

# Australia: Macquarie University meeting issues strong call to oppose Zionist witch hunt against Randa Abdel-Fattah

**Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee**  
**21 February 2025**

A lunchtime meeting of some 70 educators, students and workers organised by the Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee on Thursday made a powerful call for a campaign throughout the universities and the working class as a whole for the defence of Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah, a Macquarie University academic, and all the others being vilified as antisemitic for opposing the US-backed Israeli genocide in Palestine.

After two reports from rank-and-file committee members and a lively discussion, the participants, who included staff and students from Macquarie University, Western Sydney University and others around Australia and New Zealand, voted unanimously for this resolution:

This public meeting convened by the Macquarie University Rank-and-File Committee opposes the victimisation and witch hunt of anti-genocide activist Randa Abdel-Fattah and calls for a campaign throughout the universities and the working class against it.

The latest attacks on Abdel-Fattah are aimed at rescinding her research grant and sacking her from Macquarie University and we demand that no such action be taken. The harassment is being led by the Murdoch media and Zionist lobby groups, fully endorsed by the Albanese government. Abdel-Fattah, like others who oppose the genocide in Gaza, is being bullied and slandered as being antisemitic for speaking out in defence of the Palestinian people.

The attack on Abdel-Fattah is not confined to one academic. It is aimed at silencing any opposition to the US-Israeli mass killings, the Labor government's support for the genocide and the Trump administration's criminal plan to ethnically cleanse Palestine.

We call on educators, students and workers to pass similar resolutions defending Abdel-Fattah, the right to free speech and democratic rights, including academic freedom.

Addressing the meeting, Carolyn Kennett, a Macquarie University staff member and a founding member of the Macquarie Rank-and-File Committee, explained: "The attacks on Abdel-Fattah have been spearheaded by the Murdoch media, which has conducted a campaign of bullying and harassment against anti-genocide voices, slandering them as antisemitic. These attacks have now been taken up by the

federal Labor government...

"Under pressure from the Zionist lobby, Macquarie University management has again initiated an investigation into whether Abdel-Fattah has breached the university's code of conduct."

Kennett denounced Labor's moves against Abdel-Fattah, which include Education Minister Jason Clare asking the Australian Research Council (ARC) to investigate her on trumped-up charges of breaching the rules for her current research grant, and Labor MP Josh Burns, who chaired a parliamentary "antisemitism in Universities" inquiry, demanding to know why Macquarie University had not already sacked her.

Kennett explained: "The political interference by Labor sends a chilling message. Such measures could be used against any university research which is deemed not to be in the interests of Australian capitalism and the bipartisan Labor and Liberal-National Coalition alignment behind US militarism."

These developments had to be seen, Kennett said, in the context of the cuts to funding to universities through attacks on international students, and the alignment of universities more fully with the demands of big business and the military, as set out in the Albanese government's Universities Accord.

Kennett said numerous other academics had also been targeted, but the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) had not made a single statement in defence of anti-genocide academics.

Kennett's full report can be viewed on youtube.

Speaking on behalf of the Western Sydney University (WSU) Rank-and-File Committee, Mike Head said this campaign was an important test case for the defence of all the university staff and students, as well as journalists, who are being smeared and victimised as antisemites for opposing the barbaric US-led Israeli genocide and now open ethnic cleansing in Palestine.

There was growing opposition, as shown by an online petition, signed by more than 6,200 people, demanding that Clare "immediately retract his directive for an investigation into Dr. Randa Abdel-Fattah's research" and an open letter, signed by over 700 academics, including more than 50 from Macquarie University, condemning Clare's intervention.

"We welcome these developments. They indicate the depth of hostility to the attack on fundamental democratic rights and the underlying agenda, now being spearheaded by the fascistic Trump White House and all those aligning themselves with it, including the Albanese Labor government.

"Such petitions, statements and open letters are important, but we

must be frank. Appeals to the Labor government and authorities such as the ARC will not defeat this offensive.

“To defend Abdel-Fattah, and defeat the wider threat to free speech and basic democratic rights, requires a broader political fight throughout the universities and the working class as a whole against all those pursuing the witch hunt, and that includes the Albanese government.

