

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



Submission: Inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights | 09/12/2024

Western Sydney University welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities.

Our priority is the safety and wellbeing of our students, staff, and community. Western Sydney is one of the nation's most culturally and linguistically diverse regions, and our University proudly reflects this multiculturalism.

A principled, clear and consistent stance

At all times, the University leadership has taken a principled, non-partisan, clear and consistent approach to the global issue of antisemitism on university campuses.

As a leading university, we support freedom of speech but draw the line at hate speech. Our campuses are no place for antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, hate speech, intimidation, or violence. We are guided by our Freedom of Speech Policy, which is based on the Model Code for Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Australian Higher Education Providers.

Western Sydney University Chancellor, Professor Jennifer Westacott AO has taken a national leadership role in condemning antisemitism in any form. Professor Westacott told *The Australian* on 10 October 2024 that those behaviours would not be tolerated on our campuses.

“The safety and wellbeing of students is our priority. Universities should be places of intellectual challenge and the contest of ideas, but they must never be places of fear or intimidation,” she said.

The University’s position and actions have been in lockstep with her comments.

Support for staff and students

The events unfolding in the Middle East have been deeply personal and distressing for many people in Western Sydney and at our University.

As part of our ongoing assistance to students and staff, we offered a range of support services. This included access for students to free and confidential counselling and welfare services via a hotline number and website. For our staff, we offered professional counselling through our Employee Assistance Program.

We continue to work closely with our students and staff to ensure they feel supported and included, and that their voices can be heard in a safe and peaceful way. We also have long-standing and robust internal processes to swiftly triage any concerns raised by staff, students, and the community.

Increased humanitarian efforts

In late November 2024, Western Sydney University announced additional steps to expand our humanitarian efforts to support people fleeing conflict and seeking refuge in Australia.

We are providing personalised support to develop education plans; help to build the essential skills to transition to university life and Australian society successfully; wrap-around support including assistance with employment, accommodation and resettlement resources; and increasing our full scholarships for those who need them most.

The University is happy to answer any further questions.