National Executive Meeting

**National Union of Students Inc.**

Wednesday, 2nd October 2024



# Meeting Details:

Venue: Zoom

Time: 7:30 pm AEDT

Chair: Ngaire Bogemann (National President)

Minute Taker: Jonathan De La Pena (National Secretary)



# Acknowledgement of Country

1. **Attendance**

National Office Bearers/Non-voting members

| Ngaire Bogemann | National President |
| --- | --- |
| Jonathan De La Pena | National Secretary |
| Sabrine Yassine | National Welfare Officer |
| Lucy Fawcett | National Education Officer |
| Ela Akyol (Apology) | National Women’s Officer |
| Ella Gutteridge | National Queer/LGBTQIA+ Officer |
| Eddie Stephenson | National Queer/LGBTQIA+ Officer |
| Chandra Altoff (Apology) | National First Nations Officer |
| Mairead Foley (Apology) | National Disabilities Officer |
| Reynal Adrien (Apology) | National International Officer |
| Jacinto Hedus | National Ethnocultural Officer |
| Caitlin Marlor (Apology) | National Small & Regional Officer |
| Beth Shegog | National TAFE Officer |

State Branch Presidents/Voting Members

| Oliver Shephard-Bayly | SA State Branch President |
| --- | --- |
| Disha Zutshi | Vic State Branch President |
| Hamish Covell | NSW State Branch President |
| Liam Bessell-Koprek | ACT State Branch President |
| Jeremy Wong (Proxy to Jacinto Hedus) | Qld State Branch President |
| Heidee Autistic (Proxy to Oliver Shephard-Bayly) | WA State Branch President |
| Liam McLaren | TAS State Branch President |

General Executive Members/Voting Members

| Xavier Dupe (Proxy to Ella Gutteridge) | General Executive Member |
| --- | --- |
| Veronika Gobba | General Executive Member |
| Tess Robb | General Executive Member |
| Finbar Bray | General Executive Member |
| Nicholas Goodyer (Proxy to Noah Smith) | General Executive Member |
| Edward Archer | General Executive Member |
| Brandon Lee (Proxy to Liam Bessell-Koprek) | General Executive Member |
| Kevin Li (Proxy to Asad Jan) | General Executive Member |
| Alexander Knowles (Proxy to Olivia Stronach) | General Executive Member |
| Daniel O’Shea | General Executive Member |
| Molly Quinnell (Proxy to Daniel O’Shea) | General Executive Member |
| Asadullah Jan | General Executive Member |

* 1. **Absent**
  2. **Observers**
  3. **Election of Deputy Chair**

**Action**

The National Executive appoints Jonathan De La Pena as the Deputy Chair of the Committee.

**Moved:** Ngaire Bogemann (National President)

**Seconded:** Jacinto Hedus (National Ethnocultural Officer)

Carried Without Dissent

# Acceptance of Apologies

**Action**

The National Executive accepts the apologies of the following:

* + - Refer to Attendance Sheet

**Moved:** Ngaire Bogemann (National President)

**Seconded:** Liam McLaren (Tas State Branch President)

CWD

# List of Accepted Proxies

The following proxies have been accepted by the National Secretary:

* + - Refer to Attendance Sheet

# Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

None received.

# Confirmation of Previous Minutes

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**Action**

That National Executive acknowledges the circulated minutes of the previous meeting and the discussed amendments are a true and accurate reflection of that meeting.

NX 6 - 4/09/2024

**Moved:** Ngaire Bogemann (National President)

**Seconded:** Lucy Fawcett (National Education Officer)

CWD



* 1. Chance for OBs to speak further on their reports.

Ngaire took as read;

Jono took as read;

Sabrine took as read;

Ella spoke on their report stating their attendance of a rally in support of the CFMEU. Ella spoke on the recent attacks in Lebanon by Israel. Ella spoke on the upcoming anniversary of the october 7th attacks. Olivia asked if they were doing any work on the conversion therapy which is a current topical issue in Western Australia. Ella had not heard of anything but was happy to work on action if any was brought up.

Eddie spoke on their report with a focus on Palestine campaigning with the escalation of the conflict into Lebanon. Eddie spoke against the NSW Police who are aiming to ban the Oct 7th protests. Eddie spoke on their action support against

Jacinto took report as read. Ella asked Jacinto on the statement into antisemitism and why the position of the NUS is to endorse the Inquiry. Jacinto stated that he believed he represented the organisation as per the platform as the NUS is intrinsically against antisemitism.

Beth took report as read;

# Motion to Accept National Officer Reports

**Action**

That National Executive accepts the submitted reports of the National Officers.

**Moved:** Liam McLaren (Tas State Branch President)

**Seconded:** Finbar Bray (General Executive)

CWD



* 1. Chance for SBPs to speak further on their reports

Oli took report as read;

Disha took report as read;

Hamish took report as read;

Liam M took report as read;

Liam B took report as read;

# Motion to Accept State Officer Reports

**Action**

That National Executive accepts the submitted reports of the State Officers.

**Moved:** Lucy Fawcett (National Education Officer)

**Seconded:** Jonathan De La Pena (National Secretary)

CWD



# September Financial Statements

**Speaker:** Jonathan De La Pena

Jonathan commented on the Accounts Receivable which lists outstanding invoices owed to the NUS. The majority of those outstanding for 2024 are outstanding affiliation invoices, although the majority of the rest include PresSummit and EdCon Invoices which remain unpaid.

# Women’s Conference Update

**Speaker:** Ela Akyol

# Disability & Ethnocultural Conference Update

**Speaker:** Mairead Foley, Jacinto Hedus & Jonathan De La Pena

Eddie and Ella asked if the Antisemitism Inquiry will be discussed at Ethnocultural Conference. Jonathan and Jacinto both replied explaining that a schedule for Ethnocultural Conference has not been completed and invited Eddie and Ella to attend EthnoCon to speak on the Inquiry themselves if they wished

# National Conference Update

**Speaker:** Jonathan De La Pena



# Amendment to 5.2

**Action:**

3. The General Secretary will continue to look at other options to host NatCon to ensure accessibility requirements are met, provided that Federation University, Ballarat and/or La Trobe University, Bundoora fail to meet those requirements.

*Action is amenable to the mover;* Carried

# **Convening 202**4 **NUS National Conference (Natcon)**

The National Conference for 2024 is fast approaching. Regulation R17.1 National Executive must convene the annual meeting of the national conference in accordance with C14.2

Regulation R17.2 The annual meeting of National Conference must begin on the 2nd Monday in December, unless National Executive by resolution passed by an absolute majority sets another date, at least 3 months before the date set.

This sets the date for the conference as 9-13th of December.

The Conference is traditionally held in Victoria five quotes where sought for the conference:

* Deakin University, Warnambool
* Federation University, Ballarat
* Latrobe University, Bundoora
* Latrobe University, Albury-Wodonga
* Charles Sturt University, Albury-Wodonga

Only Federation University, Ballarat and La Trobe University, Bundoora have the capacity during the dates required for the conference and submitted a quote for $57,240 and $65,728 respectively for the venue, accommodation, lunch and dinner for 150 people. It should be noted this will change based on the final attendance count and on any final accessibility needs.

**Action:**

1. The National Executive approves 2024 NUS National Conference for 9-13 of December, approves either Federation University, Ballarat or Latrobe University, Bundoora as the location for 2024 NUS National Conference pursuant to accessibility needs.
2. The National Executive appoints the General Secretary to coordinate the organising of this conference with the 2024 Conference Organisers.

Veronika asked about the accessibility details as well as raising the issues with Federation Uni from last year. Jonathan replied that this was why two tenders were accepted and the amended additional action point which allowed for searching for a new venue as the accessibility of the conference remained a priority.

**Moved:** Jonathan De La Pena (National Secretary)

**Seconded:** Ngaire Bogemann (National President)

CWD

# Appointment of 2024 NUS Auditors

**Preamble:**

It is auditing season, so we've gotta appoint our auditors. We've used Simon Jones & Co the last two year, so I'm recommending we go with them again.

**Action:**

1. The National Executive appoint Simon Jones & Co. as the 2024 auditors.

**Moved:** Jonathan De La Pena (National Secretary)

**Seconded:** Ngaire Bogemann (National President)

CWD

# NUS stands with the CFMEU and rejects their administration

On the 23rd of August the Fair Work Commission placed the CFMEU around the country under administration for up to five years. This is an attack on democracy in the union and the most draconian attack on the Australian union movement in years. The administration has already sacked over 250 union officers and 11 officials from their paid positions. Reasons put forward for the administration include allegations of corruption largely centred around the Victorian branch, as well as bullying and intimidation. It is a disgrace that most state branches that are being punished that currently have no allegations of corruption against them, revealing of the fact that the administration is an attempt to discipline one of the last remaining unions that takes industrial action to fight for its members.

