

Australia: IYSSE campaign pushes back Griffith University's political censorship

Our correspondents

21 March 2015

A determined campaign by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Griffith University in the Queensland state capital of Brisbane has forced an initial back down by the university's authorities on their decision to ban the IYSSE from registering a club on the university's campuses this year.

The IYSSE, the Socialist Equality Party's youth movement, won important support from Griffith students, as well as readers of the *World Socialist Web Site*, who protested against the university's blatant political censorship. During campus campaigns by IYSSE members and supporters, students at both the Nathan and Southbank campuses signed up to join the club, while WSWs readers sent letters to the university's Clubs and Societies coordinator demanding the reversal of the ban.

On February 2, Deb de Silva, the clubs support officer for the Campus Life Clubs & Societies Office, had sent the IYSSE an email declaring that “due to previous attempts, which proved unsuccessful in gaining student interest, we will not be proceeding further with this organisation registering as a student club.” Permission was also refused for the IYSSE to hold information and sign-up stalls during Orientation Week. Officials twice shut down IYSSE campaign tables.

From the outset, the IYSSE recognised that the ban was politically-motivated, directed against the only student club that advances a socialist and internationalist perspective opposing the drive to war, austerity, social inequality and the overturning of basic democratic rights being pursued by governments across Australia and around the world.

Far from lacking “student interest,” the IYSSE club at Griffith had a two-year record of holding regular

meetings and campaigns, on topics such as “Defend Edward Snowden! The socialist answer to the assault on democratic rights,” “No to war against Syria!” “The glorification of WWI and the preparations for WWII” and “Ukraine, the dangers of fascism and war.”

On February 21, on the eve of Orientation Week, the IYSSE issued a statement condemning the decision by the university management. Hundreds of copies of were circulated on campus. The statement explained that the ban marked an escalation of a bid last April to bar all student political clubs from booking rooms to hold meetings at the university. The IYSSE had also exposed and campaigned against this thoroughly anti-democratic move, ultimately forcing the management to drop the room booking ban.

On March 4, after the university continued to block the IYSSE from holding information stalls, a further article was published on the *World Socialist Web Site* condemning these actions, interviewing a new IYSSE member and urging readers to write to the university to demand a lifting of the ban.

While now denying that the university was trying to stop the IYSSE from registering a club, de Silva, the Clubs and Societies support officer, said the club must submit an “expression of interest” before it could sign up members—even though the IYSSE was granted provisional registration last year after submitting the requisite list of 15 members.

Finally, the IYSSE was permitted to conduct two sign-up tables, one at each campus, to complete a list of 15 members in order to file such an expression of interest. De Silva insisted that the IYSSE would also have to explain why it was different to Socialist Alternative, a pseudo-left group. This stipulation suggested that the university could use that group's presence on campus as a pretext to deny registration to the IYSSE.

Socialist Alternative—which has been permitted to set up frequent stalls at the Nathan campus this year—has nothing whatever to do with socialism. It has backed the US-led interventions in Libya and Syria, hailed the openly pro-capitalist Syriza government in Greece and sought to divert the popular hostility to the Abbott government back behind the return of another Labor-Greens government.

The “expression of interest” submitted by the IYSSE made crystal clear the club’s diametrical opposition to Socialist Alternative and other fake “left” groups. The aims of the club were set out as follows:

1. Oppose imperialist war and social inequality. Build an international anti-war movement.
2. Hold regular forums on the analysis of the *World Socialist Web Site*.
3. To promote Marxism. To discuss the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky.

In response, de Silva sent an email on March 18, which stated: “Congratulations! IYSSE have moved on to the next stage with registering the club at Griffith.” De Silva also agreed to the IYSSE’s request to book a room so that the club can hold its first meeting for the year at lunchtime on Tuesday April 14. At the same time, however, she set a deadline of 4 p.m. on March 27 for the IYSSE to submit a club registration pack.

Because of the university management’s weeks of obstruction, the IYSSE requested an extension of this deadline. The deadline fell before the date of the club’s first meeting, making it clearly impossible to meet one of the registration requirements: to submit details of the club’s annual general meeting as part of the registration pack.

On March 20, de Silva responded by sending an email granting an extension until 4 p.m. on April 17. Given the record of the Griffith authorities over the past year, there is still no guarantee that they will register the IYSSE club, even after all the requirements are met.

We urge Griffith students to come to the IYSSE meeting on April 14, at 12.30 p.m. to 2 p.m. in the Nathan campus’s seminar room N53_0.59 (Willett Centre Building). It will take a report and watch a video on the IYSSE’s campaign at Germany’s Humboldt University against the revival of German militarism and the transformation of the university into a centre of right-wing and pro-war propaganda. The meeting will also elect the IYSSE’s executive committee for 2015.

At the same time, we urge Griffith students and WSWS readers to continue sending messages demanding that the university stop seeking to prevent the IYSSE registering a club.

Messages should be sent to Wade Hurst, the Clubs Coordinator and Student Representative Council Liaison Officer.

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To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact