

NTEU Fightback

Media Release

Union bans distribution of no case in plebiscite on national pay cut deal

20 May 2020 – The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) has banned the distribution of [Vote No material](#) for a national plebiscite of members on a controversial pay cut deal to take place on Monday 25 May.

Members will be asked to support the National Jobs Protection Framework negotiated between the NTEU and Vice Chancellors. NTEU officials say the framework will protect jobs with temporary pay cuts, but opponents slam it as “[the greatest attack in a generation on our wages, jobs and conditions](#).” The Framework allows for pay cuts of up to 15 per cent at the worst-affected universities, and does not prevent redundancies where universities close courses or campuses.

NTEU General Secretary Matt McGowan emailed NTEU staff and branch representatives on 19 May, stating: “The Framework agreement is union policy” and that “[d]istribution of material opposing that position is contrary to the unions interests and should not be contemplated.”

Vote No campaigners say debate is being suppressed.

Alma Torlakovic, a member of the union’s national council, and University of Sydney branch committee member said: “In any plebiscite or referendum, people need to hear both sides. Our national leadership doesn’t get to decide on our behalf. The union claims to be ‘extremely democratic’ but these are tactics worthy of management, not union leaders.”

Katie Wood, also a dissident National Councillor and Branch Committee member at the University of Melbourne said: “We are being silenced by our own union leadership so they can ram through a horrific deal. If the deal is so good, why stifle debate?”

At a branch level, Vote No campaigners have been refused speaking rights in meetings, stopped from putting up motions, and blocked from distributing material.

The Framework has provoked significant opposition from members across the country. On 19 May, a members’ meeting at the University of Technology Sydney voted to oppose the deal by a majority of 62%. The same day the union branch committee at the Australian Catholic University did the same, urging the union’s National Executive to “dump this damaging, divisive and self-defeating policy”. The University of Sydney branch has also rejected the deal. Networks representing casual workers and many campuses have been outspoken, and over 1100 members have signed a statement rejecting the union leadership’s strategy.

Under the framework workers on the average female full-time wage of \$65,000 a year could lose \$375 per fortnight.

For comment:

Katie Wood – 0412 761 357

Alexis Vassiley – 0400 247 212

<https://www.facebook.com/NTEUfightback/>