Yet this follows a long tradition of the Australian media and government attempting to paint militant unions as criminal and thuggish for taking industrial action to defend the rights of their members. Unions like the CFMEU that defend the rights of their members not to work in unsafe conditions through industrial action should be wholeheartedly supported, even if taking such action means breaking draconian anti-union laws. The witch hunt against the CFMEU in the right wing media has every interest in conflating the CFMEU’s defence of its members through industrial action, with thuggishness, violence and intimidation. In reporting on the issue, “evidence” of the CFMEU’s criminality has included terse communication with workers attempting to scab on strikes in Queensland.

The argument that scabs should have the right not to feel intimidated by their colleagues is one that will only help the bosses to drive down pay and conditions throughout the industry. It is certainly not evidence of criminality or corruption, especially in Queensland where there are no allegations of corruption towards the union. It is even more disgusting that the Queensland branch has had all of their organisers and officials sacked in the midst of an important industrial dispute on the state government Cross River Rail project in to demand pay rises and that all workers on the site are covered by CFMEU awards. The workers are also striking for the implementation of a heat policy in line with other CFMEU agreements, after one of their colleagues, Daniel Sa’u died from heat stress after finishing a full day’s work, and was not the first to die on the site. He left behind a wife and three young children. His wife Jeraldine later said at a CFMEU rally: “What happened to him is not right ... those in power who could have prevented his death need to be held accountable”.

The attacks on the CFMEU and democracy in the union movement will undermine the ability for workers to fight for their own wages, conditions and safety. Democracy is a core part of our ability to organise and fight back against the bosses and the right in this country. That’s why it is shameful that the CFMEU has been isolated by the broader union movement bar a few unions like the ETU and MUA who have stood against this attack. Just as reprehensible is the stance of ACTU secretary, Sally McManus, who called for the administration to take place, and the Labor Party, who have joined in the chorus attacking the CFMEU and slandering them as criminals and thugs.

**Platform**

* NUS stands with the CFMEU
* NUS condemns the administration and defends the rights of union members to elect their own leaders

**Action:**

NUS will support, share and attend upcoming rallies to defend the CFMEU and call for democracy within the union.

Jacinto spoke against the motion

Jonathan asked if Ella was amenable to removing the action

Finbar asked Ella how the NUS should reply to questions on the CFMEU fees being spent towards drug smuggling and organised crime.

Ella & Eddie emphasised the point that interstate branches of the CFMEU did nothing wrong and that for them to be put into administration was a stifling of the democratic process.

**Moved:** Ella Gutteridge (National Queer/LGBTQIA+ Officer)

**Seconded:** Eddie Stephenson (National Queer/LGBTQIA+ Officer)

**For:** 2 **Against:** 17

# UNITU Survey Trial

As part of our reform initiatives, we have engaged with Unitu, a UK-based platform

that specialises in real-time student feedback collection and analysis. The Unitu

platform is essentially a centralised student feedback tool that can make sure we are

getting the most out of the work student reps are doing while ensuring we are

engaging with our member orgs and their feedback in a variety of different ways.

Following a productive meeting between NUS representatives and Unitu’s founder,

Anish, who was recently in Australia, we are looking to trial this platform during the

upcoming Discon and Ethnocon conferences. The free trial will provide us with an

invaluable opportunity to gauge student concerns and experiences in real time,

which can then inform our future campaigns and strategies.

As confirmed by Finain, ths is a standard agreement for trialling a business’s

services and they are typically entered into before trial access is allowed, the

contract is a low-stakes agreement offering free access to the platform. This enables

us to test the system without significant financial or operational commitments,

ensuring that we can fully assess its suitability before considering any long-term

engagement. It aligns with our commitment to meaningful student engagement and

will play a crucial role in refining our advocacy and welfare efforts.

As mentioned, bringing this to NX is due diligence as the contract is very low/no

stakes but also gives member of NX to ask questions about the way the platform/tool

works.

**Action:**

The National Executive approves the signing of the contract for a free trial of Unitu’s

student feedback tool with the trial to be conducted during Discon/Ethnocon.

Eddie asked on what the main information will be collected from the survey.

Sabrine replied that the questions are flexible and we can decide and draft what questions would give the best information such as through the NUS reform working group which could help draft questions.

