

# Melbourne University NTEU elections

NTEU Fightback activists Katie Wood and Danica Cheesley are running for Branch Committee at Melbourne Uni. Katie is also running for National Council.

Fill out the form at [tinyurl.com/electfightback](https://tinyurl.com/electfightback) to help Katie and Danica's election campaign

## **For Branch Committee:**

17 candidates contesting 13 positions – all voters must number at least 13 boxes

Vote 1 Katie Wood

Vote 2 Danica Cheesley

## **For National Council:**

9 candidates contesting 5 positions – all voters must number at least 5 boxes

Vote 1 Katie Wood

# Candidate statements

## Katie Wood

Candidate Statement - National Councillor, Melbourne University



Our sector is experiencing a crisis caused by the lack of adequate funding from the federal government and the neo-liberalisation of university management. VCs are targeting staff by cutting jobs, increasing workloads, decreasing continuing positions, underpaying casuals and so on.

Last year when the VCs tried to use the crisis caused by the pandemic to push this agenda further, the leadership of our union didn't fight them but instead tried to negotiate a deal called the Jobs Protection Framework (JPF) with Vice Chancellors that would have seen pay cuts for university staff of up to 15%.

The leadership's approach of offering concessions has to be defeated if our union is going to be strong enough to withstand attacks on jobs and conditions

I believe the leadership did this because they don't have faith that our union can be strong enough to win. We've shown in small measure at Melbourne University through the Vote No campaign in 2020, the campaign against outsourcing of Research Computing Services digital platforms training team, and the successes won by the Casuals Network, that when we do act together we can win.

The whole sorry affair of the JPF showed not just that the leadership won't fight for our dignity and our conditions, but that they are not keen on building a passionate and democratic union. Members of the NTEU Fightback group, which I helped to found, put motions to the National Council last year to have a debate on the JPF but it was overwhelmingly defeated. The NC also voted overwhelmingly to end the practice of allowing delegates to have access to membership information that would help them do their jobs effectively, a longstanding practice in this union and many others. The bulk of the NC at the moment seems to be far more interested in pledging blind loyalty to the current leadership than in building a strong and fighting union, a process that would include robust debate.

For a long time, the National Council meetings have passed members by without barely any flicker of interest. This speaks to the moribund nature of the body.

The National Council needs a shake-up. If elected, I'll be one of a network of activists across the country who will try to do just that, whilst arguing for an approach to this bargaining round that is centred on ambitious claims that would have a real, material positive impact on members' working lives, and serious industrial action and strikes to achieve them.

If you agree with Fightback's approach, get involved with our election campaign: fill in the form at [tinyurl.com/electfightback](http://tinyurl.com/electfightback).

## Danica Cheesley

Candidate statement – Ordinary Branch Committee, Melbourne University



University administrations are cutting jobs, outsourcing teams, increasing workloads and stealing casual wages. Here at Melbourne Uni it's no different. None of this is justifiable - especially at a University worth over \$8 billion. We need to build a large union, whose active members are in control and prepared to take engage in the serious strike action that will be necessary to defend, let alone improve our conditions and pay.

I'm a professional staff member working in Enrolments. I want to build this kind of union in my local area, and more broadly on the Branch Committee. Before working at Melbourne, I was on the

Branch Committee of my previous NTEU branch where I organised workers in the University contact centre. Outside of the union, I'm also a member of Socialist Alternative, and have been involved in a variety of progressive campaigns.

Last year the leadership of our union proposed the disastrous 'Jobs Protection Framework' - a plan that would have allowed wage cuts of up to 15%. In response I formed NTEU Fightback, alongside Katie Wood in our branch, to organise against the JPF, and later as part of the successful campaign to vote no to the enterprise agreement variation proposed by our Vice Chancellor.

Our Branch Committee's focus needs to be on encouraging and supporting organising by members, to strengthen the whole branch. This means fighting around local restructures - like the endless phases of the pandemic reset program, continuing to build an active delegates network, and giving members confidence to stand up for their own rights.

We know senior management are prepared to attack our wages and conditions, they've shown this in spades throughout the pandemic. They would rather attack staff than touch their piles of assets. This year our current Enterprise Agreement will expire, and bargaining for a new agreement will likely be tough. But this is also an opportunity to fight for improvements in our conditions and pay. We need strong, enforceable clauses to protect and improve the conditions and pay we care about like job security, workloads, casualisation and outsourcing.

To really improve our wages and conditions we need to organise towards serious strike action, and build the confidence of other staff to be part of that fight.

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## **Katie Wood**

Candidate statement - Ordinary Branch Committee, Melbourne University branch

Our sector is experiencing a crisis caused by the lack of adequate funding from the federal government and the neo-liberalisation of university management. VCs are targeting staff by cutting jobs, increasing workloads, decreasing continuing positions, underpaying casuals and so on. Local managers are under pressure, and often disregard our legally enforceable rights set out in the Enterprise Agreement.

The only way to successfully resist this many-layered assault on our conditions is to build a large, member-led, strike-ready union. I have tried and will continue to try to build such a branch at Melbourne University as a delegate and, hopefully, a Branch Committee member.

I've been a professional staff member in the Archives for over 10 years, have been a delegate and a member of the Branch Committee for most of those. I have also been a National Councillor. Beyond the union, I've been a member of Socialist Alternative, as a broader commitment to political activism against oppression and inequality.

Last year, with Danica Cheesley at this branch, I helped to establish NTEU Fightback, a national group of rank-and-file activists who organised against the union leadership's disastrous "Jobs Protection Framework", which would have seen wage cuts of up to 15%. The debacle of the JPF showed many in our union that debates around strategy matter.

Since then, NTEU Fightback has continued to advocate for a fighting union. I have been helping to organise members to resist job cuts and concessions, played a leading role in the campaign against the Enterprise Agreement Variation last year, and to save jobs in Research Computing Services and the Grounds Team this year.

The Branch Committee needs to develop an active and engaged delegates network, capable of fighting around local issues like team restructures, building membership and giving all members the knowledge and confidence to collectively defend their own rights.

Our senior management have shown that they will attack our job security and conditions to protect their hoard of assets. When our Enterprise Agreement expires later this year, bargaining for a new Agreement is likely to be even tougher than usual. But it is still our best chance to improve our working conditions, by fighting for better clauses on, for example, job security, consultation, casualisation, workload, OHS, outsourcing and flexible working arrangements.

The only way to really improve our working conditions and rights at work is to organise towards serious strike action. And only by having ambitious demands will we inspire staff to join that fight.

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