

## **INQUIRY INTO ANTISEMITISM IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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Australian  
Human Rights  
Commission

# Inquiry into antisemitism in New South Wales

Australian Human Rights Commission

Submission to the New South Wales Legislative Council

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## 1 Introduction

1. The Australian Human Rights Commission (Commission) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the New South Wales Legislative Council on the [inquiry into antisemitism in New South Wales](#).
2. The Commission is Australia's National Human Rights Institution. It undertakes a range of policy development and research tasks that aim to promote compliance with Australia's human rights obligations, while also investigating and conciliating complaints of unlawful discrimination and breaches of human rights.
3. The Commission's submission responds to the following terms of reference:
  - a. the causes underlying the increasing prevalence and severity of antisemitic incidents across the state
  - b. record levels of antisemitism on university campuses and in schools undermining student safety
  - c. the threat to social cohesion in New South Wales presented by antisemitism
4. This submission references core projects of the Commission's Race Discrimination Team, including the [National Anti-Racism Framework](#), [Racism@Uni](#), and [Seen and Heard](#).

## 2 The causes of antisemitic incidents

5. There has been an alarming and intensifying nationwide rise in antisemitism including racist violence, arson attacks, racist graffiti on schools and homes, racist abuse and threats.
6. This rise in antisemitism is of grave concern for the Commission. Antisemitism is an insidious form of racism and hatred. It has no place in Australia.
7. Antisemitism harms individuals and communities. It affects people's identity and self-esteem, their sense of belonging and inclusion, their participation in public life and their wellbeing and safety.
8. Racism in Australia has been and continues to be a long-standing entrenched social issue causing serious harm to negatively racialised communities, including the Jewish community.

9. The more recent rise in antisemitism is connected to the 7 October 2023 attacks on Israel by Hamas and Israel's response to those attacks.
10. Jewish students and community groups shared perspectives during the *Inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities* that 'the events that occurred on 7 October 2023 were a 'catalyst' that exacerbated 'an already dangerous environment.'<sup>1</sup>
11. The Commission has heard consistently, through an extensive process of community and sector consultations as well as research findings, that systemic and structural racism is deeply embedded throughout Australia.
12. An urgent national response is required, including the endorsement and implementation of the Commission's National Anti-Racism Framework. This is outlined in section 5 of this submission.

### **3 Antisemitism on university campuses undermining student safety**

13. The Commission does not currently have data recording the levels of antisemitism on university campuses and schools.
14. However, the Commission is currently undertaking the Racism@Uni project – a study into the prevalence and impact of racism in Australian universities. The study is funded by the Australian Government.
15. During the Commission's initial consultations for the study in 2024, Jewish students and staff reported an increased prevalence of antisemitism since October 2023. They expressed that this significantly affected their sense of belonging and safety.
16. The study's [Interim Report](#) was released in December 2024. Interim findings included increased antisemitism and structural discrimination, with impacts on wellbeing, participation, feelings of safety and performance.
17. The Interim Report covered not only antisemitism but a range of forms of racism including racism against First Nations students and staff, racism

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<sup>1</sup> Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2) (Report, 2024) 11, 12.

against Muslim, Arab and Palestinian students and staff, and racism against students and staff from African and Asian backgrounds. For convenience, relevant sections of the report that relate to antisemitism are extracted in the Appendix below.

18. The Commission will deliver the final report for Racism@Uni in October 2025.

## **4 The threat to social cohesion in New South Wales presented by antisemitism**

19. All forms of racism, including antisemitism, pose a threat to social cohesion across the country.
20. The Commission is currently undertaking the Seen and Heard project, a program of community engagement and awareness raising about racism to support safety in Jewish, Palestinian, Muslim, and Arab communities affected by the conflict in the Middle East. The project is funded by the Australian Government.
21. An [update](#) of community insights from the Seen and Heard project was published in February 2025.
22. Communities commonly expressed that the discrimination they have been facing has led to feelings of dehumanisation, isolation, lack of belonging and fear for personal safety.

