

Australia: University of Newcastle students demand affiliation of IYSSE at Sydney's Macquarie University

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (University of Newcastle)
5 September 2023

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at the University of Newcastle (UoN) in regional Australia, condemns management's ongoing refusal to affiliate our sister club at Sydney's Macquarie University.

Management's claim that the IYSSE shares the "same aims and purpose" as the Macquarie Socialists, the student and youth organisation of the pseudo-left Socialist Alternative, is false and it knows it. As Macquarie Socialists themselves admit, the IYSSE, which is the student and youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party, has a long record of unbridgeable political differences with Socialist Alternative.

The IYSSE club at Macquarie University has met all the official affiliation requirements.

There is no other conclusion than that university management's decision is a politically targeted attack on the IYSSE as the only socialist, anti-war club on campus. Macquarie University management has played a nefarious role in disaffiliating student associations, as demonstrated last year's wrecking operation which culled 67 clubs including the IYSSE.

Blocking the IYSSE's reaffiliation isn't just an attack on the club's democratic rights, it is an affront to the rights of all students to establish clubs and societies of their choosing. By effectively banning the IYSSE, management is attempting to prevent students and youth from accessing a genuine revolutionary socialist program and anti-war perspective.

All other political tendencies on campus line up behind the braying by capitalist governments and the corporate media to escalate the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine which threatens nuclear catastrophe.

Attempts to silence and block the IYSSE on campuses around the world—including in Australia, Germany, New

Zealand, Canada and the US—point to nervousness and concerns within the state that the IYSSE's anti-war perspective is connecting with the growing radicalisation of billions of young people globally.

The IYSSE has opposed efforts by university management and the student associations at UoN to politically censor student clubs and activities.

In 2014, the IYSSE led a campaign opposing efforts by the UoN administration to prevent political clubs, including the IYSSE, from hosting "political members" on campus during orientation weeks. This was discriminatory attack on the democratic rights of clubs associated with political parties was based on the former Labor government's reactionary Students Services and Amenities Fee legislation.

If allowed to stand, this regulation would have blocked students and clubs from holding lectures, demonstrations and other political events on campus.

These tendencies were continued under the University of Newcastle Student Association (UNSA) which was established as the arm of university management to govern student affairs in 2020.

UNSA introduced new guidelines for clubs and societies that barred student clubs from "proselytization" in 2021. The rules assert that clubs cannot attempt to persuade a student to change their beliefs—a foundation for the democratic right to a free and open discussion of politics, history, current affairs, ideology and philosophy and every area of cultural and intellectual interest.

Macquarie University's attempts to bar the IYSSE reflect the transformation of universities into pro-war hubs churning out job-ready graduates for the profit-interests of big business. This trend is incompatible with universities being centres for free and open discussion, particularly on questions of politics, social issues,

philosophy and culture.

UNSA has also acted as public relations body for the university administration, hosting meetings in 2021 to “justify” course cuts and university restructuring to students who are overwhelmingly opposed to the gutting of university courses.

Approximately 500 University of Newcastle casual staff lost their jobs during 2020 and 2021, and a quarter of courses were axed in the restructuring.

The IYSSE led the opposition the UNSA’s fundamental attacks on democratic rights and the university administrations’ attempts to subvert the intellectual and cultural traditions of university campuses.

Across Australia, the increasingly corporatised universities are being integrated into the military-industrial complex.

UoN Vice Chancellor Alex Zelinsky was former Australian Chief Defence Scientist from 2012 to 2018. He played a prominent role in deepening the university sector’s partnerships with the defence industry as part of Australia’s role in US-led war preparations against China in the Indo-Pacific region.

The university has signed industry partnerships with Lockheed Martin, the world’s largest weapons manufacturer, and run virtual lecture series for defence engineering students and simulation training for air force pilots.

While the IYSSE has led the fight against the militarisation of universities, the pro-war pseudo-left Macquarie Socialists slander the IYSSE as “sectarian” in an attempt to provide management ammunition to further prevent its affiliation. Similar slander was levelled against the IYSSE at UoN late last year by the pseudo-left UoN Socialists.

Such comments highlight the right-wing nature of the fake left and the importance of the IYSSE’s presence on the campuses as the only genuine anti-war, socialist revolutionary club.

The UoN IYSSE passed a resolution at one of its club meetings which stated: “Everyday in our work on the campuses, we are in a political battle against the fake left who have nothing to do with socialism. These nationalist organisations advance the interests of a privileged layer of the upper middle class, including by defending the corporatised trade union bureaucracy against workers and supporting US-led imperialist wars.”

It further stressed that, if Macquarie University’s blatant act of political censorship is allowed to stand, it would set a dangerous precedent for the silencing of anti-

war and left-wing voices on campus.

The resolution concluded: “We resolve to develop an active and broad campaign to fight for the overturning of the decision to block our affiliation at Macquarie University as part of the broader struggle for freedom of speech on and off campus.”

The IYSSE at UoN demands that management reverse its decision and immediately affiliate the IYSSE.

The IYSSE launched a campaign against the censorship at Macquarie University. More than 600 people have signed a petition against the attack on our club. Add your voice today!

The Macquarie University IYSSE is hosting a meeting titled, “End political censorship at Macquarie University! Affiliate the IYSSE!” on September 7:

Date: Thursday, 7 September

Time: 5:00 p.m. (AEST)

Room: 14SCO T5 Lecture Theatre, Macquarie University

Or participate in the online livestream via Zoom. Register at this link.

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.

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



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact