



Professor Barbara Caine
Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
A14 Quadrangle
University of Sydney, NSW 2006

23 March 2016

Dear Professor Caine,

We are concerned to hear of the proposal to downgrade the status of the Sydney University Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPACS) to that of a "mini-department".

CPACS has an excellent reputation for teaching, inter-disciplinary research and community outreach, as well as for its establishment of the Sydney Peace Foundation. In a world experiencing more conflict, peace and justice studies are increasingly important and sought after.

CPACS' efforts to promote debate on issues like accountability for war crimes in Sri Lanka, West Papua, Palestine and human rights generally provide the Australian and the global community with a sophisticated, alternative voice on topical and difficult issues, as reflected in acclamations for CPACS' work by the likes of Dr Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

The fact that CPACS has attracted lively public debate and some adverse commentary in conservative quarters for its role in the Sydney Peace Prize, as well as for its efforts to provide different perspectives in a public discourse dominated generally by mainstream media, means that it is doing its job. In the words of founder Emeritus Professor Stuart Rees: "*The initiators of the Sydney Peace Prize aimed to influence public interest in peace with justice, an ideal which is often perceived as controversial. The choice of a non-controversial candidate for a peace prize would be a safe option but unlikely to prompt debate or to increase understanding. Consensus usually encourages compliance, often anaesthetises and seldom informs*".

It cannot be good for our democracy and academic reputation to attenuate such voices. It would be particularly disturbing if a prestigious institution like Sydney University, by the simple expedient of withdrawing resources from CPACS, is seen to suppress reflection and debate on important, even controversial, matters.

I urge you reconsider the proposal to downgrade CPACS.

Yours Sincerely,



Hon. Melissa Parke MP
Federal Member for Fremantle



Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP
Federal Member for Calwell



Paul Lynch MLA
Member for Liverpool
Shadow Attorney General



Laurie Ferguson MP
Federal Member for Werriwa



Lynda Voltz MLC
Shadow Minister for Sport
Shadow Minister for Veteran's Affairs



Julia Finn MLA
State Member for Granville



Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane MLC
Opposition Whip in the Legislative Council of NSW