



Protest encampment update

17 June 2024

Dear students,

I want to provide you with an update on the protest encampment. As you may be aware, we've met with representatives a number of times to discuss their concerns, with the aim of achieving a peaceful resolution to the encampment.

Following the rejection of our proposal, last Friday we informed the encampment representatives that we require them to vacate the front lawns, so we can prepare for Semester 2 Welcome Fest.

Welcome Fest has a long tradition of being held on our front lawns, and tens of thousands of students attend this event every semester. It's an important and exciting opportunity for our new and continuing students to get involved in campus life, meet new friends and sign up to the USU's clubs and societies.

Since 24 April when the encampment began, we've repeatedly stated that we support the right to peaceful protest, provided it doesn't cause significant disruption to core University operations. We consider preparations for Welcome Fest to be core University operations – and any activity that impedes this constitutes a significant and unacceptable disruption.

The lawns are a popular and shared space, and as we have said previously, our shared spaces should be welcoming and inclusive to all members of our community. Unfortunately, the lawns have become damaged – in some places, quite badly – by use for which they are not intended. Our campus grounds team has advised that remediating this damage will take some time. To give our students the best possible experience at Welcome Fest we now require the lawns to be cleared to do this work.

Keeping our community safe

Our top priority is always the safety of our students, staff and the broader community. [As we have repeatedly stated](#), we have zero tolerance for any form of racism, threats to safety, hate speech, intimidation, threatening speech, bullying or unlawful harassment, including antisemitic or anti-Muslim language or behaviour. We unequivocally condemn violence, terrorism and any breach of human rights. Where we have become aware of alleged behaviour that violates our Code of Conduct or [Student Charter \(PDF, 219 KB\)](#), we have acted immediately.

You may be aware that on Sunday, concerning allegations regarding external influences on the protest encampment were raised in the media. I assure you the University is treating these allegations seriously and we are seeking advice from authorities.

Since the protest encampment began, we've been in regular contact with NSW Police and we

participated in the recent briefing of the Universities Foreign Interference Taskforce, which included briefings from intelligence officials, ASIO, and several senior government officials. We follow advice recommended by the Taskforce and other relevant authorities.

Support

If you need support you can visit our [student life, wellbeing and support webpage](#) or [talk with one of our University counsellors](#).

If you are feeling unsafe on campus or witness other forms of concerning behaviour, you can call protective services on 9351 3333. If you witness an incident please report it via our [online complaints form](#).

I will continue to keep you updated.

Kind regards,
Mark

Professor Mark Scott
Vice-Chancellor and President

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