



Victorian Council for Civil Liberties Inc
Reg No: A0026497L
GPO Box 3161
Melbourne, VIC 3001
t 03 9670 6422
info@libertyvictoria.org.au

PRESIDENT
Michelle Bennett

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Michael Stanton SC

SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT
Sam Norton

VICE-PRESIDENTS
Jamie Gardiner OAM
Thomas Kane
Gemma Cafarella

TREASURER
Gregory Buchhorn

SECRETARY
Zubin Menon

PATRON
The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG

Media Release

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights' Report on Antisemitism at Australian Universities

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights has published its report on Antisemitism at Australian Universities and we are honoured for our submissions to have been quoted throughout the report.

The rise in antisemitic incidents in Australia is plainly concerning and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. When addressing it, we must be careful to preserve the rights of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly (together the right to protest), and to ensure Universities are places where ideas can be exchanged robustly without descending to vilification.

We have concerns about the Committee's ultimate recommendation of adopting a clear definition of antisemitism that "aligns closely" with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition, given the potential for that definition to be used to attempt to silence legitimate criticism of the actions of the Government of Israel. However, it is clear that the Committee, and stakeholders, are united in wanting to stop racial vilification and hatred.

Some places where we are quoted in the report:

- 3.98 Liberty Victoria emphasised that universities 'are places of particular importance as crucibles of learning'. It stated that students should be encouraged to be highly critical and to question the world around them in both safety and freedom...

- 3.107 Liberty Victoria stated that ‘a definition of antisemitism should not include any reference to the State of Israel or conflate criticism or even condemnation of the actions taken by Israel with antisemitism’. It stated that criticism of the State of Israel, or the actions of its government, are not inherently antisemitic, and cautioned that there is ‘a real danger that accusations of antisemitism are being weaponised by supporters of the current government to attempt to invalidate legitimate criticism and shame critics into silence’.
- 4.44 Liberty Victoria emphasised the importance of the right to freedom of assembly and the ability to engage in peaceful protest, stating that protest is critical to a functioning democracy. It argued that vigilance is required to ensure that people calling for greater restrictions on student protests are not ‘seeking to weaponise this issue for other, authoritarian ends, and that bad-faith actors do not seek to shoehorn the legitimate concern about rising incidents of antisemitism into weakening protest rights and the foundations of our democracy.

With thanks to the Committee for the opportunity to participate in this important inquiry.