

INQUIRY INTO ANTISEMITISM IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Charles Sturt University

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28 March 2025

The Hon. Robert Borsak MLC
Chair, Portfolio Committee No. 5 - Justice and Communities
NSW Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Sent via email; portfoliocommittee5@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Borsak

Inquiry into antisemitism in New South Wales

Thank you for this opportunity to make a short submission to the Committee's inquiry into antisemitism in New South Wales.

Charles Sturt University recognises and embraces the value and benefits of cultural diversity. We are committed to fostering a safe, inclusive and respectful environment, both on campus and online, for all students and staff regardless of their faith, ethnicity, political beliefs or other characteristics. We take this responsibility very seriously, with a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of discrimination or vilification, including antisemitism, and we are committed to taking appropriate actions whenever such behaviour is identified or suspected.

The relevant University Policies and Procedures are in line with the standard across the higher education sector. They were last reviewed in 2022 and scheduled for another review this year.

Incidents of bullying, harassment or intimidation on the basis of race or religion at Charles Sturt are exceedingly rare and, during this recent period of heightened tension, there have been no reports of antisemitic actions on our campuses. If incidents are reported, we follow an established procedure that includes an investigation and review. If verified, the response can involve support and counselling to those affected, appropriate disciplinary actions, including suspension and exclusion, the implementation of educative measures to prevent future occurrences. The latter can include requiring the students involved to undertake a cultural competency program and participate in community engagement activities. Feedback from students indicate that these educative measures are an effective response in most cases.

Mindful of current global and local tensions, Charles Sturt continues to strengthen its policies and practices to ensure safe and inclusive on campus and online environments. The University promotes equal opportunity, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, cultural awareness, cross-cultural competence, and appropriate conduct for staff and students through its policies and strategies, information resources, recruitment processes, induction/orientation activities, training programs and support services.

All Universities Australia members agreed to the recommendation of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights to adopt a clear definition of antisemitism that aligns closely with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition. The membership has unanimously endorsed a working definition of antisemitism and resolved to ask the Higher Education Standards Panel to incorporate a uniform definition of antisemitism into the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF). The HESF is managed by TEQSA and all higher education providers, including universities, must have policies, procedures and practices in place that meet its requirements.

It will be necessary to ensure that any changes to the HESF and any definition of antisemitism incorporated into standards, regulations or guidelines are consistent with the model code for the protection of freedom of speech and academic freedom in Australian higher education providers. The model code was developed by former Chief Justice, the Hon Robert French, and embedded in the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA) in 2021 following the Walker Review. HESA requires all universities to have a policy on academic freedom and freedom of speech in line with the definition in the Act.

Charles Sturt University supports Universities Australia's actions on this issue and will work with other members, TEQSA and the Higher Education Standards Panel to update the HESF. The scheduled review and update of our own policies may need to wait on the outcomes of this process.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I would be happy to provide the Committee with more information on any of the matters raised in this letter.

Yours sincerely

Professor Renée Leon PSM
Vice-Chancellor and President

