

Open letter to the Vice Chancellor

End political censorship at Macquarie University! Affiliate the IYSSE!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Macquarie University)
25 August 2023

To Vice Chancellor Professor S. Bruce Dowton,

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) is writing to you to demand the affiliation of our club at Macquarie University, which has been blocked despite having fulfilled all the requirements months ago.

On May 3, the IYSSE held a successful Annual General Meeting to reaffiliate our club. The IYSSE had previously been a registered club for 12 years, before being removed in a bureaucratic, anti-democratic cull in 2022 that saw the elimination of 45 percent of clubs.

In response to our successful AGM this year, Paul McKay of Macquarie University management's Student Engagement, Inclusion & Belonging division wrote on May 29 to inform the IYSSE that it would not be affiliated. The decision was made on the false grounds that the IYSSE shares "the same aim and purpose" as the Macquarie Socialists—a club linked to the pseudo-left, pro-imperialist Socialist Alternative.

The IYSSE has thoroughly exposed the fraudulence of this assertion. Macquarie Socialists themselves have publicly stated that they "reject the claim that we share the same aim and purpose as IYSSE."

No organisation outside university management asserts that the IYSSE and Macquarie Socialists share the same aims and purpose. The false grounds for the refusal to affiliate the IYSSE have been thoroughly refuted, yet university management maintains its block on our affiliation and has erected a wall of silence in the face of the IYSSE's exposures.

McKay responded to the IYSSE's exposure of the lying pretence used to block the club's affiliation by stating that "the application has been closed."

The IYSSE launched a campaign against this

censorship in May. Nearly 600 have signed a petition against the attack on our club.

Dozens of Australian youth, academics, Macquarie University researchers and students and alumni, US high school students, and IYSSE chapters internationally have submitted powerful letters protesting the university's block on the IYSSE. The letters have simply been ignored by the Student Engagement department, in a move that not only speaks to a contempt for democratic rights, but that also undermines the standing of Macquarie University in Australia and internationally.

In his last email, dismissing the IYSSE, McKay instructed it to check "the outcome of your formal complaint for additional details." But the complaint, submitted by the IYSSE to the relevant university body, has met with a similar response.

According to Macquarie University's Complaints, Appeals and Discipline division's online information, formal complaints result in an initial assessment "within **20 days** of lodging your complaint regarding next steps."

More than 70 days after the IYSSE lodged a complaint, we have received no "next steps."

Students are entitled to ask: does this complaints department even exist? Does it have employees? If so, what exactly do they do? Is its purpose to investigate and address complaints, where appropriate, or to ignore, stymie and block them until the complainant goes away in discouragement?

That at least two university bodies, which are nominally separate, are working in tandem to stonewall the IYSSE raises the question as to whether this political censorship is university policy.

Such a policy of political censorship would contradict Macquarie University's Ethics Statement which claims the university is committed to the promotion of "equality of opportunity", acting "justly", and holding university members "accountable."

It is beholden upon you, therefore, to clarify this situation. Either Macquarie University supports political censorship, and its statements about "inclusion" and "equality" are a sham aimed at drumming up enrolments. Or you adhere to basic civil liberties and will affiliate our club forthwith.

In addition, basic issues of transparency, which the university also claims to uphold, are at stake.

We demand to know which members of Macquarie University management have been involved in discussions on the IYSSE's affiliation. Have any members of the university executive, including you, Vice Chancellor Dowton, been involved in these discussions?

Less than two months before the university barred the IYSSE, we 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.

What were the discussions in the university management around the IYSSE's April 4 meeting?

That meeting was part of an international series organised by the IYSSE warning of the escalating threat of a nuclear third world war. In every country, the meetings have come under attack from far-right, nationalist forces.

In this context, the IYSSE has provided an explanation for Macquarie University's censorship: it is an attempt to shut down the only organisation advancing an anti-war perspective, under conditions of an explosion of militarism threatening a global catastrophe.

As the IYSSE has explained, the conflict in Ukraine is a US-NATO proxy war against Russia. The war was stoked and prepared by Washington, which is exploiting it to advance the longstanding aim of inflicting a catastrophic defeat on Russia. This is viewed as an essential step in the drive to war against China, which has been identified as the chief obstacle to US global dominance.

The IYSSE opposes the reactionary capitalist oligarchy in Russia, along with the Stalinist regime that

long ago restored the profit system in China. We advance an independent, socialist perspective based upon the unity of the working class in a struggle against the source of war, the capitalist system itself.

The ruling elites know that given a fair hearing, such a perspective can win substantial support, as it has at key turning points in history before. That is why the IYSSE has come under attack.

The Macquarie University leadership must immediately rescind its political censorship and affiliate the IYSSE. Failure to do so, or to reply in a timely fashion to this email, can only be interpreted by students as a tacit admission that our explanation for your refusal to affiliate the IYSSE is accurate.

Sincerely,

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