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MEDIA RELEASE

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**UNIVERSITY REPORT CARD SHOWS SECTOR-WIDE FAILINGS ON
ANTISEMITISM**

Today's release of the University Report Card by Australia's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism shows sector-wide failures in identifying and responding to antisemitism.

The Independent Assessor's Sectoral Assessment explicitly found that antisemitism is a "continuing and very serious problem within Australian universities". The independent assessor listed intimidation of staff and students on campus, targeting and silencing of Jewish academics, structural problems within universities and inadequate complaints systems as ongoing issues.

The university sector's response had been so deficient that, unlike the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the Royal Commission, Australian universities cannot even agree on a definition of what antisemitism is. The assessor lists eleven separate categories of failure.

The underlying reasons that are identified are damning. First, universities have not realised, or do not accept, that antisemitism is serious. Second, they do not see "Jews" as warranting protection. These issues are compounded by limited policy skills in universities and time constraints.

Shadow Minister for Education Julian Leeser said the sector-wide failings on antisemitism had much broader ramifications.

"This is an issue that should concern all Australians. History teaches us that what starts with the Jews never ends with Jews. Who is next?"

"We have seen 15 of our fellow Australians murdered on Bondi Beach because of their religion. That should be a massive concern to every decent person."

"Universities are where the next generation of leaders are formed, and right now they are failing. There needs to be a cultural shift."

Mr Leeser said that antisemitism was particularly insidious because, unlike other forms of racism, antisemitic conduct was often reframed as social justice and painted as being virtuous.

Leeser slammed the failure to agree on a definition of antisemitism.

“Quite frankly, it’s pathetic. The Royal Commission made clear that governments around the country agree on and accept a definition – but our universities cannot.”

“How can you address a problem if you can’t even agree what it is?”

Mr Leeser has repeatedly urged all universities in Australia to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition.

IHRA is an intergovernmental organization comprising over 30 member countries that unites governments and experts to strengthen and promote Holocaust education, research, and remembrance. Founded in 1998, it is best known for its "working definition of antisemitism" used globally to combat hatred.

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