“Clare’s intervention is not a mistake or an aberration. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and state Labor leaders have repeatedly equated anti-genocide dissent with antisemitism and called for the shutting down of student encampments and other anti-genocide protests.”

Head warned: “Over the past week, the wider sweep of this assault was laid bare by the wall-to-wall witch hunt, led by Albanese in parliament, against two Bankstown Hospital nurses who were provoked by an Israeli agent. That was followed by the exposure of a similar, but failed provocation at the Cairo Takeaway café in Newtown.

“As these developments show, it is not just academics who are threatened by this orchestrated campaign against a supposed wave of antisemitism. Workers are also being targeted.

“In opposing the genocide, and the witch hunt by the government and the corporate media, anger and emotion are not enough. We have to face up to the source of this offensive.

“For a start, the Labor government is now working closely with Trump. The Labor Party is totally committed to US militarism, including the AUKUS pact preparations for war against China.”

Head said the Albanese government had refused to even comment on, let alone oppose, Trump’s fascistic agenda, which included blatantly calling for Gaza to be “cleaned” of its Palestinian population in order to make way for US control and plunder.

Head said the NTEU leaders had repeatedly blocked rank-and-file committee calls for unified action against the suppression of dissent at universities, along with job destruction, course closures and pro-corporate restructuring.

At WSU, the rank-and-file committee, not the NTEU, was fighting the pro-business restructuring of WSU College. “This restructuring is setting a shocking sector-wide precedent by eliminating jobs via a vicious ‘spill and fill’ process, gutting arts and humanities courses and introducing ‘block mode’ teaching, cramming entire subjects into four-week periods.”

Head said rank-and-file committees need to be formed everywhere, to link up with workers in Australia and worldwide through the International Workers’ Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

“This is part of a broader necessary struggle against capitalism itself and its program of ever-greater corporate wealth and turn to war and Trump-style dictatorial rule. It means a fight to reorganise society along genuinely democratic and egalitarian, that is socialist, lines in the interests of humanity, not the corporate ruling class.”

Watch Head’s report in full on youtube.

There were numerous comments and questions. In-person participants in the meeting expressed their strong support for the resolution, as did online participants. One wrote: “Zionism only saw the light of day, because it intersected with the strategic interests of imperialism. Jews were interested in assimilating into the societies in which they functioned. Not the creation of a separate state.”

Another pointed out that “artistic expression is under attack, with Creative Australia rescinding the appointment of Khaled Sabsabi and Michael Dagistino to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale.”

The Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand sent greetings: “This is an extremely important meeting and campaign in defence of free speech, and for the fight against genocide. The role of the union apparatus is disgraceful and it is in keeping with their role for the past year and a half in blocking any real opposition to genocide and war. To defend democratic rights of workers from the escalating assault by the ruling class, rank-and-file committees are urgently needed.”

A Macquarie University academic expressed agreement with the resolution and asked what concrete steps were proposed in the campaign.

In response, Head said the Committee for Public Education, the rank-and-file educators’ network established by the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), was planning the broadest possible campaign throughout the working class. He urged attendees to join and expand the campaign. “Already at Footscray High School there has been an important resolution in defence of Abdel-Fattah.”

SEP national secretary Cheryl Crisp spoke on the need for a clear political perspective. “Take the tragic experience of the Bankstown nurses. They were entrapped, goaded and baited into making comments...

“What is needed is a socialist perspective. That’s what those two nurses in Bankstown lacked. And they are paying a terrible price for it. And that is the lesson: All of us have to really fight to convey, to teach, to convince students, academics, doctors, nurses and the working class as a whole to overcome what is a fascist president in the United States, a fascist government in Israel.

“There are increasing turns to fascism by the ruling class. There has got to be an alternative perspective. And that’s a socialist perspective.”

Crisp’s contribution can be seen in full on youtube.

The meeting concluded by making an appeal for educators and students to join or form rank-and-file committees to take forward the campaign against the assault on Abdel-Fattah, and the right to free speech, and the suppression of dissent against the underlying program of war and austerity.

To join the campaign or send statements of support, email the committee at [macquarierfc@gmail.com](mailto:macquarierfc@gmail.com), or the Committee for Public Education (CFPE), the rank-and-file educators’ network, at [cfpe.aus@gmail.com](mailto:cfpe.aus@gmail.com).



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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