

ISSE meetings in Australia and New Zealand

## The social crisis facing students: For a working class movement to defend education

11 May 2010

The right to free, universal higher education and associated student income support was the by-product of the struggles of the working class for major social change in the 1960s and 1970s, not only in Australia and New Zealand but around the world. Those rights have been largely destroyed through decades of retrograde policies by both Labor and conservative governments. Students now face immense financial obstacles while studying and massive debts upon graduation. The university system has become corporatised, increasingly reliant on business sponsorship and full-fee paying students.

Under its “education revolution” the Rudd Labor government is escalating this bipartisan assault on all levels of education, as part of an international offensive on working class living standards that has deepened since the beginning of the global financial crisis in 2008. Rudd and Education Minister Gillard have introduced the “MySchool” ranking system to impose merit pay and other punitive “performance-based” schemes on teachers, and to create the conditions for the closure of so-called “underperforming” public schools. In the United States, a similar policy has already led to the closure of hundreds of public schools, the sacking of tens of thousands of teachers and the expansion of privately run charter institutions.

In New Zealand, the National-led government has announced a series of attacks on every sector of the public education system. Community-based night classes have already been virtually wiped out. Primary schools are being forced to implement the same regressive “national testing” regime as in Australia and elsewhere. Universities have begun restricting enrolments, cuts to courses and programs are under way and substantial fee increases have been

foreshadowed. The first semester has seen a 20 percent surge in the uptake of student loans, with youth hit by the economic crisis and rising unemployment. The government is moving to restrict access to the loans scheme and increase the cost of borrowing.

The ISSE meetings at campuses in Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle and Wellington will discuss the socialist political perspective required to fight back against the unrelenting attack on the social rights of students and the working class as a whole.

### **University of Sydney**

Thursday, May 20, 1.00 p.m.

School of IT Lecture Theatre

*(the entrance is located at the front of the building, facing the Engineering walk, between the Seymour Centre and the Aeronautical Engineering building)*

### **University of New South Wales**

Thursday, May 20, 3.00 p.m.

John Goodsell Building LG19

*(access to the John Goodsell Building is via the Commerce Courtyard, which is also where you access the Central Lecture Block)*

### **RMIT**

Thursday, May 20, 12.30 p.m.

Union Meeting Room

Building 8

Room number 8.3.18

*(Opposite the gym)*

### **University of Newcastle**

Wednesday, May 26, 1.00 p.m.

NUSA Offices, near Bar on the Hill

### **Victoria University Wellington**

Friday, May 28, 3.30 p.m.

Meeting Room 1



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**