

# **NTEU Fightback's approach to bargaining**

## **No Concessions**

In the current period of severe attacks on the pay, conditions and job security of university workers the strategy of offering concessions to managers in return for empty undertakings to 'save jobs' has failed. It has not prevented the sacking of hundreds of workers, even at institutions which have signed up to concessionary deals, and it has undermined the capacity of the union to resist further attacks, let alone improve the circumstances of university workers.

## **Building strength for bargaining starts now, by resisting job cuts and other attacks**

Resistance to every attack from managements at workplace and institutional levels is a fundamental way to build union strength in the period before the start of enterprise bargaining. This involves cohering, mobilising and increasing the self-confidence of existing and recruiting new members particularly through workplace meetings, which take decision on action. We need to go through the "proper channels" of disputes clauses and the like, but with the largest possible degree of worker, participation, organising and public controversy. This approach will be most successful when properly promoted and resourced by union officials at Branch, Division and National levels.

## **Organising for industrial action and protest is the key**

Protest and industrial action by members, on the largest scale possible, are the most effective way defending our conditions and winning new ones. It's also the most effective way of promoting our arguments about the sector. Not only the inadequacies of both university managements' decision-making and resource allocation and the government's higher education policies but also the need to change the funding, nature and priorities of the sector, particularly its promotion of and reliance on fixed-term and casual employment, and the decline in the quality of university education and research over recent decades.

## **We need to raise expectations (and raise hell)**

In order to mobilise existing and recruit new members, the demands raised in the next round of enterprise bargaining must build expectations of major change in the sector. In current circumstances, that means claims that are not only ambitious but also specify effective mechanisms in the areas of employment security, workloads and pay. Hence our emphasis on ambitious claims on [pay](#) and [job security](#), amongst other crucial issues such as change management.

## **Democracy and debate is fundamental to union strength**

The mobilisation of existing members and the recruitment of new unionists depends on the possibility of unfettered, comradely debate over existing and proposed policies among the membership, officials and employees of the NTEU.

## **Building towards open ended mass strikes**

The union's past industrial weakness and passivity means that satisfactory outcomes in the bargaining round are extremely unlikely before members have demonstrated their determination and capacity to disrupt higher education institutions through sustained strike action, until our demands are met. A fundamental aspect of preparing the membership for that action is immediately starting to explain its necessity.