

# University of Queensland NTEU elections

NTEU Fightback activists **Fran Chidgey**, **Izzy Ariff** and **Christian Rizzalli** are running for Branch Committee at UQ. As we explain below, we're all committed union activists who have been in the thick of organising against concessions and job cuts over the past year.

We're asking our supporters to also preference **Kelly Greenop**, who played a big role in the public campaign against the spill-and-fill in Architecture over the past six months, and **Kate Rowe** who has been an important part of organising against cuts in the library. Remember to number at least ten boxes to cast a valid vote.

Fran and Izzy are also running for National Council. We're running against Andrew Bonnell and Sharlene Leroy-Dyer, both of whom supported the so-called "Jobs Protection Framework" last year, which allowed universities to impose pay cuts of up to 15% -- more on the JPF below.

Fill out the form at [tinyurl.com/electfightback](http://tinyurl.com/electfightback) to help with the Fightback election campaign

## For Branch Committee:

11 candidates contesting 10 positions – all voters must number at least 10 boxes

Vote 1 Fran Chidgey

Vote 2 Izzy Ariff

Vote 3 Christian Rizzalli

Vote 4 Kelly Greenop

Vote 5 Kate Rowe

## For National Council:

4 candidates contesting 2 positions – all voters must number at least 2 boxes

Vote 1 Fran Chidgey

Vote 2 Izzy Ariff

# Candidate statements

## Francine Chidgey

Candidate Statement – Ordinary Branch Committee and National Councillor, University of Queensland



**FIGHTBACK against job cuts!**

**FIGHTBACK for no concessions!**

**FIGHTBACK for ambitious demands in bargaining!**

University administrations are cutting jobs, shifting higher workloads onto continuing staff, and stealing casuals' wages. At UQ, senior management is trying to outsource jobs and subject workers to demoralising spill and fill restructures that force us to compete against colleagues for fewer positions.

None of this is justified by the current economic crisis; UQ consistently ranks fifth on the list of highest revenue among Australian universities. Recently, our Vice Chancellor boasted of last year's consolidated surplus of \$108.7 million.

So it's clear the job cuts, mounting workloads, and slashed research fractions are not necessary, but opportunistic. Yet our current NTEU leadership's response to such attacks last year was to side with the Vice Chancellors by offering to initiate cuts of their own, in the form of the Jobs Protection Framework. On top of other hard-won gains they planned to trade away, they proposed uni workers take a 15% pay cut, for the fantasy that saving bosses money would translate to saving an equivalent number of jobs. Worse still, there was no binding guarantee any savings would be spent retaining any specified number of staff.

NTEU Fightback is proud of our work to defeat the Jobs Protection Framework. Left unchallenged, it would've demoralised members, damaged our union, and shown weakness to management, who

would undoubtedly have pursued harsher attacks nationwide — as they have at branches that didn't vote strongly against the Framework.

This proves industrial power isn't built by a minority of representatives' negotiating skills or by legal manoeuvring. Fightback's strategy is the opposite of this self-defeating concessions bargaining approach. We're for no concessions, because we know that workers leading our own campaigns — ultimately, organising a majority to withdraw our labour to win our demands — is where union power lies.

That's the strategy we need for Enterprise Bargaining this year. Fightback members on Branch Committee will demand more branch meetings, supporting workers to unionise our local work areas and get more members active, and organise on the ground leafleting and doorknocking. Fightback members on National Council will demand more local organising, supporting workers to drive their own fights.

We'll fight for the serious, sustained strike action needed to win ambitious claims — claims workers will want to FIGHT for: job security; lower workloads; an end to wage theft; enforceable clauses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff; casuals conversion; comprehensive health and safety clauses, and a real pay rise, not stagnant wages.

Fightback candidates at UQ have been active in campaigns against the spill and fill restructures in Architecture and the Library, the Jobs Protection Framework, the racist Ramsey Centre, and now against the outsourcing of ICTE to the UQ-owned private company, UQ College, demanding staff from both areas become part of the uni and our stronger Enterprise Agreement.

I've worked as a casual English language teacher at UQ ICTE for two years, and am now a casual academic tutor. I've been a union activist in the NTEU for two years, and am a member of Socialist Alternative. I first became an activist organiser at a school in Malaysia, where local staff and precarious teachers on Visas formed our own union, making demands like getting paid on time; books for students; and the reinstatement of a Muslim Malay coworker.

I've learned there are no workers who can't organise serious industrial action. It doesn't matter if we're professional or academic, casuals, fixed term, or permanent — workers win when we stand together to fight back.

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## **Izzy Ariff**

Candidate Statement – Ordinary Branch Committee and National Councillor, University of Queensland



**FIGHTBACK against job cuts!**

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Workers around the world have borne the brunt of the Covid crisis and our sector in particular has seen vicious cuts on hard won conditions. But these attacks are not new responses to the pandemic; they're managements' and the government's old wish list of job losses, rampant casualisation, compounding workloads, harsh pay cuts and slashed public funding. And shamefully, our union's leadership went along with the logic of these attacks; its Jobs Protection Framework included pay cuts of up to 15%, before even considering organising membership resistance to the assaults by university administrations.