**Moved:** Sabrine Yassine (National Welfare Officer)

**Seconded:** Hamish Covell (NSW State Branch President)

CWD

# Student Finances Survey

From the 1970s up until 2017, a Student Finances Survey was conducted across the country to survey and understand in concrete terms the extent of student poverty amongst higher education students in Australia. As Universities Australia, who formerly conducted this survey, have neglected to do so in 7 years, consultants from Maven and Edge have approached us to propose the NUS taking ownership of this survey and the data it produces.

Not only would NUS involvement in such a survey contribute strongly to our organisational knowledge and data bases, but it would also provide us and the broader student union movement with updated statistics on the extent of student poverty in Australia, with possibilities for us to use an NUS-run Student Finances Survey to generate campus-by-campus data and further situational data sets to support our campaigns.

It is therefore recommended that the NX formally endorse NUS involvement in the beginning stages of survey development.

**Action:**

The National Executive approves the provision of in-kind support to Maven and Edge Consulting to collaborate on the co-design, development and testing of a survey tool to be used to conduct a wider Student Finances Survey, as outlined in the supporting document ‘SFS Project Plan\_260924’.

The National Executive will in its first meeting of the 2025 term review the outcomes of these initial stages of the project and seek to make further decisions as to the NUS’ ongoing involvement in the project beyond December 2024.

**Moved:** Ngaire Bogemann (National President)

**Seconded:** Sabrine Yassine (National Welfare Officer)

CWD

Eddie proposed that the Inquiry (item 5.7) become an item for discussion.

Jono noted that the item was received late and recommended that the motion be tabled and discussed further at NX8 once members had time to properly read the motion.

Ngaire noted that the period for discussion had passed and as the item had been received late that it will be discussed at the following NX meeting.

**5.7 NUS NX statement on senate inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities**

Student pro-Palestine activists are currently facing a serious and concerning campaign of censorship and repression on campuses around Australia. The NUS strongly opposes the recent Senate inquiry into anti-Semitism on campus as a deliberate attack on student opposition to the genocide in Gaza, based on the cynical and untrue conflation of support for Palestine with anti-Semitism. The NUS reaffirms its support for the peaceful, anti-racist and anti-war student movement for Palestine.

The unexamined premise of the Senate inquiry is the political argument that support for Palestine is inherently anti-Semitic. This is a political argument which has long been used to silence supporters of Palestinian human rights, and it is an argument that the NUS rejects. The student movement for Palestine is based on students’ justified moral and political opposition to the racist apartheid conditions imposed on Palestinian by the Israeli state, and to the IDF’s horrific bombardment and siege of the Gaza strip, which has cut off food, water and medical supplies from 2.3 million Gazans, claiming nearly 200,000 lives according to conservative estimates published in the *Lancet*.

Many submissions made to the inquiry were produced by organisations which conflate support for Palestine with anti-Semitism, including the well-known right wing organisation the Australian Jewish Association (AJA) and the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC). These submissions included numerous examples of basic anti-racist and anti-war sentiments of solidarity with Palestine, falsely asserting that these were instances of anti-Semitism. These examples included:

* Student protesters carrying placards stating that Israel is committing a genocide
* Stickers in support of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions anti-apartheid movement being stuck up on campus
* A staff member wearing a keffiyeh, the traditional Palestinian scarf, while on campus
* Discussion of the bombardment of Gaza in an Indigenous Studies class

Opposing these kinds of clearly anti-racist political activity on campus has nothing to do with preventing racism towards Jewish students and everything to do with silencing opposition to an ongoing genocide. Moreover, the attempt to conflate pro-Palestine political stances with anti-Semitism trivialises genuine anti-Jewish racism, particularly that of the far right. This is disturbing to the NUS, as we oppose all forms of racism on campus in the strongest possible terms.

Many of the submissions to the inquiry refer to pro-Palestine campaigns on campus eliciting feelings of discomfort amongst supporters of Israel as reason to ban such activity and discipline students involved in the Palestine campaign. As Max Kaiser from the Jewish Council of Australia has noted, “protests may make some students feel uncomfortable, and even disrupt the normal functioning of the university, but that is not grounds for penalising students - it is a reality of life in a democracy”. Supporters of Israel’s genocide in Gaza may feel uncomfortable with seeing their political position challenged, just as supporters of South African apartheid, segregation in Australia, or the invasion of Vietnam were discomforted and offended in their time by progressive political opposition to these injustices. Nonetheless, it is the democratic right of student Palestine activists to express their opposition to the genocide. Encountering vigorous opposition to your own views is a common and necessary feature of free political debate.

**Mover:** Ela Akyol

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