

Strong union response needed



Management attacking work rights and intellectual freedom

Sydney University management are further putting the boot into staff, with a raft of new anti-democratic policies, along with their usual fare of wage theft, contract denials, and change plans (despite the pause).

The proposed policy changes foreshadowed by the email from the Provost in January constitute a serious threat to intellectual freedom and freedom of speech campus as a whole, and the principles of union organisation.

We urge members to support the BC motion rejecting the proposed anti-democratic policy suite. More importantly, we call on all staff to make their most of their free speech while they can, and openly defy the proposed policy changes by doing the following:

- Welcoming and facilitating student lecture announcements
- Holding a banner at the National Day of Action for Palestine on March 26th.
- Sending an email to colleagues about joining the union
- Putting up an NTEU flag, Palestinian flag, rainbow flag, trans flag in your local area.

All these actions could be banned under management's proposed policy. A new announcement on the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism also threatens to ban criticism of the "right" of the state of Israel to exist.

✓Support the Branch Committee Motion
And support member motions:
✓ Solidarity with Randa Abdel-Fattah
✓ Condemn the attack on Khaled Sabsabi
✓ Endorse the National Day of Action in solidarity with Palestine on March 26th

These policies are inherently connected to our ability to stand against current attacks such as escalating wage theft, casual contract denials, and change management. Scrawling "end wage theft" on a banner, or emailing colleagues about the criminalisation of wage theft, are not excised from the proposed policies. Local organisation around these issues, as described in the report inside, are the critical counter-weight to management's anti-worker agenda.

The upcoming federal election risks echoing some of the dangerous politics of Donald Trump. The only way to keep ourselves safe and to fight back against the cuts and repression is to rally for our rights, stop management cuts, and to build the union organisation we will need no matter who wins at the election.

Stay in touch →
and get involved!



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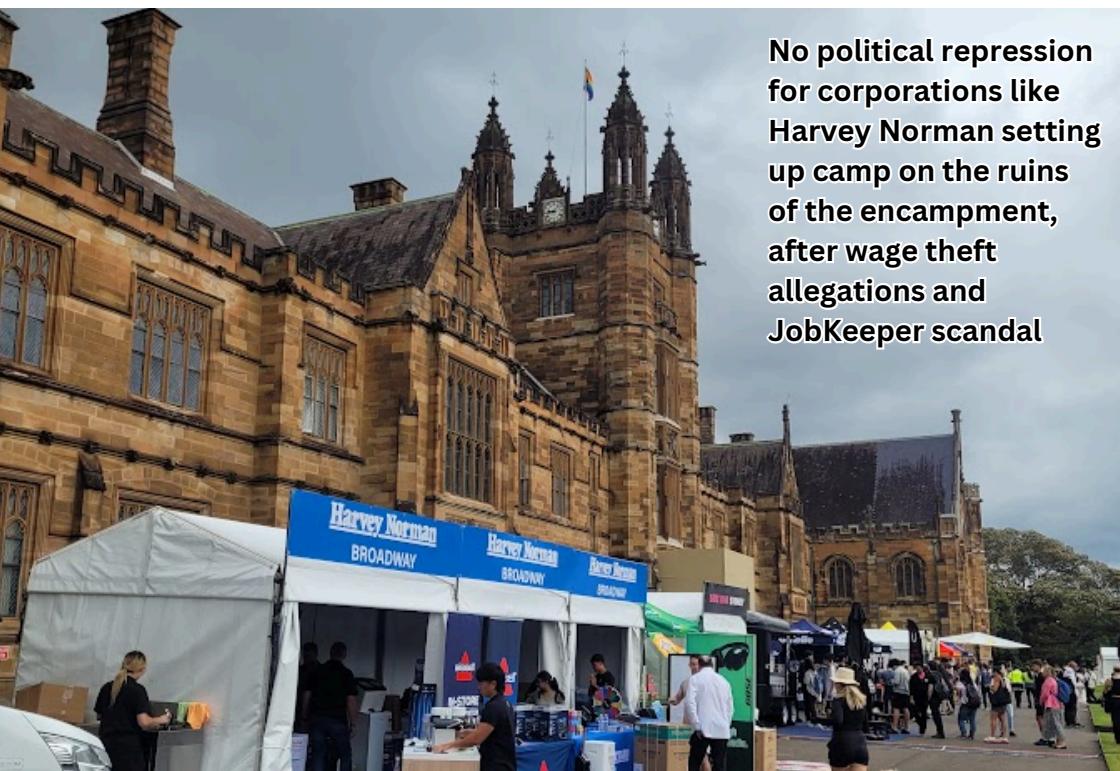
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Don't let moral panic turn into political repression

Nick Riemer

In January, while almost everyone was still on holiday, management announced their intention to impose even more draconian restrictions on free expression on campus than had already been introduced under the Campus Access Policy. This policy had already been criticised by major Australian human rights and civil liberties organisations, including Amnesty International and the NSW Council for Civil Liberties, for violating fundamental rights. This didn't stop the Provost from flagging her desire to introduce even tighter restrictions on staff and students' ability to express their opinions on campus. Under the policies, flags, banners, posters, broadcast emails, along with demonstrations and collective statements of opinion, would all be severely repressed.

