



Racism study in universities

The Albanese Government will undertake a study into antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism and the experience of First Nations people in the universities sector.

The study will investigate the prevalence, nature, and impact of individual and systemic racism in universities across Australia.

It will develop recommendations for Government to consider that can contribute to reducing racism and creating safer, more respectful and inclusive learning environments for students and staff.

How will this initiative work?

The Minister for Education Jason Clare will commission Race Discrimination Commissioner Giridharan Sivaraman to lead the study, with support from the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

It will follow a similar approach to the AHRC's landmark *Change the Course* (2017) report that looked at sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities.

The Commissioner will consult widely with students, staff, universities and other education providers.

This includes establishing a reference group of respected leaders from First Nations people, Jewish and Muslim communities and other multicultural communities with experience studying, working in and leading universities.

The study is expected to commence shortly, with an interim report to be delivered by 31 December 2024 and a final report by 30 June 2025.

Why is it important?

Freedom of speech and academic freedom are important, but it should not come at the cost of student or teacher safety, or anyone being subjected to racial vilification or hate speech.

A Tertiary Education Racism Study was recommendation 33 of the Australian Universities Accord to contribute to making the tertiary education system as safe as possible.

Concerns of racism in tertiary education have been growing in recent months, particularly in relation to antisemitism and Islamophobia since the beginning of the Israel/Hamas conflict.

Racism towards First Nations students and teachers – in areas including enrolment, assessment, recruitment and promotion – will also be addressed, as recommended by the Accord.

Who will benefit?

The study will have a particular focus on antisemitism, Islamophobia and the experience of First Nations people, while racism in all its aspects will be investigated as part of the study.