

UMSU Advocacy Position on the new Vice Chancellor Rules

14 March 2025

Procedurally Cooked

The VC rules made under the Regulation bypass the University's Policy Framework which requires that policy:

- **aligns with university objects in the Act** (e.g. promoting critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate within the University and in the wider society)
- **be consistent with legal and regulatory requirements**, other policies, and community expectations (e.g. must comply with the Vic Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities)
- be developed, established, amended and reviewed in consultation with key stakeholders (e.g. they should consult with students)

Substantively Baked

The rules go significantly further than just banning indoor protest:

- Not only are protests forbidden if they are held inside, protests held outside *must not obstruct entry into, or exit from, any building* (this could easily be used to penalise protest action that is **anywhere near a building** – i.e. most places on campus) used for University activities.
- Additionally, if the University deems that any protest anywhere under its jurisdiction unreasonably undermines the capacity of individuals to participate fully in the University it is not allowed, neither is any protest that is deemed to prejudice the fulfilment by the University of its duty to foster the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and visitors

- so one complaint from anyone who says the protest action is making them feel unsafe will give them license to act against a protester.

Another poorly defined and subjective term bans protests that unreasonably disrupt activities or operations (deliberately vague and allows the broadest possible interpretation, based on a single subjective view).

Bad Optics and Hypocrisy

The rule says:

The University of Melbourne (University) is committed to being a place where the thoughtful exchange of divergent views may occur in a civil and peaceful manner, and which respects the right to freedom of speech and expression and the right to assembly to engage in peaceful protest.

This statement is inconsistent with an Executive order (not consulted or subject to any checks and balances) which effectively outlaws any protest action on campus while pretending that some will be allowed.

It is wholly disingenuous to pretend that this rule allows for **any protest** at the University. There will always be someone with an opposing view who comes into contact with a protest action and who, with knowledge of this Uni position, will make a complaint saying it makes them feel unsafe or insecure.

As the Jewish Council of Australia notes:

Protests may make some students and staff uncomfortable, and even disrupt the normal functioning of universities, but that is not grounds to penalise protesting students – it is a reality of life in a democracy.