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UNIVERSITIES HELD TO RANSOM BY GOVERNMENT WORKPLACE RELATIONS AGENDA

The next phase of the Howard Government's draconian workplace relations agenda has been revealed today, with the announcement that universities' funding will be dependent on them meeting new workplace relations requirements.

This is another case of the Government punishing anyone who doesn't agree with its ideology - holding universities to ransom over its workplace relations agenda and eradicating their autonomy.

Universities will miss out on funding increases of up to 7.5% a year if they do not agree to promote individual contracts over collective agreements, cut unions out of their representational role, strip agreements of detailed provisions, and tie pay to productivity.

Universities will have to meet these requirements "to the satisfaction of the Education Minister", 'Lord' Nelson.

Putting university funding at the whim of an ideologically obsessed Government is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this proposal, particularly given that we haven't even seen the full extent of its wider attack on workplace relations yet.

The funding arrangements in question were negotiated and agreed to by universities back in 2003 - without the strings now being attached by the Government. To now tie the funding to a specific set of workplace relations requirements shows just how arrogant the Government has become in its quest to wind back conditions for working Australians and wield its soon to be unlimited power.

Newcastle University, already struggling from nine years of funding cuts totalling \$120m, should not be blackmailed into delivering this Government's workplace relations agenda.

University funding is for teaching students. It should not be used to hold universities to ransom over a workplace relations agenda that has nothing to do with the provision of quality education.

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