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THREATS TO FREE SPEECH ON CAMPUS HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED SINCE 2016

“Australian universities should be the exemplars of free expression, but sadly free speech is under renewed attack on our university campuses, where conformity is valued over education and debate,” said Brianna McKee, National Manager of Generation Liberty at the Institute of Public Affairs.

Today, the IPA released its *Free Speech on Campus Audit 2023* research report, which reviewed the 279 conduct and social justice policies of Australia's 42 universities. The audit found 90% of Australian universities currently administer policies explicitly hostile to free speech:

- **The number of university policies which are hostile to free speech has increased by 117% between 2016 to 2023.**
- **Only 15 of 42 universities in Australia are fully aligned to the six pro-freedom of speech provisions contained in the ‘French Model Code’.**
- **Every Australian university has adopted at least one woke policy or strategic commitment (77 in total) on issues such as indigenous affairs, sustainability, or gender equity, which seeks to limit open debate on campus.**
- **One of the worst offenders is the University of Wollongong’s *Inclusive Language Guideline*, that instructs students to avoid words like ‘man’, ‘ladies’, ‘mothering/fathering’, and ‘wife’.**

“Academic standards in Australian universities are already in crisis, on top of this, the IPA's latest audit shows when students finish their studies, they are more likely to be woke-ready rather than work-ready,” said Ms McKee.

The IPA’s Audit also found 20 of Australia’s 42 universities failed to adopt the standards of academic freedom and provisions allowing speech that may cause ‘offence’, which are outlined in former Chief Justice Robert French’s 2019 model code.

“The IPA’s Generation Liberty program has led the defence of freedom of speech on campus and was the catalyst for the development of the French Model Code, designed to ensure open debate remains at the heart of Australia’s tertiary sector,” said Ms McKee.

“Debate and the contest of ideas is not only the very essence of university life, but the very essence of everyday life in a flourishing liberal democracy like Australia.”

The IPA’s research follows the recent announcement by the federal government of its intention to implement the recommendations of the Universities Accord Interim Report, which emphasises equity and affirmative action, but fails to address intellectual and academic freedom.

“The Universities Accord recommendations are designed to entrench woke priorities, all while failing to address the diminution of our academic institutions as be places of free and open discussion and debate,” said Ms McKee.

“Instead of adopting these flawed recommendations, Parliament must urgently pass legislation to protect free speech, similar to those implemented in the United States, that will prohibit excessive rules designed to violate the core mission of higher education.”

To download the *Free Speech on Campus Audit 2023* [click here](#).

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