

4 August 2024

Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary,

Subject: Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill

I am writing to bring to your attention a matter of significant concern that requires immediate and thorough investigation: the rising incidents of antisemitism at Australian universities. Given the gravity of this issue and its implications for social cohesion, academic freedom, and the safety of Jewish students and staff, I urge the Australian Government to establish a Commission of Inquiry into antisemitism within our higher education institutions.

Recent data and reports have highlighted a disturbing trend of increasing antisemitic incidents on university campuses across Australia. The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) has documented numerous cases of harassment, discrimination, and violence targeting Jewish students and academics. These incidents range from hate speech and vandalism to physical assaults, creating an environment of fear and exclusion. Such acts not only contravene Australian values of multiculturalism and inclusivity but also undermine the fundamental principles of academic freedom and mutual respect.

A Commission of Inquiry is imperative for several reasons:

- 1. Documentation and Accountability:** There is a pressing need for comprehensive documentation of antisemitic incidents in universities. While organisations like the ECAJ provide valuable data, a government-led inquiry would ensure a systematic and authoritative record, holding perpetrators accountable and identifying patterns of behaviour that require targeted intervention.
- 2. Policy and Legislative Recommendations:** An inquiry would enable the formulation of robust policy recommendations and legislative measures to combat antisemitism effectively. This includes reviewing existing policies on

hate speech, discrimination, and campus security, and ensuring they are adequately enforced to protect vulnerable communities.

3. **Educational Initiatives:** Understanding the root causes of antisemitism and the dynamics that allow it to persist in academic environments is crucial. A Commission of Inquiry can propose educational initiatives to promote tolerance, diversity, and mutual understanding among students and staff, thereby fostering a more inclusive campus culture.
4. **Support Mechanisms for Victims:** Identifying gaps in support systems for victims of antisemitism is vital. An inquiry would assess the adequacy of current support services and recommend enhancements to provide timely and effective assistance to those affected by hate crimes and discrimination.
5. **International Standards and Best Practices:** By establishing a Commission of Inquiry, Australia can align its efforts with international standards and best practices in combating antisemitism. This would not only bolster our national reputation but also contribute to global efforts in addressing this pervasive issue.

The establishment of a Commission of Inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities is a necessary and timely response to a growing problem. It will demonstrate the Australian Government's commitment to safeguarding the rights and well-being of all its citizens, ensuring that our higher education institutions remain spaces of learning, inclusivity, and respect.

I urge you to consider this proposal with the urgency and seriousness it warrants. I am available to discuss this matter further and to provide any additional information that may assist in the establishment of this crucial inquiry.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Skimin