



Submission – Inquiry into a Commission of Inquiry into Antisemitism at Australian Universities Bill 2024 (No. 2)

Monash University is proud to be named after General Sir John Monash, and takes inspiration from his philosophy, *“...equip yourself for life, not solely for your own benefit but for the benefit of the whole community.”*

At Monash, we recognise and abhor the increase in antisemitism around the world, including in Australia. We acknowledge that university campuses are not insulated from that trend, which is manifested in a number of different ways.

Monash’s [Anti-Racism statement](#) commits the University to challenging prejudice and race-based discrimination experienced in institutions and by individuals. It incorporates the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which was adopted by the University’s Academic Board in February 2023, and previously by the Monash Student Association.

In addition to existing policies and procedures and our ongoing anti-racism project group, Monash is home to the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilization (ACJC), established in 1992, which brings the world of Jewish studies into global debates and fosters intercultural understanding through undergraduate and postgraduate study, research projects and community engagement. There is deep academic expertise in the ACJC on antisemitism, through a specific research cluster for antisemitism studies.

Monash is supporting research and implementing major initiatives to build social cohesion, strengthen dialogue and help to reduce tensions on campus. One of these is an action-based research program led by Associate Professor David Slucki (Director ACJC) and Dr Susan Carland (sociologist of religion at Monash University School of Social Sciences) to investigate specifically the nature and experience of antisemitism, Islamophobia and related prejudice, and to develop and test programs and initiatives that support campus cohesion, and further support safety in the classroom for all students and staff.

Another initiative involves facilitated dialogue between students, and collaborating with representative student associations and teaching staff to co-design parameters for safe, inclusive and supportive learning and campus environments.

These initiatives are grounded in the educational and research mission of the University, are non-partisan, and have been designed and are being implemented to avoid politicisation and unintended consequences. By listening, gathering evidence and educating, we aim to foster the mutual understanding and respect that is the foundation of constructive disagreement, to enable a better future not just for our own benefit but for the benefit of the entire community and broader society.

In analysing the Bill, we recommend due consideration of a range of legal and non-legal mechanisms and processes to reduce antisemitism on Australian campuses as much as possible and avoid unintended consequences. We note the potential for a Commission of Inquiry to be used as a platform for public debate that could exacerbate antisemitic behaviour and distract from the urgent task of finding solutions.

We would participate in any Commission of Inquiry or alternative approach, to share the steps we have always taken as well the initiatives we have recently begun in support of student and staff safety and wellbeing, social cohesion, and academic freedom.

Professor Sharon Pickering
Vice-Chancellor and President
Monash University
23 August 2024