

Candidate statement – QUT -- Branch Committee Member (Casual Employees)

Nigel Gough



In 2021 despite an initiative from the federal government to address the casualization of labour within the university sector QUT management saw fit to offer only a few meager crumbs as a feeble nonresponse to this government mandate. Across the entire university only a handful of casual and sessional academic staff were offered the opportunity of contract conversion, while most were left in precarious semester to semester employment contracts in a breathtaking act of bait and switch.

The only sign that this review had taken place were a couple of discreet emails, explaining that the casual staff member was eliminated from the review process because they had not worked continuously for a 12 month period and were therefore not eligible for further consideration. The very frontline staff that QUT management claimed to value so highly, as essential to the operation of the university, had the door firmly closed in their faces, and their long-term contribution to the university disavowed. Academic staff with years, even decades of service to QUT were dismissed as irrelevant, if not non-existent, in a short perfunctory email.

For me this moment was the proverbial straw which broke the camel's back.

Make no mistake this is QUT's true colours, that of maintaining a culture where sessional and casual staff have no security, no voice, and no path forward. This is an injustice that we need to have the courage to rally against.

For me this moment was the time to stick my head above the parapet, and stand with other like minded colleagues in the NTEU. The time to have a confident voice directed towards positive change. Last year after a career spanning 33 years at QUT as a sessional academic, including multiple awards for my service within QUT and within my wider professional community, I had the privilege to be appointed as a NTEU delegate for sessional and casual staff. I have not taken this appointment lightly. I embraced this new role not for myself, as it is unlikely I will be beneficiary of any long term changes within the university. On the contrary I am motivated to foster a better workplace for sessional academic and casual staff that will still be building their futures long after I have moved along. Now is the time for a push for change, for those frontline staff first and foremost, but also for students, and for the integrity of the university as a whole.

I have been lucky to be part of a positive first step. Most significantly earlier this year I was fortunate to be able to work with NTEU Fightback to successfully expand the Log of Claims in the current Enterprise Bargaining negotiations, with emphasis on the needs and aspirations of sessional academic and casual staff.

But we have a long road ahead.

We need a diverse range of committed people behind our NTEU Bargaining team to move us towards positive outcomes. On behalf of sessional academic and casual staff I feel I can be a positive voice in this dialogue.

Your vote and support will bring a committed advocate to the table.

Regards

Nigel Gough