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Committee Secretary  
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee  
Department of the Senate

## **SUBMISSION TO SENATE INQUIRY INTO ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

I was a student at Flinders University of South Australia from 2000 to 2002 where I studied a Bachelor of Science (Physics) with Honours. Around 2004 I was strolling the corridors of a humanities department there, when a large poster on a lecturer's door caught my attention. It proclaimed that George W Bush is the world's number one terrorist. (See attached file Bush\_no1.jpg).

A small exhibition in the university library's foyer at around the same time featured Islam. One prominent exhibit was a book comprising a collection of passages from the Koran that were each "shown" to have scientific or prescient merit. I spent some time perusing it, and it was an utter sham. The spirit of free inquiry so crucial to the pursuit of knowledge and understanding had evidently got carried away and transcended its factual moorings.

From grades 7 to 10 I attended a New South Wales state school. In the grade 7 Australian Studies class there, the arrival of Europeans was referred to as an "invasion" and some ensuing events characterised as "genocide" (against the natives). There I also had to read rubbishy Australian books like *The Heroic Life of Al Capsella* and *Two Weeks With the Queen*, which both derive from a leftist worldview. Meanwhile, the only classics studied (cursorily) were a couple of Shakespeare plays and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. During all my schooling I encountered no Twain, Austen, Dickens, Bronte, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky or George Eliot, nor any other great literature, except *Animal Farm* by George Orwell -- and that was at the private college I attended for my last two school years.

If my school hours had been filled with something else useful, like a thorough treatment of world history (following a factual narrative), or tracing the development of philosophy from classic times forward, I might not have minded missing the classic novels so much, but as it happened, I wasted countless hours at school poring over the details of insignificant and boring topics. I think we must have spent a whole term on whether Anna Anderson really was the Grand Duchess Anastasia; and in a grade 10 history class, I remember refusing the teacher's request that we make a cellophane stained-glass window.

While overt displays of leftist political bias in the education system are commonplace and must be stamped out, a more insidious corollary of the underlying bias is the enervating effect it has on the way education is approached. If the guiding principle is that all cultures are equally worthy of respect, then patent nonsense must be accorded the same treatment as stately works, as we saw in the Flinders library foyer; teachers lose confidence in the Western philosophical inheritance, including a tradition of rational inquiry; and they shun clear historical narratives, for fear of being Occidentalists, in favour

of trivial obsessions that avoid any kind of sensible judgement.

Stuart Burrows