

More than 500 sign petition demanding end to political censorship of IYSSE at Sydney's Macquarie University

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4 August 2023

More than 500 workers, youth and students in Australia and internationally have added their signatures to a petition begun little more than two weeks ago by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) against the political censorship of its club at Sydney's Macquarie University.

The response to the petition highlights the broad opposition to Macquarie University management's effective ban on the IYSSE—an anti-war and socialist movement of students—from campus without any justification.

On May 29, university management rejected the affiliation of the IYSSE, despite the club meeting all stipulated requirements. The basis for management's anti-democratic decision was the false claim that the IYSSE shares the "same aims and purpose" as the Macquarie Socialists club linked with the pro-war, pseudo-left Socialist Alternative.

The IYSSE has thoroughly exposed the false pretence under which its affiliation was blocked by Macquarie University. The pseudo-left Macquarie Socialists themselves, in a politically hostile statement which is in no way a defence of democratic rights, state that they "reject the claim that we share the same aim and purpose as IYSSE."

Despite the complete refutation of management's fraudulent reasoning for blocking the IYSSE, Macquarie University has stonewalled the growing opposition to its decision.

As the petition states:

But thus far, the university has refused to reverse its decision. That demonstrates that this is political censorship. The only explanation is that the IYSSE is being targeted, as the sole student club that has advanced a consistent socialist alternative to militarism and war.

That is demonstrated by the context. On April 4,

the IYSSE held a meeting on campus, opposing the US-NATO war against Ukraine and fighting for a socialist movement to prevent it from spiralling into a global nuclear catastrophe.

The IYSSE made plain its complete opposition to the reactionary invasion of Ukraine, by the Russian regime, which represents a capitalist oligarchy. But because our meeting sheeted home responsibility for the conflict to American imperialism and its allies, including the Australian government, and called for the unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers, it was attacked by far-right Ukrainian nationalists who demanded that we be censored.

It is that program that Macquarie University is now enacting, though behind a cowardly veil of lies, evasions and silence. This is part of a global attack on the IYSSE's anti-war perspective.

If Macquarie University's political censorship is allowed to stand, it will have a chilling impact. Management will be able to determine what students and staff can and cannot discuss. Inevitably, the parameters of legitimate discussion will be determined by the corporations, governments and military-intelligence agencies with which university management collaborates closely.

Dozens of Australian youth, academics, Macquarie University students and alumni, US high school students, and IYSSE chapters internationally have already submitted powerful letters protesting the university's block on the IYSSE. Their statements foreshadow the broader attack on democratic rights that the assault on the IYSSE at Macquarie University portends.

These sentiments are echoed in comments submitted by signatories to the IYSSE's petition against the anti-democratic decision of Macquarie University management.

Many pointed to the fact that Macquarie University's assault on freedom of speech highlights the turn by universities away from being academies that promote critical thought, into corporatist, pro-military institutions.

"Universities are supposed to be places where diversity of thought and ideas is valued," wrote one signee, Judith.

Bob wrote: "I strongly believe in academic freedom and academic integrity, and these values should be part of the 'DNA' of universities. I formed these values while a postgraduate student at the University of Queensland in the late 1960s; all universities should hold and practice such values. Political censorship is anathema in such a context."

Writing from regional New South Wales, Morgan said: "The banning of political groups using the spurious grounds evinced by the "leadership" of Mac Uni shows the continuing decline of debate, investigation and most chillingly, critical analysis in our tertiary education system."

"Any censorship of ideas, thoughts and opinions is anathema to the role universities play in the development of society," another signatory, Peter, wrote. "From what I can tell nothing the IYSSE stands for should be kept from being aired at an institution purportedly designed to promote critical thinking," Sara added.

Joanne pointed to the transformation of Macquarie University in particular: "I was a Macquarie student and this is bad news. What has happened to Macquarie?"

University of Sydney senior lecturer in the visual arts, Dr David Haines, also signed the petition, highlighting the clear political censorship against the IYSSE: "As a former Deputy Director at the Office of Film and Literature Classification (Film Censorship Board) I have a keen nose for censorship and political gamesmanship, and strongly support this petition."

"As a graduate who attended Macquarie University from 1971 to 1974 and a Student Union member, I am appalled at the administration's outright political censorship in the act of denying affiliation to the anti-war IYSSE club," Clay wrote. "Macquarie's staff and students have a proud historical record of opposing the dirty war in Vietnam. The administration's attack on the democratic rights of the IYSSE is an attack on all students and staff and spits on this record."

Signees also highlighted their support for the IYSSE's anti-war and socialist perspective.

As his reason for signing for the IYSSE's right to form a club at Macquarie University, Rudi wrote: "We must expose and counter the dramatically increasing drives by vested war machinery interests."

"I believe in their [the IYSSE's] ideals, they are fighting for freedom of speech and a robust democracy that values citizens over the greed and the inequality of power

entrenched in our institutions and our democracy," Bruce said. "I stand with these students."

"In any free and civil society, students and citizens should be free to express their political views and especially disagree with war," Jason wrote. "Macquarie University should be SUPPORTING anti-war and socialist groups, not ostracising them," signee Freya said.

The IYSSE has repeatedly stated that the political censorship of its anti-war, socialist perspective at Macquarie University is a warning. As universities are increasingly transformed into militarist and corporatist entities churning out job-ready graduates for big business, left-wing, oppositional and anti-war voices are increasingly under attack by university managements working with the student unions.

In fighting against the assault on its club at Macquarie University, the IYSSE is taking a stand in defence of the democratic rights of all students and youth to oppose growing social inequality and the threat of nuclear catastrophe under the capitalist system. The IYSSE's petition ends: "We demand an end to the de facto ban on the IYSSE, the immediate affiliation of its club and full democratic rights for students."

Add your voice to this petition, and share it with your friends, family, classmates and co-workers. Join the IYSSE's fight against the political censorship at Macquarie University as part of the struggle against the assault on democratic rights and for the building of an international anti-war movement.

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_ysse.macquarie@gmail.com.

Get in touch with the IYSSE to find out how you can be involved:

Email: iysseaus@gmail.com

Facebook: facebook.com/IYSSEaustralia

Twitter: @IysseA

Instagram: @iysse.aus



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