

Macquarie University stonewalls after its political censorship of IYSSE is exposed

Eric Ludlow, Oscar Grenfell
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Management at Sydney's Macquarie University is continuing its blatant political censorship of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) despite proof that its decision to block the IYSSE's affiliation was based on a false assertion.

On May 29, the Student Engagement, Inclusion & Belonging division's Paul McKay sent the IYSSE an email which stated that the IYSSE would not be affiliated, despite meeting all stipulated requirements. This was based on the fraudulent claim that the IYSSE shares "the same aim and purpose" as the Macquarie Socialists club—linked to the Socialist Alternative organisation.

As was explained in detail in a June 6 statement opposing management's decision, the socialist, anti-war perspective of the IYSSE is diametrically opposed to the pseudo-left politics of Socialist Alternative.

On July 5, the IYSSE wrote to McKay to inform management of the Macquarie Socialists' June 28 Facebook statement in which they themselves highlight the differences between the two clubs.

Though their statement was politically hostile and rife with falsifications of the IYSSE's political positions, the Macquarie Socialists' post states that they "reject the claim that we share the same aim and purpose as IYSSE."

The IYSSE wrote to McKay: "The assertion that we have the same aims as Macquarie Socialists, you will recall, was the sole justification you gave for rejecting our affiliation. It has now been entirely refuted by all parties involved. The only institution that falsely claims that we have the same aims is your own. Aside from the complete impropriety of a university management body adjudicating on the politics of student organisations, your previous assertions are now entirely untenable.

"We therefore demand that you immediately rescind this position and affiliate our club forthwith."

In a striking display of indifference to the democratic rights of students, McKay's entire response was: "I'm sorry to inform you that the application has been closed. I suggest checking the outcome of your formal complaint for additional details. Thank you for reaching out."

In other words, despite the IYSSE's complete refutation of

the false assertion on which it was denied club status, Macquarie University management is claiming that the period for affiliation has passed. The reason that period has passed is precisely because management rejected the IYSSE's application on fraudulent grounds in the first place!

A formal complaint against the refusal to affiliate the club was submitted by the IYSSE on June 11. More than a month later, Macquarie University management's complaint department has not yet issued a finding, despite confirming receipt of the complaint.

The complete unaccountability of Student Engagement, Inclusion & Belonging, and the glacial complaint process, effectively means management's decisions are unchallengeable by the student body, even when there is clear evidence that a decision has been made based on false grounds and constitutes a direct attack on students' democratic rights.

The question arises: If the false assertion that was used to block the IYSSE has been refuted, why is the university continuing its censorship of the IYSSE? The ongoing refusal to affiliate the IYSSE reveals that this anti-democratic decision is of a political nature. The IYSSE's anti-war and socialist positions are effectively being banned.

That is demonstrated by the context of the censorship. Less than two months before the university barred the IYSSE, the club held a meeting at Macquarie University opposing the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

Right-wing Ukrainian nationalists attempted to prevent the IYSSE from holding that event. One Ukrainian nationalist sympathiser emailed university management to demand that the IYSSE's room booking be cancelled. While Macquarie University allowed the booking to proceed, they made no defence of the IYSSE's democratic rights.

Now, university management is effectively carrying out exactly what the right-wing, pro-war nationalists were aiming for: the silencing of the only anti-war voice on campus.

These right-wing forces deny the incontrovertible fact that the war in Ukraine is a conflict between the US and NATO on one side, and Russia on the other. The US and European imperialist powers provoked and used the reactionary invasion of Ukraine by Russia's capitalist regime to advance their longstanding war plans in the region.

The IYSSE has implacably opposed the US-NATO war drive. We have warned that the actions of the imperialist powers threaten nothing less than a global nuclear catastrophe. At the same time, we have opposed entirely the nationalist policies of the Putin regime, which represents an oligarchy that came to power through the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The IYSSE is the only youth organisation in the world fighting for the unity of the international working class, including Russian and Ukrainian, on a socialist perspective directed against war.

A plethora of pseudo-left organisations, including the Macquarie Socialists, have taken a diametrically opposed position. They have fraudulently presented the conflict as a war for “democracy” and “sovereignty,” dovetailing with the propaganda of the imperialist powers and legitimising their war policies.

The IYSSE’s anti-war perspective has come under international attack, not just at Macquarie University. The April meeting at the university was part of an international series. At campuses globally, these events have been attacked by state and fascistic-aligned forces, precisely because they represent the only genuine opposition to war.

While the ground troops of this censorship campaign has been the far-right Ukrainian nationalists, their actions are completely in line with the policies of the major powers.

That includes the Labor government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese which has deepened Australia’s involvement in the conflict, including through the provision of hundreds of millions of dollars of weaponry and ammunition.

This goes hand in hand with Australia’s increasingly central role in US war policies globally. In the Indo-Pacific region, Australia is serving as the key partner of US preparations for a catastrophic conflict with China, which is viewed as the chief threat to American global hegemony. That includes the announcement this year of a \$368 billion deal for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines, as well as a massive expansion of other strike capabilities, especially missiles.

As part of these war preparations, universities around Australia are being integrated into the military apparatus. They are establishing research and development ties with the world’s largest arms manufacturers and with the defence department, to directly prepare the weapons of war.

In December 2022, for instance, Macquarie University signed onto a \$32 million research project to boost the military’s testing and engineering capabilities. These upgrades, coined the “Capital Refresh Program,” will pave the way for advancements in technology to be used by the military including space optics and hypersonics.

Macquarie enters the partnership along with several other universities, the Royal Australian Air Force, leading Australian information warfare firm L3 Micreo, Australian circuit board manufacturer Lintek and US-based defence contractor QinetiQ.

Universities are also key centres for the ideological

justification for war. Their political and international relations departments are hotbeds of pro-war propaganda, aimed at legitimising and promoting the war policies that other university departments are directly involved with on the research and development side.

This is combined with the evisceration of student cultural and political life on the universities. At many campuses, including Macquarie, there is not even a semblance of student control over such things as club affiliations as there was in the past. Instead, management, representing the university as a state and military aligned corporation dependent on funding handouts from big business, calls the shots.

It is in this broader context that Macquarie University has deemed the presence of the IYSSE—an anti-war and socialist club—impermissible. It is seeking to prevent discussion on campus of left-wing politics and opposition to war.

The decision to censor the IYSSE, if allowed to stand, paves the way for further attacks on students at Macquarie University and anti-war and oppositional voices across the country.

Around the world, students and youth have voiced their opposition to Macquarie University’s assault on the democratic rights of the IYSSE and the broader student population.

Students and youth, as well as academics and all those who defend civil liberties should join the fight against the anti-democratic assault on the IYSSE at Macquarie University. This struggle is intimately bound up with the broader defence of democratic rights, and the fight to end imperialist war.

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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