Only a few years ago, the restrictions on free speech currently proposed by management would have seemed impossible. But the solidarity encampment established by students at the university last year in response to Israel's genocide in Gaza changed everything. The encampments here and across the country propelled the Gaza genocide, and its domestic implications, to the front of the news cycle, and constituted one of the most powerful demonstrations of pro-Palestine, antiracist politics that had ever been witnessed in this country. This enraged official pro-Israel lobby organisations, who launched a concerted campaign to slur Palestine supporters as antisemites, and to outlaw expressions of opposition to genocide and support for Palestinian rights wherever they emerge. This campaign is now threatening democratic freedoms for everyone, not just Palestine supporters. It must be resisted.



No political repression for corporations like Harvey Norman setting up camp on the ruins of the encampment, after wage theft allegations and JobKeeper scandal

Australian politicians, like those throughout the global north, are in the grip of an extraordinary moral panic about protest. Environment protesters were the first targets; now, the crackdown is leading them to silence and criminalize Palestine supporters too. This authoritarian fever dream has taken hold of social elites, including the leadership of the university. The Sydney Theatre Company, The National Gallery of Australia and the NSW Department of Education are just some of the organisations that have effectively criminalized support for Palestine, even to the extent of banning the keffiyeh, the common Palestinian scarf. Now, Mark Scott and Annamarie Jagose want the University of Sydney to follow suit.

The proposed restrictions on political expression on campus coincide with a chilling attack on the right to protest by the NSW state government, adopted in recent weeks. They are part of an authoritarian, neo-fascist political dynamic sweeping the globe, that embraces Trump, the far-right in power in much of Europe, Javier Milei in Argentina, Dutton, or the NSW premier Chris Minns. The University of Sydney is not immune from this dynamic. Universities must be places where critique and protest can be freely expressed. It is disgraceful that the Vice-Chancellor, Provost and other university leaders are so unprincipled that they are quite prepared to abolish fundamental democratic freedoms. In capitulating to opportunistic politicians and the supporters of the Israeli genocide, they achieve no other purpose than signalling their own compliance and lack of backbone – to the serious detriment of staff, students, unions, and anyone who believes in a free society.

Why is USyd denying Casual contracts?

Management's latest attack on casual staff

At least 20 casual academics in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the School of Medical Sciences have been informed that their contracts would not be approved for Semester 1. Despite previous assurances of work by unit coordinators and supervisors, casuals have been thrown out of work just two weeks before semester—some losing all work, and others facing reduced workload.

All of the casual staff denied work have many years of teaching experience and expertise in their respective fields, including holding PhDs. Denying them work is not only a loss for these casuals, but also a loss for students who deserve qualified and experienced teachers.

Some casual staff were told by management that they were denied work in favour of HDR students, to help train another 'generation' of researchers. Perversely, however, the effect of this policy is to put that generation onto a short-lived treadmill, where any experience gained in teaching becomes a punishment used to deny them work in the future. This pushes casual staff further away from ongoing employment in the academy, and intensifies pre-existing inequalities in the workforce. The effect of removing income from long-term casual staff will be that those who don't require income, those with preexisting privilege or external supports, will be those who go on to ongoing employment at the university.

Markela Panegyres

This flies in the face of the Enterprise Agreement requirement for merit-based, transparent, competitive hiring practices. More insidiously, management is clearly using these new hiring practices to avoid and prevent casual staff conversions, including under the EA and the [Closing the Loopholes Legislation](#). Regular and systematic work and high teaching workloads can trigger conversions under Clauses 82 and 123, and work cannot be rearranged to avoid these obligations.

We are demanding the university reinstate the expected contracts for the group of long-term casuals in FASS and SOMS. It is highly likely that this has also happened in other areas of the university, and if so the contracts for these other casuals should also be reinstated.

The hiring process for casuals must be rectified so that it is fair and transparent, honouring the experience and commitment of long term casuals, while also providing for the professional development of HDRs.

But management won't meet these demands unless we fight for it, so if you are a long-term casual who has been denied work, please get in touch so that we can collectively work out how to fight for our jobs and for fair hiring practices.

