

Online public meeting in Australia: Oppose the job cuts at Macquarie University! Build rank-and-file committees to defend public education!

7 July 2021

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and the Committee for Public Education (CFPE) have called an online public meeting for Saturday, July 17, at 4 pm (AEST). It will discuss how to take forward the fight against cuts at Sydney's Macquarie University and nationally.

In response to the ongoing historic assault on university staff and students that saw up to 90,000 jobs destroyed across Australia's campuses last year, students from the Macquarie University Mathematical Society have taken up a fight to reinstate a highly-regarded lecturer, Dr. Frank Valckenborgh.

Valckenborgh was made redundant in a "hunger games"-style process, in which educators had to compete against each other for a reduced number of positions. Dozens of academics have been retrenched at Macquarie, on top of more than 300 redundancies of educators and professional staff members in 2020. Nationwide, the COVID-19 pandemic has been used as the pretext for an entire restructuring of class relations in education and throughout the working class.

The student-led petition to defend Valckenborgh has received the support of more than 500 pupils and staff.

The petition includes many comments appreciative of Valckenborgh's commitment to students and scholarship. The passionate and broad support for the petition also indicates deepening opposition to the cuts to public education over decades by successive Liberal-National and Labor governments. One student wrote: "Universities should be places of learning, not money-making institutions and in order to have quality education, we need quality teachers."

Such student-led actions need to be supported and

broadened. This means a direct struggle against the staff and student unions, which have suppressed widespread opposition to the destruction of jobs and conditions and blocked any unified struggle by university workers and students.

Far from fighting the cuts, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) has repeatedly offered to collaborate with university managements to find ways of saving money, including cutting pay and conditions for staff. This serves to implement the further pro-business restructuring of higher education demanded by the corporate elite and the political establishment, which is being accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The forthcoming IYSSE and CFPE public meeting on July 17 will advance the necessity for students and university workers to establish a network of joint rank-and-file committees, completely independent of the unions. This is essential to initiate a nationwide, unified fight against the assault on jobs and conditions, and link up with students, educators and all workers internationally who are facing similar critical struggles against the impact of the worsening global crisis.

That means rejecting the dictates of the financial elite. It requires a struggle against the capitalist profit system itself, and the turn to a socialist perspective, to reorganise society on the basis of social need, not private wealth accumulation. To participate in the joint online public meeting register here.



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