

Thursday, 7 August 2014

## University of Wollongong facing massive funding cuts

The University of Wollongong will lose almost \$100 million over four years under Federal Government budget cuts, according to new research by the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU).

ACTU President Ged Kearney and NTEU NSW Secretary Genevieve Kelly met Wollongong University staff on campus today to discuss the impact of the Government's 20 per cent cut to university funding.

The NTEU estimates Wollongong University will lose \$95.8 million dollars in Commonwealth funding between 2016-19 as a result of the Government's cuts.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said on average universities will have to increase their fees by about 30% just to compensate for the lost funding.

"The Illawarra region has the second highest youth unemployment in the state. The Government should be looking at ways to create education and training pathways for young people – not putting a university education forever out of their reach," said Ms Kearney.

The funding cut could also lead to the university relying on more casual staff to cut costs and will have a detrimental impact on the Illawarra, said NTEU NSW Secretary Genevieve Kelly.

"Already around half of university teaching is being delivered by casual staff with little to no job security and retiring academics are being replaced by casuals. It is unsustainable and puts the quality of university education in jeopardy," said Ms Kelly.

While most of the public attention has been on the Abbott Government's plan to saddle university students with mortgage sized HELP loans, unions are equally concerned about the 20% cut to university funding.

"These severe budget cuts mean universities like UOW will either have to significantly increase student fees and debts, or compromise the scope, nature and ultimately the quality of the teaching, research and community service they deliver to their students," said Ms Kelly.

"NTEU members call on Vice Chancellor Professor Wellings to end his support for the Abbott Government's changes, and to bargain in good faith with the NTEU, to protect UOW jobs and conditions. Professor Wellings needs to stand up for the local region and Illawarra students."

The Abbott Government's cruel and unfair budget leaves universities with no reasonable choices, said ACTU President Ged Kearney.

"The whole community is concerned prospective students and their families will be forced to give up their aspirations of a university education because they can't afford the fees.

"Unions have vowed to campaign against the Government's unfair budget measures and protect hardworking Australians and their families," said Ms Kearney.

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