



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Dr Michael Spence AC
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

27 June 2018

Kurt Iveson
Branch President
NTEU University of Sydney Branch
Merewether Building H04, Room 390
University of Sydney NSW 2006

Dear Kurt,

Thank you for your letter outlining concerns about the University's discussions with the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation. While I have addressed many of the issues raised in this letter in a variety of open fora including at the Academic Board, on Yammer and on Q&A on the ABC, I welcome the opportunity to once again put on the record some important facts about our discussions with the Ramsay Centre.

It is important to note that at this stage, we are talking to the Ramsay Centre about what our terms of engagement with them might be. This includes non-negotiable matters such as academic freedom and autonomy. If we are unable to reach agreement on these matters, we will not proceed with further negotiations. Right now, no Memorandum of Understanding or agreement exists.

As to the three specific issues you raise in your letter, I shall address each in turn.

First, you have raised the issue of academic involvement in curriculum development. I can assure you that any course we would teach at the University, Ramsay or other, would have to be workshopped and developed by a group of relevant academics before it could be taken to a Faculty Board and to the Academic Board for approval. This is not least so that people could express an interest in teaching on the course and be a part of developing it. As I have said in other contexts, the University, like many other NSW and ACT universities, submitted an Expression of Interest to the Ramsay Centre to provide some idea of what we might be able to do with any funding we received. Our Expression of Interest included a draft curriculum worked up by a group led by Professor Peter Anstey. We have not circulated those documents because, like every other university, as a part of the process of submitting an Expression of Interest, we undertook to Ramsay that we would not do so. An important additional reason for not now releasing the draft curriculum prepared by Professor Anstey, which is very a fine piece of work and in no way a propaganda course, relates to its status as a draft that will need further academic input if it is to progress from a conceptual model to a formal course proposal. To release the curriculum now would be to give it a formality and status that it does not have. Any course to be offered with the support of Ramsay funding would need to be developed and approved in the normal way for an academic course at the University.

Second, you raise the issue of academic integrity in relation to a Memorandum of Understanding which you appear to believe exists in some form and is being withheld on the basis of confidentiality. This is simply not the case. As I stated above, there is no MoU with Ramsay. If and when there is, we will make it public.

Third, you raise the concern that Senate will make a decision on a possible course before it is considered by the Faculty and the Academic Board. Again, this is simply not the case. If we reach the stage of developing a formal course proposal, it will proceed through the normal academic processes, including the Faculty Board, Undergraduate Studies Committee and Academic Board prior to consideration by the Senate. There is no other way that a course can be approved and offered at the University.

As I have stated previously, the support potentially available from the Ramsay Centre represents a rare opportunity for a university such as ours, which has the intellectual resources in core relevant areas, to develop an internationally excellent programme. However, we would never consider compromising on the principles of academic freedom and integrity that constitute the very foundation of this University in order to secure it. We will need to reach agreement with Ramsay on these core principles before we even consider negotiating a formal agreement or developing a detailed course proposal.

I would be happy to arrange for us to meet and discuss these concerns further at a mutually suitable time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Spence', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Michael Spence