

# University of Melbourne student union refuses to affiliate IYSSE despite successful affiliation meeting

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In an egregious act of political censorship, the University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU) is refusing to reaffiliate the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) club on campus, despite it having met all of the requirements.

The IYSSE held a highly successful Annual General Meeting (AGM) attended by over 40 students on September 22.

The AGM was held despite the anti-democratic disaffiliation of the IYSSE club by the UMSU and its affiliated Clubs and Societies Committee (C&SC).

In a September 16 open letter, “Overturn University of Melbourne student union’s anti-democratic disaffiliation of the IYSSE!” the IYSSE stated: “We do not recognise the decision of the C&SC to disaffiliate the club and will proceed with our Annual General Meeting.”

The IYSSE wrote to C&SC detailing the success of the AGM. The response of C&S Coordinator at UoM Fiona Sanders was, in full:

Dear IYSSE

The club has been disaffiliated by the C&S Committee, and the decision confirmed by Students Council. The matter is closed.

This is our final correspondence on the matter.

Kind regards,  
Fiona

At the AGM, titled “The political issues in the US-led war drive against China and the threat of World War III,” the IYSSE club’s constitution and statement of aims were endorsed unanimously, without dissent. The IYSSE membership elected its club executive of six office-bearers, as required under the C&SC regulations.

The IYSSE exceeded the 20 student club members that needed to attend the AGM, as required by the C&SC’s regulations. In addition, students from other campuses including La Trobe University, Victoria University and young workers were in attendance.

A significant number of Chinese international students attended and actively participated in the discussion at the meeting, attracted by the IYSSE’s anti-war program. The IYSSE campaigned among students for weeks ahead of the AGM advancing a socialist alternative to the catastrophic nuclear war plans of all the imperialist powers led by the United States.

The IYSSE has been alone on campus in warning of the threat of world war and fighting to build an anti-war movement orienting students and youth to the revolutionary social force of the working class.

As the IYSSE explained in its open letter:

The move is a blatant attack on the democratic rights of the IYSSE and the entire student population. It is part of a broader onslaught on cultural and political life at universities, as they are transformed into fully corporatised instruments of big business, governments and the military.

Within this context, the targeting of the IYSSE is particularly significant. The disaffiliation of its club is aimed at suppressing any discussion of the key political issues confronting young people, including the mounting threat of world war, the disastrous consequences of the “let it rip” COVID policies and the turn to authoritarianism by governments around the world.

On June 16 the C&SC seized upon technical issues experienced, unbeknownst to the club, in submitting its membership list to disaffiliate the IYSSE. This resulted in the late submission the list of IYSSE members despite having more than the required number.

The C&SC took the IYSSE’s elaboration of the technical issues on July 1 as an appeal of the disaffiliation. C&SC officer Eleanor Cooney-Hunt told an August 4 Student Council meeting of UMSU which heard the appeal that the IYSSE

should be disaffiliated because “the club is not operating.”

IYSSE members were not informed that the appeal would be heard on August 4. Nor was the result of the vote upholding the IYSSE’s disaffiliation communicated to the IYSSE until the club’s president requested the minutes of the Student Council meeting.

The IYSSE’s well-attended meeting exposes the dishonesty of the C&SC claim that the “club is not operating.” In fact, the highly successful AGM followed a series of weekly meetings of the club totalling more than 32 meetings til September 22 on a range of topics from the defence of Julian Assange, to the fight against the drive to war and the homicidal response by the government to the COVID pandemic.

After the formal business of the AGM, the IYSSE held a political discussion on the threat of nuclear war emerging out of the reckless drive of US imperialism to arrest its historic decline as the global hegemon, targeting nuclear-armed Russia and China in particular.

Leading IYSSE member Evrim Yazgin delivered an opening report which details the Trotskyist position of the International Committee of the Fourth International—of which the IYSSE branches around the world constitute the youth and student arm—against imperialist war and for an independent movement of the working class against the capitalist system which leads to imperialist war.

Students asked key questions about Washington’s recent actions renouncing the “One China” policy, the history of the Trotskyist movement and its struggle against the counterrevolutionary bureaucracy that emerged in the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin who promoted the anti-Marxist position that socialism could be built in one country, and the life and writings of Leon Trotsky, leader with Vladimir Lenin of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

At its AGM, the IYSSE passed unanimously the following resolution:

This meeting of the University of Melbourne chapter of the IYSSE condemns in the strongest manner the anti-democratic attempt of the UMSU to disaffiliate our club.

The disaffiliation was based on the most spurious and arbitrary grounds—a deadline for the submission of our membership list was narrowly missed, apparently due to website technical issues, and no proper communication was subsequently received from UMSU, with sent emails going to our executives’ spam folders. We demand the immediate revocation of the UMSU ban and reinstatement of the IYSSE as a fully affiliated club on campus. We also demand that UMSU recognise our meeting today for what it is—a legitimate annual general meeting, held as required under student union stipulations.

The IYSSE understands the disaffiliation attempt as an attack on not just our democratic rights, but those of all University of Melbourne students. It is part of a broader onslaught on cultural and political life at the universities, as they are transformed into corporatised instruments of governments, big business, and the military. The IYSSE has been targeted because we advanced an internationalist and socialist perspective, opposed to the entire political establishment including Labor and the Greens, and because we are an anti-imperialist and anti-war organisation.

The IYSSE will sustain a wide, international campaign against the disaffiliation in the event that UMSU does not immediately move to reverse the disaffiliation. We call on all students and student clubs, at the University of Melbourne and more broadly, to support our campaign and publicly oppose the student union’s manoeuvres.

While the bureaucrats in the UMSU and C&SC have supposedly sent their “final correspondence on the matter,” the IYSSE has not.

The IYSSE will continue to develop its international campaign against this anti-democratic, political attack. The disaffiliation of the IYSSE cannot be allowed to stand!

This assault must be seen as a warning to students. Whatever the immediate motivation behind the decision, C&SC is functioning as thought police, attempting to arbitrarily decide what students can discuss and even think, through their tight control over which clubs are allowed to exist on campus.

We urge all students and student clubs to support our campaign. Get in contact with the UofM IYSSE, give statements of support and join our fight against this anti-democratic attack.

To get in contact with the IYSSE,  
email: [iysse.uom@gmail.com](mailto:iysse.uom@gmail.com)

Join the IYSSE Facebook  
page: <https://www.facebook.com/IYSSEaustralia>  
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To contact the WSW and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

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