

# Vote No to the union sellout at Macquarie University!

The NTEU's "in-principle" agreement was pushed through undemocratically. Demand at least seven days to read and discuss the full enterprise agreement!

**Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee**  
**16 August 2023**

At a totally undemocratic members' meeting at Sydney's Macquarie University on August 3, National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) officials and branch representatives sowed as much confusion as possible to push through a motion to accept a rotten "in-principle" enterprise agreement with management.

Union officeholders point blank opposed our Rank-and-File Committee motion that members must have the basic democratic right to vote on the full agreement after being given at least seven days to properly consider and debate all the hidden details.

An August 8 NTEU email to all staff falsely claimed that the August 3 meeting "resoundingly endorsed" its "in-principle" agreement. The vote rushed through in the meeting's dying minutes was 141 for, 25 against, with many abstentions. The motion passed was "conditional" on a further NTEU members' meeting in "approximately two weeks" to endorse the final written text, a decision which the NTEU is now trying to circumvent. Two weeks on, the proposed agreement has not been circulated to members.

The motion was only passed after the NTEU representatives shut the discussion down, preventing many people from speaking against the sellout, including an angry young casual academic and Rank-and-File Committee member Carolyn Kennett.

A "pleased" chief people officer, David Ward, sent out an all-staff email on August 10 announcing that the NTEU and CPSU "are now arranging for formal endorsement of the new agreements through their

official approval processes." He said staff would only receive a copy of the full document on August 21, with a formal ballot to start on August 28.

The unions' official approval processes involve sending the full agreement to their national offices for legal checks rather than to members to read the fine detail. The unions' timetable, in partnership with management, gives no time for members to properly review the fine print.

At the August 3 meeting, NTEU representatives insisted that the deal they had bargained for was "good." This is clearly false. Here are the main facts:

- The pay offer, averaging just over 3 percent per annum until 2026, is a pay cut of thousands of dollars a year in the face of the soaring cost-of-living.
- The so-called restrictions on change proposals pave the way for ongoing restructuring. A limit of one change proposal per two years—and more in "exceptional circumstances"—means staff members could face retrenchment at least every two years.
- There are no limits on calls for so-called voluntary redundancies.
- Management's offer of 70 new permanent positions does not address the ongoing casualisation at the university, which runs into the thousands. Moreover, not a single current casual may actually get a job: it's all up to management to pick and choose.
- Workload committees will still be dominated by management appointees.
- The only "flexibility" in workloads is for management to "deploy resources effectively and

efficiently.” That is, flexibility for management, not staff.

The Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee urges NTEU members to reject the union’s sellout. We demand a meeting of members to vote on the full agreement, with members having at least a week to examine and discuss it.

Throughout the August 3 meeting, NTEU representatives tried to intimidate members by saying that if they rejected the deal, management could invoke the new “intractable” dispute provisions of the Albanese government’s workplace relations legislation. That would allow the pro-employer Fair Work Commission tribunal to impose an arbitrated outcome.

This underscores the union’s role, like all the trade unions, in policing the anti-strike laws that the Labor government has just reinforced.

The NTEU now boasts of striking 17 agreements at individual universities in the current round of enterprise bargaining. In every case, these impose sub-inflationary pay deals, facilitate further pro-corporate restructuring and allow mass casualisation to continue. They also open the floodgates for new teaching-focused roles and greater exploitation of low-paid post-graduate instructors.

This is completely in line with the agenda of the Labor government. It is still starving universities of funds and demanding, via its Universities Accord review, that they fully subordinate their teaching and research to the requirements of the corporate elite and the AUKUS military preparations for war.

The only alternative is a unified struggle across the sector against this offensive, reaching out to other workers, including teachers and healthcare workers, for support and joint action. As the basis for this struggle, we advocate the initial demands contained in our founding statement. These include:

- pay increases surpassing inflation to compensate for past losses
- the reinstatement of all jobs eliminated by decades of funding cuts and during the COVID-19 pandemic
  - secure employment for all casualised university workers who want it
  - the right to conduct teaching and research that is not dominated by the profit demands of corporate interests, government interference or the needs of the military apparatus.

If you agree with these demands, join our committee.

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