



Australian Government

**Australian Government response to the Senate Legal and
Constitutional Affairs
Committee report on the Commission of Inquiry into
Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No.2)**

TABLING MARCH 2026

Overview

The Australian Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee report on the Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No.2).

On 4 July 2024, the Senate referred an inquiry to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee (the Committee) to examine the Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No.2) (the Bill). The Committee released its inquiry report on 1 October 2024 and made three recommendations.

The Australian Government agrees all three of the Committee's recommendations. The Australian Government notes the Committee's findings and recommendations complement a range of Government initiatives underway.

On 29 October 2024, the Australian Government referred the issue of antisemitism at Australian universities to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (PJCHR) for inquiry and asked the Committee to provide advice on steps that Australian universities and the sector can take to better protect Jewish students and staff from further harm.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- strengthening the powers and penalties of TEQSA to ensure it is able to step in and act when it is justified in the public interest;
- strengthening Commonwealth higher education regulation to ensure institutions demonstrate a commitment to addressing racism, and ensuring TEQSA can monitor compliance;
- supporting the Monash Initiative for Rapid Research into Antisemitism (MIRRA) to expand its training program to deliver training to university staff and leadership on recognising antisemitism in universities across Australia;
- in February 2026, the Special Envoy attended the Education Ministers Meeting to provide an update on the Plan to address antisemitism and support a discussion about the role of the education system and school communities;

- establishing the Expert Council on University Governance which has provided the Education Ministers Meeting with principles to ensure universities are safe and welcoming;
- tasked the Australian Human Rights Commission to undertake the Respect at Uni Study, led by Race Discrimination Commissioner Mr Giridharan Sivaraman. The Study examines the prevalence, nature, and impact of individual and systemic racism in Australian universities and is engaging in significant consultation with university students and staff;
- appointing the National Student Ombudsman, a free and impartial service to investigate complaints from students, including antisemitism or any other forms of racism; and
- developing and releasing TEQSA Statement of Regulatory Expectations: Student grievance and complaint mechanisms on 3 October 2025 in the context of protests on university campuses.

Further information

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Responses to recommendations

The Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee report on the Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No.2)

Recommendations by the Committee

No.	Recommendation	Response
1	The committee recommends that, in collaboration with the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, all Australian universities urgently review their complaints processes and give effect to any and all changes necessary to ensure these processes are known to and understood by students and staff, and deliver real and meaningful outcomes for complainants.	Agree
2	The committee recommends that the Attorney-General immediately refers an inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights.	Agree
3	The committee recommends that the Senate does not pass the Bill.	Agree

Recommendations by Coalition Senators

Recommendation 1. That the Senate and the Parliament pass the Bill at the earliest opportunity so that a Commission of Inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities can be established as soon as practicable

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

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

Recommendation 2. That the Australian Government directs the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, Ms Jillian Segal, to urgently recommend, in consultation with TEQSA:

- **best-practice university policies and procedures to combat antisemitism, including in relation to complaints handling and fines for non-compliance;**
- **antisemitism training for university leaders; and**
- **any other practical initiative to combat antisemitism at Australian universities.**

That the Australian Government considers how best to implement the recommendations of the Antisemitism Envoy including any necessary amendments to the law.

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

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

Recommendation 3. That the Australian Government amends the law so that all public universities are required to either adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism or give detailed reasons as to why such a definition has not been so adopted, to be published and updated prominently on each university's website on 1 February and 1 August of each year.

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

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

Recommendation 4. That the Australian Government amends the law so that public universities are required to disclose a breakdown of all revenues and all agreements, arrangements or understandings in relation to the provision of such revenues including with foreign persons or entities.

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

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

Recommendation 5. That the proposed National Student Ombudsman be supported by a person expert in antisemitism and that such requirement be included in the National Student Ombudsman Rules.

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

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

Recommendations by Australian Greens Senators

Recommendation 1. That the office of the Race Discrimination Commissioner urgently completes and implements the national anti-racism strategy and be fully funded and resourced to do so.

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

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