

Young people around Australia speak out against Macquarie University's refusal to affiliate anti-war IYSSE club

Our reporters
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International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) members have been campaigning across the country against the blatant political censorship being conducted by Macquarie University in Sydney.

Despite the IYSSE having met all requirements to form a club, Macquarie University management has rejected its affiliation. It has justified this anti-democratic edict with the lie that the IYSSE shares “the same aim and purpose” as the Macquarie Socialists club associated with the pseudo-left, pro-war organisation Socialist Alternative.

This is refuted by a vast body of written material, which the administration has simply ignored. The gulf between our organisations has also been acknowledged by the Macquarie Socialists in a public statement they issued last week.

The actions of Macquarie University are part of an international assault on the democratic rights of the IYSSE, with its anti-war meetings and campaigns subjected to disruptions and hostile campaigns in many countries. The fight to affiliate the IYSSE's club, therefore, takes on broad dimensions. It is a component of the defence of democratic rights of all students and youth to oppose war, especially the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine which threatens nuclear catastrophe.

We call on students, youth, academics and all those who defend civil liberties to add your voice to those who are calling for the IYSSE to be affiliated at Macquarie University.

Below, we publish statements from young people across Australia, protesting the attack on the IYSSE at Macquarie University.

Tomas, an 18-year-old in Brisbane, called Macquarie University management's refusal to affiliate the IYSSE “an affront to democracy, intentionally crippling the

ability of politically keen students to organise and fully voice their opinion from a socialist perspective.”

He noted: “Despite being completely eligible to be affiliated, meeting all the requirements, it has been arbitrarily decided to disaffiliate the IYSSE on the fraudulent grounds of supposedly sharing the same aims and purposes as the Macquarie Socialists, who are affiliated with the pseudo-left Socialist Alternative. It is well known that there are sharp programmatic differences between the IYSSE and the Macquarie Socialists on many issues, including but not limited to their opposing attitudes towards the war in Ukraine, and their attitudes towards trade unions.

“It cannot be stressed enough that if this decision is not corrected, it will serve as a precedent for further attacks against the democratic rights of students to politically organise and voice their independent opinions.

“The IYSSE strives to build an international anti-war youth movement, so it is absolutely necessary that they are able to reach as many people as possible.... Everyone who cares about civil liberties must oppose Macquarie University management's blatant act of political censorship.”

Miranda, a University of Melbourne psychology student, said: “At best, Macquarie University's refusal to instate the IYSSE club is a gross misunderstanding of the political goals of the pseudo-left Macquarie Socialists club which is tied to Socialist Alternative.”

“The notion that these organisations share the same goals is observably false, with the anti-war movement of the IYSSE being entirely incompatible with Socialist Alternative's open support of the US-NATO proxy war against Russia. The Macquarie University IYSSE meets every requirement to be an affiliated club, and refusing to recognise it as such is an act of political discrimination.”

A student at Western Sydney University said the decision by management was “an act of political discrimination, an attack on the IYSSE and the most fundamental rights of the student body. Students should have the right to participate and build any club on campus regardless of political perspective and whether or not university management think they ‘have the same aim,’ especially when they obviously do not.”

The student quoted from the IYSSE’s initial statement from June 6 opposing the rejection of its affiliation at Macquarie University to highlight the irreconcilable differences between the two organisations:

Socialist Alternative supports the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine; we oppose it and fight to build a socialist anti-war movement of the international working class. Socialist Alternative defends the trade union bureaucracy which acts as a policemen for governments and the corporations; we fight to independently mobilise workers against it through the formation of rank-and-file committees. In elections, Socialist Alternative calls for a vote for Labor and the Greens as “lesser-evils”; we denounce this as a reactionary attempt to tie workers and youth to the capitalist political establishment and support Socialist Equality Party candidates.

“The IYSSE has been a student club from 2010 to 2022,” the student continued. “Management’s attempts at likening these two political organisations with a vast gulf between them as one and the same have no credibility when you actually probe into these organisations.”

At a recent mid-year orientation event at the University of Newcastle in regional New South Wales, **Shantay** told IYSSE members that she opposes the war in Ukraine and the role of the US and NATO in particular. “The mainstream media is not telling the whole truth.... The war needs to be stopped as soon as possible, otherwise it will escalate into something really bad. That’s why I am looking at this club, the IYSSE.”

Defending the IYSSE’s right to be affiliated at Macquarie University, Shantay said that the IYSSE is different from the pseudo-left Macquarie Socialists “not only because you are anti-war, but because you focus more on the class issues. Class is essential, because at the end of the day, if you’re just papering over that, there is

always going to be someone in power.”

“This is definitely a different perspective,” Shantay said. “You should be able to affiliate.”

Also from the University of Newcastle, **Mailyn** told campaigners that the IYSSE “should be able to have a club at Macquarie—there needs to be as much discussion as possible about what’s going on in the world and in this country. I want to know as much as possible what’s going on about the government, about war and it’s good to be able to discuss. You have the right to freedom of speech.”

“I think that government is wasting time and money on war by sending equipment to Ukraine which is just fuelling the war and causing more destruction,” she added.

“We should be spending money to build more, not destroy things. The cost of living is also going up because of the war. The Reserve Bank of Australia interest rate hikes are making it more difficult for people to pay their mortgages and wages aren’t going up enough. I have two young kids who are struggling to pay the rent, they’re stressed, they have to do more overtime. Some people are having to work two or more jobs just to get by. There will be young people who have to move back with their parents because they can’t afford the cost of rent.

“So, I think we have to know what’s really going on. Your meetings sound good and people should be able to join the club—if your meetings let people have a voice and say what they think and discuss this, I think that’s good.”

We call on all readers to support the fight to defend the IYSSE at Macquarie University by sending letters of protest over the rejection of the IYSSE’s affiliation to the Student Engagement, Inclusion and Belonging division of university management at studentgroups@mq.edu.au, and CC_iysse.macquarie@gmail.com.



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