

## **SUBMISSION**

# **The University of Newcastle Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian universities**



*December 2024*

## Introduction

The University of Newcastle welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian universities.

The University condemns antisemitism. We have implemented and continue to review and advance policies and systems to protect students from antisemitism, and support those who experience antisemitism.

The University has a zero-tolerance approach to racism and discrimination.

The University has a number of inter-related policies aimed to protect staff and students from discrimination, including antisemitism. These are implemented with the goal of protecting students and staff and promoting equity.

## Implementation of Staff and Student Codes of Conduct

The University's [Student Code of Conduct](#) and [Staff Code of Conduct](#) apply to all staff and students, and set out the obligations of each person in the University community to others, under the key pillar of Respect. These Codes set out the positive actions each member of the University community agrees to abide by to promote diversity and inclusion, and also every individual's obligation to value diversity and difference, treat others with compassion and kindness, and have no tolerance for harassment or bullying. Failure to comply with the Codes can lead to disciplinary action, including the possibility of termination of employment or exclusion from the University. Unlawful conduct, including racial discrimination, can result in criminal proceedings. The Codes were reviewed and revised in 2024. They are upheld in line with the positive obligations of our community members to protect staff and students from discrimination.

## Students

### Conduct Rule

The [Student Conduct Rule](#) sets out the standards of behaviour required by all students at the University, and incorporates the Code of Conduct. This requires all students to value diversity, and behave in a manner that does not offend, degrade or humiliate others. It provides further rules around misconduct for students: that students must not assault, threaten, bully, harass, or endanger any staff, student or other member of the University community. The University works hard to ensure that all students are aware of their rights, protections and their obligations under these policies.

### Risk Prevention

The University takes a proactive approach to risk identification and management, including through the Behavioural Risk Group, a cross-institution team which works to strengthen the University's capacity to identify and assess high-risk situations or actors within the University community, and to promote early intervention and management. The purpose of this group, Chaired by the PVC-Student Experience is to manage holistically, inclusive of staff, a student's behaviours to ensure harm to self and others is mitigated and where necessary appropriate referrals made.

## Support

The University has a structure of supports for students who are concerned in any manner for their safety or wellbeing. Students can contact Campus Care, which is a specialised team with backgrounds in healthcare and counselling. Campus Care are expert in dealing with sensitive and complex situations. All students have access to this team and are encouraged to reach out if they are concerned about antisemitism or any form of discrimination from anyone at all at the University. This is outlined in the following [Policy](#).

The University's Student Wellbeing Team consulted with the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation in developing their approach to managing and supporting Jewish students on campus this year, including how they best uphold the Spiritual Support and Inclusion Action Plan, which outlines a set of actions to improve spiritual inclusion on campus.

Students have access to counselling services and interfaith chaplaincy services, which are inclusive of Jewish faith, as well as TalkCampus, a 24/7 multilingual mental health support service, and prayer rooms for all faiths.

The University has taken measures to ensure that students know how to reach out for help, and report any safety concerns, with the University making information available to them at multiple frequent contact points, including on their login screen. This has resulted in a significantly increased uptake in services.

## Staff

Staff have access to a range of supports including free counselling services provided through the University's Employee Assistance Program. In the event that staff engage in, or are subjected to, the forms of behaviour you have identified that are of concern, the University has internal procedures and processes to deal with and address those matters either as workplace concerns or as formal complaints. As a diverse workplace community, the University is clear that discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, religion or ethnicity is not tolerated.

## Incident Response, Physical and Digital Security

The University has clear processes and responsibility for handling any antisemitic actions, primarily through the Critical Incident Team, a cross university group including senior representatives with clear lines of reporting and action.

24/7 security services on our campuses provide additional monitoring and frontline risk management, with trained officers providing a visible presence on campus through foot and vehicle patrols, as well as CCTV to ensure the physical security of our community. Campus security or police will intervene immediately in the uncommon event of external actors on campus.

The University of Newcastle has robust systems in place to monitor its social media channels and remove and/or report any instances of inappropriate content on those channels. Monitoring technology and reporting is established for the channels both within and outside of business hours given the nature of the platforms. The Student Conduct Rule and the Staff Code of Conduct apply to activity on these channels.

## Positive Actions

We work actively with community partners on initiatives that promote safe communities, including through community-led anti-racism campaigns with the City of Newcastle.

The University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy sets out our positive actions as an institution to work towards equity, diversity and inclusion across the entire organisation, and specifically includes religion in our definitions of diversity. The University's [Equity Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) became effective 10 December 2024, covering physical and digital environments, and sets out clearly that all forms of communication must not reinforce inappropriate, demeaning or discriminatory views in relation to race or religion, and sets out a requirement for positive communication.

The Student Support Team engage with Jewish students and the student community as our approach to combatting antisemitism evolves.

The University has instituted proactive training for staff and students in health, wellbeing and diversity. For staff, this includes mandatory training in equal opportunity and diversity, and discrimination and harassment.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

We monitor the results of these actions and can advise that in 2023, our students indicated they are feeling safer on campus than ever before. In 2023, more than 9,700 students responded to the Student Feedback on the University of Newcastle Survey. Of these, 92.8% agreed they felt safe in our campus environment, steadily rising from 84.8% in 2019. Our aim is for this figure to continually increase.

### Contact and Further Detail

The University looks forward to working with the Committee and the Government to continue to ensure we can eliminate antisemitism and discrimination and foster a positive environment in our university communities.

For further information on this submission, please contact:

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