



News

## Melbourne University: Student council passes motion to celebrate Thatcher's death

Sandra Qian on April 15, 2013 / 1 comment

**LARGE parts of the student community, including international students, have condemned the University of Melbourne Student Union's motion to "unreservedly" celebrate the death of Margaret Thatcher. Sandra Qian reports.**



The University of Melbourne Student Union's council last week narrowly passed a motion to "unreservedly" celebrate the death of the former British Prime Minister. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

A motion by the University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU) has provoked anger for celebrating the death of Margaret Thatcher.

In a controversial move, the UMSU's Student Council last week narrowly passed a motion to "unreservedly" celebrate the death of the former British Prime Minister.

Brought by Left Action Students' Councillor Patrick Alves, the motion denounced Thatcher's "horrific" legacy and her "neoliberal policies that destroyed the lives of millions".

It accused Thatcher of oppressing the Irish, supporting right-wing dictators such as Pinochet and Suharto and supporting apartheid in South Africa.

As part of the "celebration", the motion called for a screening of *Which Side Are You On?*, a documentary about the UK miner's strike of 1984.

The move has been condemned by large parts of the student body, triggering an outpouring of criticism on social media.

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**hockthai**

April 18, 2013 at 12:10 am

The public is polarized by Thatcher's death. Some people liked her, some don't. I send deep thoughts and prayers for her family.

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For a start, it seems somewhat random to be doing so in Australia when I know of no UK universities passing any equivalent formal motions and secondly, it was never going to be a motion supported by the whole student community. – Catherine May, UK

One comment on the Student Union's [official Facebook page](#) read: "What a disgusting lack of respect for humanity! This Student Union does not represent me and never has or will. Anyone who condones the 'celebration' of a death ought to be shamed."

Elected once a year, the Students' Council exists as one of two groups within the UMSU representing the views of the broader student population at the University of Melbourne. Student Council is comprised of 18 councillors, including 4 special councillors who stand for queer, mature aged, international and Indigenous students.

A [statement](#) from the UMSU President Kara Hadgraft said that the passing of the motion was not a unanimous vote and followed a "robust" discussion that presented a wide variety of views.

**Do you think the University of Melbourne Student Union's motion to celebrate the death of Margaret Thatcher has gone too far?**

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Catherine May, a former student at the University of Melbourne recently returned to the UK, condemned the motion, questioning the reason behind the controversial move.

"For a start, it seems somewhat random to be doing so in Australia when I know of no UK universities passing any equivalent formal motions and secondly, it was never going to be a motion supported by the whole student community," she said.

"Couldn't the University of Melbourne's Student Union's time been better spent discussing motions to unite the student community, rather than to divide it?"

Jennifer Fung, an exchange student from Hong Kong studying at La Trobe University acknowledged the controversy of some of Thatcher's policies, but said she was shocked at the harshness of the motion.

"Nobody is perfect, we all make mistakes" she said, adding that vilifying a public figure on behalf of the students was unacceptable.

Farrago, the student's magazine produced by the UMSU, has confirmed that Which Side Are You On? will not be shown as no funding was attached to the motion to facilitate the screening.

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