NTEU Fightback formed to resist all attacks and to campaign for improved conditions and pay. Broadly discredited by our campaign, the Framework was defeated, members have had the chance to organise against managements' attacks, and now we are going to apply the same energy and strategy to bargaining.

Fightback rejects the Framework-style concessions bargaining approach that says we can defend ourselves by giving up hard-won wages and conditions gained in previous fights. We understand we can only hold on to our current conditions and pay, let alone improve them, if the union has a confident and engaged rank and file prepared to take serious strike action.

To get us as prepared as we can be, Fightback members on Branch Committee and National Council will fight for more rank and file worker organising at branch and local workplace level: that means member meetings, doorknocking campaigns to expand and actively organise the membership, and arguing for the most ambitious claims workers want to fight for. We will apply our experience leveraging mass demonstrations, using the union's resources to help us build rallies, and fight for

transparent industrial bargaining that draws in the broadest possible layer of workers — not closed-door negotiations that exclude the bulk of the union.

Here at UQ, we've seen for ourselves how organising concerted, collective and public resistance has saved jobs. When our very rich university saw an opportunity to spill and fill the School of Architecture, it was snap rallies that delayed attacks. When they did the same to the Library, quick mobilisations again bought valuable breathing space for organising more resistance and ultimately saved 29 jobs. Not only were these tactics effective, but they built power we can take to the next fights, like the attempted outsourcing of the ICTE.

Management will be coming for more of our conditions in this year's round of Enterprise Bargaining. But the Bargaining period is also a valuable opportunity to fight for real improvements to our conditions and pay — and strengthen our industrial power long term as we do so. We need strong, enforceable clauses we can use to win future campaigns. That means ambitious claims including: job security; casual conversion; pandemic health and safety; firm numbers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff rather than vague targets; lower workloads and secure research fractions; and, of course, a decent pay rise, not wage stagnation!

I've been a casual academic and NTEU delegate for two years in the School of Communications and Arts, as well as an activist organiser with Fightback, and am also a member of Socialist Alternative. I'm committed to organising an industrial fight this year — our current leadership's approach of offering concessions has got to be defeated if our union is going to be strong enough to fight off impending attacks on jobs and conditions.

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## **Christian Rizzalli**

Candidate Statement – Ordinary Branch Committee, University of Queensland



**FIGHTBACK against job cuts!**

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Workers in the Australian tertiary education sector have faced a ceaseless barrage of attacks from university managements since the onset of the pandemic. Under the false premise of financial hardship — a laughable notion for the vast majority of Australia’s incredibly wealthy universities — Vice-Chancellors have overseen mass layoffs of casual staff, matched by the severe overwork of permanents. In many cases, they have made concerted efforts to fire workers en masse through major change proposals and restructures that have fast-tracked their never-ending project of streamlining and rationalisation. For Vice-Chancellors and their cronies in senior management, the Covid-19 pandemic offered the perfect cover for the cynical intensification of their profit-driven education model.

Unfortunately, a view that persists amongst the leadership of the NTEU is that we can circumvent management’s logic of profit by reverse bargaining — by offering concessions in exchange for our claims. Never was this more starkly revealed than in the disastrous sell-out of the workforce represented by the Jobs Protection Framework. The Framework, designed by the union’s leadership in closed-door meetings with Vice-Chancellors, pre-emptively offered enormous concessions, including 15% pay cuts, in return for non-binding claims of job security.

The approach represented by the Framework assumes Vice-Chancellors are willing to regard us as their partners, working arm in arm to “save the sector” and grow our universities. It is a fantasy much loved by opportunist union leaders who covet a seat at the table.

This is precisely where NTEU Fightback seeks to intervene. We led the fight that defeated the Jobs Protection Framework, arguing that our union should instead be organising rank and file resistance to any and all attacks on the pay and conditions of university workers. And importantly, this is a project that we have been putting into action ourselves — with or without the support of our union leadership.

Through our national network, we have tirelessly organised resistance to countless attacks from university managements around the country throughout the pandemic. At UQ, we helped organise and promote campaigns against the spill and fill major change proposals in the School of Architecture and the Library, including building large rallies that saved 29 jobs in the Library. We are currently fighting the outsourcing of ICTE to UQ College, a company owned by the university, to demand UQ College and ICTE staff be brought into the university and under the stronger protections and higher pay of our Enterprise Agreement!

I’m a PhD candidate and casual academic. I’ve been involved in political activism throughout my time at UQ, and have consistently put into practice my belief that change comes from below: from militancy in the workplace and on the streets, not from the benevolence of those above us. In 2020, I was the postgraduate student representative in the UQ Student Union, and I used that position to foster solidarity between postgraduate students and university staff.

The Fightback candidates know there are no shortcuts to building active, powerful union memberships — that doing the work on the ground like this is the only option that builds rather than erodes our collective strength for the battles of the future. If elected to Branch Committee, we will fight for more branch meetings and organise the local area meetings, leafleting, poster campaigns, and other promotional activity to build our union branch.

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