## **5 Recommendation**

- 23. The Commission calls on the New South Wales Government to endorse and implement the National Anti-Racism Framework (the Framework) as a crucial component of its response to all forms of racism, including antisemitism, and to implement the recommendations involving both federal and state governments.**
24. The Framework was launched in November 2024, supported by Australian Government funding. It provides a roadmap for governments, businesses, and community organisations to address all forms of racism in Australia.
25. The Framework contains 63 recommendations for a whole-of-society approach and proposes reforms across Australia's legal, justice, health, education, media, and arts sectors as well as workplaces and data collection.

26. The Commission stresses the importance of national, holistic, and coordinated anti-racism action to effectively tackle antisemitism in Australia.

## Appendix

### **Extract from Respect at Uni: Study into antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism and the experience of First Nations People**

Diversity of experiences of racism - Jewish students and staff (pp. 37-39)

The Commission's initial consultations with Jewish students outlined experiences and the increased prevalence of antisemitism since October 2023. Experiences of antisemitism are also documented in the Inquiry into Antisemitism in Universities and the Australian Jewish Student Experience Survey.

Jewish students and community groups note that antisemitism is an entrenched issue, with Stand With Us Australia submitting to the Inquiry 'that the events that occurred on 7 October 2023 were a 'catalyst' that exacerbated 'an already dangerous environment.'<sup>1</sup>

Jewish students shared their profound concerns about their safety and campus cultural climate. The Zionist Council of NSW submitted to the Inquiry:

Certain staff and students are too frightened to come to campus. We heard about teachers being harassed as they walk to halls to teach, we heard about students being silenced in class because of their Jewish identity. The experiences for the Jewish community of campus have become untenable for many.<sup>2</sup>

Examples of antisemitism documented in the Australian Jewish Student Safety Survey and their incidence include:

- intimidation by people or events (47%)
- tropes of Jewish money, power or influence (37%)
- comparing Israel to Nazi Germany (37%)
- antisemitism based on religion or race (31%)
- holocaust denial or minimisation (30%)
- singled out or excluded over Israel (25%).<sup>3</sup>

When asked about the most impactful incidents in the last 12 months, 29% of respondents reported that staff had participated in the antisemitism and 70% reported that staff were present but not involved and ignored the incident.<sup>4</sup>



The Commission's consultations with Jewish students have revealed that antisemitism significantly affected their sense of belonging. For instance, one Jewish student was told by her peers that they couldn't share a room with a Zionist, so she was forced to leave their accommodation. The Inquiry and Australian Jewish Student Safety Survey both document Jewish students concealing their identities. For instance:

Jewish students, regardless of their level of observance, now feel compelled to conceal their identities. They fear wearing symbols of their faith, discussing their education and travel experiences and most tragically, expressing who they truly are. It is inconceivable that in today's society, individuals should feel threatened simply because of their Jewish identity.<sup>5</sup>

While issues related to encampments have subsided, the Australasian Union of Jewish Students cautions:

This touted reduction in incidents is just as much a product of the reduction in Jewish students who feel comfortable and safe attending their campuses as it is a diminishment in the sentiment that we're seeing.<sup>6</sup>

The degree to which antisemitism is distinct from other forms of racism has been raised with the Commission, with views expressed that a tailored approach is required to address antisemitism. Some Jewish groups have suggested to the Commission that antisemitism can be effectively addressed through comprehensive efforts to address all forms of racism more broadly.

The next phase of the Study will consider this through fieldwork and consultation with stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Indigenous Law and Justice Hub, University of Melbourne, *Legal Education Reforms for First Nations Justice* (Submission, Yoorrook Justice Commission, February 2024) 16.

<sup>2</sup> Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, *Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2)* (Report, 2024) 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Zionist Federation of Australia, *Jewish University Experience Survey* (Summary, 2023) 2  
<<https://www.zfa.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Survey-summary.pdf>>

<sup>4</sup> Zionist Federation of Australia, *Jewish University Experience Survey* (Summary, 2023) 2.

<sup>5</sup> Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee, *Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2)* (Report, 2024) 9.

<sup>6</sup> Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, *Antisemitism at Australian universities inquiry* (Public Hearing, 29 November 2024) 41.