

Text of proposed Murdoch University NTEU branch “protocols”

The NTEU Branch Committee at Murdoch University is considering the motion below, which seeks to ban any member from being able to “advocate amongst the membership positions at variance with Union decisions”, or to participate in any public discussion of debates within the union.

Generations of union activists have vigorously discussed, debated, and critiqued the strategy of our unions - in union forums, through distribution of leaflets and rank and file newsletters, and often in the left or even mainstream press. Without this sort of activity, it would be all but impossible for established union leaderships to be challenged, renewed, or removed.

Just one example: we would never have seen Jack Munday and his rank and file team reform the NSW Builders Labourers’ Federation and lead the historic Green Bans movement if they had abided by a ban on “advocating positions at variance with Union decisions”. Munday and his team often used the pages of left wing newspapers to reach a wider audience and to debate out the way forward - this would be prohibited under the “protocols” being advocated at Murdoch.

Union members in every branch of the NTEU and beyond should be raising our voices against this attack on union democracy.

The original motion being moved at Murdoch Branch Committee, circulated on 4 November and [critiqued by NTEU Fightback](#), has now been replaced by a slightly amended motion as of 6 November. We reproduce both versions here in the interests of completeness.

Amended motion (6 November)

Motion to Adopt Protocols on Behaviour and Responsibilities of Delegates and Committee Members

The Murdoch Branch Committee endorses the following motion as a binding set of protocols to be adopted by Branch Committee members and delegates.

Statement of Principles

The NTEU was formed in 1993 to provide a united voice for tertiary education workers. As a Branch of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), we recognise that committee members and delegates each play an important role in representing and building the union in our workplace, and that each of us may bring a different perspective and different skills which contribute to our overarching vision of a united, equitable and supportive workplace.

As a democratic organisation, in our collective and deliberative decision-making processes, there must always be complete freedom of discussion, and opposition to the Union's policies cannot itself be limited by policies, with the obvious exception of staff. Such deliberative decision-making processes might include, for example, a meeting of endorsed special interest groups, or of members in a local area that a delegate represents. However, such free discussion is to contribute to INTERNAL decision-making in the Union. It does not give license to anyone to share internal discussions externally or to advocate amongst the membership positions at variance with Union decisions.

We maintain integrity and respect while enacting democratic principles through discussion, debate and decision-making, respecting the role and authority of our various decision-making bodies and individuals in those bodies. We accept and respect a divergence of views but once decisions are made, we support one another in implementing those decisions by setting aside our differences and standing in solidarity with one another.

Members are free to associate in whatever manner they wish, but in doing so they may not invoke the Union's name unless endorsed to do so by the Branch Committee or a General meeting of members.

The roles of Committee Members and Delegates

Committee members are elected by the broader community of Murdoch members and are responsible for developing strategies and key messaging for the Branch. They play an active role in developing and running campaigns, with support from WA Division and, on occasion, National Office.

Delegates are endorsed by members *within their work area* to be their representative. The role of delegates is to support these strategies and provide two-way communication between members in their work area and the committee and Organiser.

It is the responsibility of all committee members and delegates to ensure the solidarity of the NTEU and to always support the implementation of democratic decisions in a positive manner to members and prospective members and to grow the union at every opportunity.

Note that the Union is vicariously responsible for the actions of its delegates and officers and must therefore always retain the right to determine, for example, who is to act as a delegate.

Establishment of sub-committees and working groups

The Murdoch Branch Committee will have oversight of any sub-committee, advisory or advocacy group formed by members for union purposes. These are defined as any unelected group of NTEU members **formed or endorsed by the Branch Committee or a General meeting of members** to advise, recruit, or advocate within Union decision-making bodies on specific issues. Unelected groups, which have been appropriately endorsed, may advocate generally in support of the Union's policies, provided this is done in concert with the Branch President or Secretary.

Training and Guidance

Delegates and committee members are the face of the union at our Branch and as such can play a key role in conducting meetings and developing a communication strategy. It is therefore critical for anyone who wishes to conduct meetings on behalf of the NTEU to undergo training first and this therefore is a requirement for delegates and committee members. The WA Division office provides delegate training sessions both on campus and online and this training can be coordinated through the Division Organiser assigned to the Branch.

Failure to Abide by Protocols

The NTEU Rules [Section 5, Clause 38] provide for removal of Committee members by resolution of the Branch in a General Meeting for certain behaviours, including 'gross misbehaviour'.

As delegate behaviour has a direct impact on the reputation of the union, delegates who fail to follow endorsed protocols can be removed from their role as delegates, subject to a motion to do so being endorsed by a quorate Branch Committee or a simple majority of members at a General meeting.

These protocols were endorsed at the Murdoch Branch Committee meeting held on 9th November 2020.

Original motion (4 November)

Motion to Adopt Protocols on Behaviour and Responsibilities of Delegates and Committee Members

The Murdoch Branch Committee endorses the following motion as a binding set of protocols to be adopted by Branch Committee members and delegates.

Statement of Principles

The NTEU was formed in 1993 to provide a united voice for tertiary education workers. As a Branch of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), we recognise that committee members and delegates each play an important role in representing and building the union in our workplace, and that each of us may bring a different perspective and different skills which contribute to our overarching vision of a united, equitable and supportive workplace. We maintain integrity and respect while enacting democratic principles through discussion, debate and decision-making, respecting the role and authority of our various decision-making bodies. Once decisions are made, we support one another in implementing those decisions by setting aside our differences and standing in solidarity with one another.

The roles of Committee Members and Delegates

Committee members are elected by the broader community of Murdoch members and are responsible for developing strategies and key messaging for the Branch. They play an active role in developing and running campaigns, with support from WA Division and, on occasion, National Office.

Delegates are endorsed by members within their work area to be their representative. The role of delegates is to support these strategies and provide two-way communication between members in their work area and the committee and Organiser.

It is the responsibility of all committee members and delegates to ensure the solidarity of the NTEU is conveyed in a positive manner to members and prospective members and to grow the union at every opportunity.

Establishment of sub-committees and working groups

The Murdoch Branch Committee will have oversight of any sub-committee, advisory or advocacy group formed by members for union purposes. These are defined as any unelected group of NTEU members formed or endorsed by the Branch Committee to advise, advocate or recruit on specific issues. Any group not created or endorsed in the appropriate manner does not have any rights to use the Union's name, to access resources, or to receive support from Union staff.

Training and Guidance

Delegates and committee members are the face of the union at our Branch and as such can play a key role in conducting meetings and developing a communication strategy. It is therefore critical for anyone who wishes to conduct meetings on behalf of the NTEU to undergo training first and this therefore is a requirement for delegates and committee members. The WA Division office provides delegate training sessions both on campus and online and this training can be coordinated through the Division Organiser assigned to the Branch.

Failure to Abide by Protocols

Whilst acknowledging that the NTEU Rules [Section 5, Clause 38] provide for removal of Committee members by resolution of the Branch in a General Meeting for certain behaviours, the Branch also supports the same process being applied to committee members who persistently fail to abide by the protocols established by this motion.

As delegate behaviour has a direct impact on the reputation of the union, delegates who fail to follow endorsed protocols can also be removed from their role as delegates, subject to a motion to do so being endorsed by a quorate Branch Committee.

These protocols were endorsed at the Murdoch Branch Committee meeting held on 9th November 2020.