve student safety be amended to receive complaints regarding racism at universities, including antisemitism. The National Student Ombudsman should seek the input and expertise of the office of the Special Envoy for Combatting Antisemitism when considering a workable definition of antisemitism.

Recommendation 4: That TEQSA provide a list of Australian tertiary institutions that have adopted the IHRA Working Definition on Antisemitism.

Recommendation 5: That the Australian Government consider whether TEQSA needs greater powers to ensure that tertiary institutions comply with Threshold Standards and the law.

Recommendation 6: That TEQSA utilises existing powers to provide advice and make recommendations to the Commonwealth Minister for Education on the impact on the quality of education flowing from universities' failures to enforce their codes of conduct and policies, or to apply the law properly to instances of racism against Jews in order to make all students feel safe and give them the opportunity of attending campus.

Recommendation 7: That the Universities Accord's emphasis on recommendations and performance targets be applied in the area of addressing antisemitism in tertiary institutions.

Recommendation 8: That the Australian Government establish a repository for standardised and consistent reporting of racist incidents and hate crimes occurring in Australia (**National Database of racist incidents and hate crimes**).

Recommendation 9: That a national hotline be instituted for university students and staff so that data about racist incidents at universities can be captured and shared with the national database referred to in recommendation 8 (**National Hotline for racist incidents and hate crimes**) with appropriate measures for confidentiality and counselling.

Recommendation 10: That all universities that have not yet adopted the IHRA Working Definition work with the Special Envoy's office to adopt a working definition of antisemitism.

Recommendation 11: Given that the Government and Opposition have adopted the IHRA Working Definition, that the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) adopts the IHRA Working Definition in order to guide its work.

Recommendation 12: That the AHRC consult with the Special Envoy in relation to educational materials on antisemitism so as to inform their complaints handling in this area.

Recommendation 13: That all the universities' leadership attend a series of workshops organised by the Special Envoy to put in place training to understand antisemitism and be equipped to deal with it; and consider a range of measures to change the culture of embedded antisemitism.

Such measures may include (many of these come from student testimony):

- Providing educational programs to staff who have been disciplined under the universities' code of conduct or other policies as a result of antisemitic conduct.
- Integrating with ombudsman complaints, establish a process for mediation.
- Working to establish procedures for broader learnings from antisemitic incidents and disciplinary proceedings.
- Providing to the office of the Special Envoy and TEQSA on an annual basis a brief report outlining how many antisemitic incidents or discourse were notified to its complaints body, and what the status of those complaints are, including measures taken to address the underlying issues.
- Auditing all recipients of external grants to ensure that their funded work complies with university codes of conduct and policies, including that such work does not contain antisemitic discourse.
- Creating opportunities for students to assess academics on an anonymous basis as to whether they succeeded in creating opportunities for balanced debates and safe spaces in their lectures, tutorials and other teaching fora.
- Ensuring that there are defined ways of measuring how universities are promoting social cohesion.

Recommendation 14: That universities work with the Special Envoy's office to establish training for students, staff and governance on antisemitism, similar to what has been established for sexual harassment. That such training extend to international students and visiting academics.