

IYSSE at University of Melbourne holds successful meeting to re-establish club

Our reporters
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Australia's University of Melbourne held a successful Inaugural General Meeting (IGM) on October 5. The IYSSE had previously been affiliated on campus between 2016 and 2022, before being undemocratically disaffiliated by the student union a year ago.

The meeting to reestablish the club was attended by 30 students in-person and online, surpassing the 20 required to reach quorum. It unanimously adopted the IYSSE club aims to advance a socialist and anti-war perspective on campus. The meeting is a significant development in the IYSSE's international fight to establish a global anti-war movement of youth and students.

Reestablishing the IYSSE's University of Melbourne club is the product of a sustained political campaign among the students on campus.

Over recent weeks, IYSSE members and supporters have spoken with hundreds of students at the university. The IYSSE won support for its opposition to the US-NATO imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine, US-led preparations for war against China in the Asia-Pacific, and the promotion of divisive, racist identity politics by the Australian political establishment in the Voice referendum.

Internationally, the IYSSE has come under attack precisely for its principled stance against imperialist war. University administrations in several countries have worked hand-in-glove with governments and far-right, Ukrainian nationalist forces to try and prevent the IYSSE from elaborating an anti-war, internationalist perspective among students.

The concern among the ruling elite is that the socialist perspective of the IYSSE will win a hearing among broad layers of youth who oppose war and the social crisis borne out of the crisis of the capitalist profit system.

In Australia, the attacks against the IYSSE saw its clubs anti-democratically disaffiliated last year by the student union at the University of Melbourne and the university administration at Macquarie University in Sydney. At Macquarie University, management is engaged in open political censorship of the IYSSE, refusing to reaffiliate the

club for over five months based on false claims.

The October 5 IGM was titled "Fight the danger of nuclear world war! Build the international anti-war movement!" It opened with the unanimous passing of a resolution calling for the immediate and unconditional release of courageous, anti-war journalist and WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

IYSSE club president-elect Morgan Peach delivered a report examining two interconnected political developments: the danger of nuclear war and the Australian Labor government's Voice referendum.

"At first, these may not seem to be related issues," Peach said. He went on to describe the reactionary character of the Voice referendum, with the Yes and No camps representing two factions of the Australian ruling class.

The Voice's aim, he explained, is not "to resolve the horrendous conditions facing the indigenous working class and youth. Instead, it will further bolster a privileged Aboriginal elite, with connections to government and big business, and it will divide the working class along racial lines."

The report also outlined the Albanese Labor government's deepening integration into the US-led drive to war with China, carried out behind the backs of the population.

"There was no referendum on any of these decisions, which threaten a nuclear world war," Peach said. "The Voice must be assessed within this context. It is being advanced to pursue the geo-strategic aims of the Labor government's ever-expanding involvement in US war plans against Russia and China."

He concluded by elaborating the Socialist Equality Party's call for an active boycott of the referendum. As with the IYSSE's principled opposition to the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the drive to war with China, the active boycott charts an independent path for the development of a movement of the working class and youth against war, poverty, and their source: the capitalist profit system.

This report provoked a lively discussion involving several of the club's student members. Questions were raised on the Marxist conception that class is the fundamental division in

society, the origins of racism, the growth of the far-right globally, as well as broader historical and theoretical issues related to the Russian Revolution and the concept of objective truth in opposition to reactionary postmodernist subjectivism.

Sharukh, an international student from India doing a PhD, said he agreed with “the position that war itself is a symptom of capitalism, and that Russia is reacting to the imperialism of the US and Europe.”

Sharukh also “enjoyed the IYSSE’s stance on objective truth, the fact that it is not a postmodernist student organisation. This aspect resonated with me. I agreed with what one speaker said about Marxists defending the idea of objectivity over personal narratives and individualism.”

Daniel, a fine arts student and club secretary, said he had been reading the WSWs for over a year. “When I heard about the IYSSE’s campaign to restart their club at Melbourne Uni, I wanted to get involved,” he said.

Daniel commented on the reaffiliation of the IYSSE under conditions of a rapid militarisation in Australia. “It pushes against that pro-war narrative, it helps create an active voice against that among students and young people. It’ll help to establish a real alternative for students to the whole political setup. It’s so easy as a student to think that you can’t have an impact on the situation, and that’s what the IYSSE is trying to change.”

On the war in Ukraine, Daniel said, “The global scale of the war’s impact is undeniable: economically of course, but it’s also heating up the political crises worldwide, with each government aligning itself with the different forces. War won’t solve the issues facing the Ukrainian people, it’s not about national liberation.

“War is such an inherent feature of the capitalist system of nations. It enforces this national identity of ‘serving your country’ and resenting other nations. But really it comes from the tension between the government and the population within a nation. And it’s the working class who is sent to the battlefields.”

Miranda, a psychology student who was elected club treasurer, said, “It was great to see so many students wanting to engage with our club, with socialism and the issues we talk about, on a very deep level. It’s really important that we have a club up and running again.”

On the discussion surrounding the Voice referendum, Miranda said, “The Yes vote is being pushed very heavily on campus. Students are definitely feeling that pressure. The discussion touched on issues of identity politics, which I was influenced by before meeting the IYSSE. It was good that we could present our perspective to students.

“The way we were disaffiliated last year was so undemocratic. It was an act of political censorship pure and

simple. To be able to fight against that is very important. We are genuinely the only anti-war socialist club on campus, and I think that’s so needed at a time when we’re moving closer towards risks like nuclear war.

“Marxism has been proven to have an objectively viable action to truly prevent war and fight against capitalism. That solution to war involves political discussion with students. The fact we can do that now at Melbourne Uni is very important.”

The club president Morgan Peach told the WSWs, “The re-establishment of our club here is real achievement, given that the IYSSE is under attack worldwide, from Germany and Canada to Sydney’s Macquarie University. University managements recognise that the IYSSE alone poses a threat to their agenda of transforming institutions of learning into militaristic, pro-war nerve centres. They see that we have the potential to mobilise students against this agenda.

“The pseudo-left clubs, by contrast, have enjoyed a comfortable existence on campus because, like the capitalist parties and pro-corporate trade unions for whom they provide cover, they are pro-war, pro-imperialist organisations.

“We were disaffiliated last year when the student union seized on a minor clerical error to falsely claim that we weren’t an active club. This meeting and the response we won from students disprove that, as does our six-year history at the uni since affiliating in 2016. The IYSSE will now be able to continue its work in developing socialist consciousness among students and helping to build an international anti-war movement.”



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