



**Australian
National
University**

Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee

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Opening Statement Professor Rebekah Brown FASSA

Interim Vice-Chancellor and President – The Australian National University

Check against delivery

Thank you, Chair, and thank you Senators for the opportunity to appear before you.

Since the University's last appearance before this Committee in October, our focus has been on stabilisation, rebuilding trust, and laying the foundations for the future of the University. Restoring confidence and culture takes time. In this role, I have prioritised listening, transparency and steady leadership.

In recent months, the University has been operating to a clear framework through the ANU Roadmap. This has guided decision-making, communications, and engagement with government, regulators and the broader community.

To ensure decisions are grounded in evidence, the University commissioned a series of rapid stocktakes across finance, communications, culture and wellbeing, productivity and performance, and governance and reputation.

The University is engaging fully and constructively with several external reviews and investigations approaching completion, including both sector-wide processes and those specific to ANU. This scrutiny is being approached openly, with a clear commitment to respond in a decisive, transparent and accountable way. As Australia's national university, our work attracts close public attention and that is entirely appropriate.

The University unequivocally condemns all forms of racism and discrimination.

Hatred and violence have no place on our campus or in our society, and every student, staff member and visitor has the right to feel safe and respected on campus.

We are a diverse community, and we recognise that different groups within the university have distinct experiences and needs, and we respond through tailored support, engagement and services that are continuously reviewed and adapted as circumstances evolve, guided by our values and responsibilities as the national university.

I want to address antisemitism and campus safety directly. The attack on Bondi Beach on 14 December was not only deeply distressing, it had a profound impact on communities across Australia, including Jewish students and staff at our university.

In response, we have provided targeted support to members of our Jewish community, reinforced campus safety measures, increased security vigilance, and ensured access to wellbeing and counselling services. This sits alongside our broader, ongoing efforts to prevent and respond to racism and discrimination in all forms, in close cooperation with government, regulators and sector partners.

The University reviewed its socially responsible investment policy in 2024 following wide community consultation, reaffirming our commitment to ethical and sustainable investment practices. When concerns were raised recently about the robustness of the investment approach, I immediately commissioned a further review to ensure our settings remain rigorous, transparent and aligned with community expectations. The findings will inform any necessary adjustments to maintain confidence in our governance and oversight.

As part of the response to the Nixon Review into gender and culture, the University is establishing an Office of Integrity to strengthen reporting pathways, oversight and institutional learning. This Office will provide a clear front door for staff and students seeking advice or support, and will help ensure matters are handled fairly, respectfully and compassionately.

Financial stability remains a priority. Expenditure controls have helped stabilise the University's position, but the operating environment remains challenging. Continued discipline must now be matched with a deliberate focus on rebuilding confidence, capability and long-term sustainability through revenue generation.

Development of the next University Strategy is underway through a co-design process involving staff, students, alumni, government and other stakeholders. This work is focused on clarifying institutional direction, strengthening governance and culture, and ensuring the University is well positioned for the years ahead. The new Strategy will be launched in August 2026, coinciding with the University's 80th anniversary.

Despite recent challenges, academic performance remains strong. The University continues to perform at the highest levels nationally and internationally. We lead the sector with the highest retention and graduation rates of students from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds; and we are home to one of the strongest Indigenous student communities in the country.

We have listened carefully to students, staff and the broader music community about the importance of performance at the ANU School of Music. The University has established a Performance+ Hub which will provide one-to-one tuition for students with strong performance ambitions.

At its core, the University is a community of students, scholars and staff united by education, discovery and service to the nation. Our focus now is clear and unwavering: advancing knowledge for Australia and the world, and stewarding the nation's intellectual capital through our people, whose excellence underpins everything we do.

Thank you, Chair. I welcome the Committee's questions.

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