Are you a long-term casual who has been denied work for this semester? If so please email the NTEU casuals representative and RAFA member Markela Panegyres: markelapanegyres@gmail.com

BDS win! SCA cuts ties with Israeli institution Bezalel

Matte Rochford

At a staff meeting earlier this month, Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) directors announced the end of the exchange program between SCA and Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Israel.

This is the result of decades of awareness raising, debate and protest at this University, arguing to cut the ties with Israeli academic institutions.

With Israel's invasion of Gaza in October 2023, protests erupted worldwide including here on campus with intense campaigning, protests, and a student encampment supported by staff – culminating in both an NTEU mass members' meeting, and a Student General Meeting voting overwhelmingly for an academic boycott of Israeli institutions.

USyd Management has denied that campaigning played any role in the decision to end the exchange with Bezalel, saying that students had not accessed the program since 2015 and that the program was simply no longer viable. The very unpopularity of the exchange reveals the growing recognition about the true nature of Israel's apartheid state, coinciding with the political debates over the

academic boycott during 2014 amongst students and staff at USyd.

After learning the program was up for mandatory renegotiation in early 2025, an open letter gathered more than 200 signatures of SCA students, staff and supporters. Activists spread the word about the exchange program by walking through the SCA building on campus and approaching students and staff from the faculty. After several smaller rallies, students and staff organised a speak out and mass leafleting at the SCA grad show (the art school's centrepiece exhibition) late last year. Almost every attendee took a leaflet or heard a speech about the exchange program with Bezalel as they entered the gallery.

SCA now joins a host of other international arts institutions to cut ties with Bezalel. We should celebrate this as a step forward for efforts to cut all ties with Israel across university campuses.

The next targets for our campaign are the Technion Exchange Scholarship for medical students to go to Technion – Israel Institute for Technology, and the OLE exchange programs with Hebrew University called 'Experience Israel'. A National Day of Action called by NTEU for Palestine is set for Wednesday, 26 March - join us!

Where to now for the BDS campaign at USyd?

Markela Panegyres

USyd NTEU members last year in May voted overwhelmingly in favour of a resolution that called on management to cut ties with all organisations that enable genocide in Gaza, including all Israeli universities. It also called on management to cut its ties with the weapons industry and militaries in general.

We now need to turn this position into concrete action. Collectively we can do this. We should not be deterred by the repression meted out on pro-Palestinian staff and students.

This year the BDS movement at USyd has already had a win (see inside). **But many other ties remain.**

USyd has at least **three major remaining student exchange partnerships** with the following Israeli institutions:

- Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- Tel Aviv University
- Technion - Israel Institute of Technology.

USyd also has many partnerships with the military-industrial complex including, but not limited to:

- Research contracts with the Commonwealth Department of Defence, the United States Department of Defense, the US Office of Naval Research, the US Army Research Office Laboratory for Physical Sciences, the US Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity.
- A memorandum of understanding with Safran, which collaborates with the Israeli weapons company Rafael.
- A Linkage project with the "defence" contractor L3Harris and the Defence Science Technology Group.
- A major research partnership with Lockheed Martin, including a nanoscale photonics research project also in partnership with Technion - Israel Institute of Technology.

- Millions of dollars in grant funding from the Australia-US International Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (AUSMURI) — a partnership between the US Department of Defense and Australia's Department of Defence.
- A longstanding relationship with the multinational weapons systems manufacturer Thales, which collaborates in drone production with Israeli weapons manufacturer Elbit Systems.

What should our strategy be when faced with the overwhelming complicity of USyd with genocide?

1. Firstly, we must fight hard against the repressive campus policies that restrict our ability to protest on this very issue.
2. Following the success of the Bezalel campaign, it makes sense for our next BDS targets to be the remaining Israel exchange partnerships with Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, and Technion - Israel Institute of Technology.
3. The next stage should be the larger weapons manufacturers such as Thales and Lockheed Martin. Collectively, through protest, petitions and other actions we need to put pressure on our university to divest from these genocidal companies.
4. Perhaps the most difficult stage will be to force the university to cut its ties with all militaries. This will require all of us to work together to demand a paradigm shift in our institution.

We must continue to organise against the complicity of USyd in genocide and apartheid. We need to grow our movement, because the strategy outlined above will come to nothing if we don't get buy-in from as many staff as possible.

If you want to do more for Palestine, and are disgusted by our institution's complicity with genocide please consider joining the University of Sydney Staff for Palestine's campaign. Email Sydney Staff for Palestine: <ss4bds@gmail.com>



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Do you have a report from your workplace area at the University of Sydney? RAFA would love to hear from you. Let us know the challenges you face, the types of conversations you and your colleagues are having, and your ideas to take the struggle forward by writing to: rafausyd@gmail.com, contact us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, or call Sophie on 0400 314 960.