

Vote NO at Monash

Why Vote No?

At Monash and around the country attempts are being made by management to make workers pay for this crisis by cutting wages and attacking conditions. The Federal Government is adding extra pressure by sending universities “broke on purpose” and hoping that VCs will restructure the whole sector. The national union leadership of the NTEU has taken a concessionary approach, happy to trade long standing conditions in return for a place at the table.

NTEU Fightback is arguing for union members at Monash, and everywhere, to Vote NO and keep organising. Every Yes vote encourages management to push for more concessions. Every No vote sends a message that university staff are prepared to stand up for fully funded public education and will fight to defend the entitlements fought for and won by previous generations of unionists.

Here are four specific reasons to Vote NO at Monash - in the union poll and the all staff ballot. For more detailed explanations see our longer analysis document also on www.nteufightback.site.

1. Protecting our rights in change consultation and disputes

Clause 26 would gut existing entitlements on major change and consultation. They meet a long standing demand of the employer body in higher education. Scrapping these entitlements for the duration of the variation is a backward step that staff at Monash should reject. Clause 26 of the proposed Monash EAV supplants the existing change management clauses in clause 13 of the Monash enterprise agreement. *This is not mentioned at all* in the information being shared by the VC or the NTEU.

2. Defend our wages and entitlements

A range of measures in the EAV serve to impose an effective pay cut:

- Staff can be required to work in a higher classification, with no extra pay (clauses 15.1 and 15.2)
- No increments for the life of the variation (clause 21). Depending on classification and the timing of increments, this might cost a general staff member \$1,500 (HEW 4), and an academic staff member double that (Level A).
- EA pay rise of 2% due on 8 December 2020, deferred until 30 June 2021 (clause 21). This would cost a general staff member on HEW 4.3 around \$700.
- Pay cuts for senior executives of 5% on salary above \$25,000 (clause 20.1.2). We're not about to pass the hat around for senior management, but this does establish a precedent that management can cut wages. If the variation is extended down the track, this precedent could very well be widened to include other layers of staff.

Again, if workers at Monash vote to cut our own and our colleagues pay relative to established EA entitlements, it only encourages management here and around the country to push further with these attacks.

3. No guarantees on jobs

The core logic of the variation is really the assertion that **all the money from wage cuts will be used to save jobs**. There are simply no enforceable guarantees of this.

Despite claims to the contrary, forced redundancies *are indeed* permitted, and not only where a work area is abolished. A “permanent insufficiency of work in a particular work unit or function” can trigger redundancies, including forced redundancies, under clauses 28.3.2 and 28.5.

Clause 28 is in practice little different to the minimum guarantees in the Fair Work Act, which say a redundancy is [valid](#) if “the employer no longer requires the person's job to be performed by anyone”. Similarly, the protections around redeployment offer no advance on common EA rights, especially in the current circumstances.

Clause 4.3 is meant to guarantee some rights for casuals but it is reliant on work continuing, with no enforceable guarantee of that, and on the phrase “reasonable expectation”. This has proved almost impossible to prove over many years, and therefore makes the whole clause useless. We have some detail on this in our document *Fighting back against job cuts*.

Clause 3 is supposed to offer a guarantee of no forced stand downs. However, there are already legal restrictions on stand downs, which means universities are highly unlikely to use these provisions anyway.

4. There is nothing as permanent as a temporary measure

The problem is, the crisis is likely to be far from temporary. Governments, economic commentators and Vice Chancellors alike are all talking about the possibility of a prolonged downturn. So today’s “temporary” measures stand every chance of becoming a new normal.

What now?

In one word: organise.

We have a huge task in getting information about the case for Voting No in front of as many of our colleagues as possible. Forwarding of information is crucial but our best hope is in organising workplace meetings, wherever we can, to discuss the actual clauses of the variation and why staff should Vote No.