

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SCC)

Notes of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Committee** held at 9.00am on Tuesday 29 April 2020
by Zoom

PRESENT:

University – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Mark Hoffman; Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury; Mark Wylie; Mark Kelly; Diane Bunch; Lesley Phillips; Lisa Fairlie and Ruth Badham. Lindsay Hardy attended for item 1.

NTEU – Alistair Rolls; Terry Summers; Emma Joel; Daniel Conway; Hannah Pipe; Louise Noell; Elizabeth Adamczyk and, Jenny Whittard.

CPSU – Sue Freeman, Lisa Nelson and Ian Braithwaite.

Chair – Mark Kelly

Note-taker – Ruth Hartmann

1. ABORGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Lindsay Hardy, Indigenous Employment Partner, attended for this item and provided an update on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy, projects and initiatives as follows:

- Several new staff appointments has increased the institutional Indigenous staff headcount from 76 to 82, including an Academic position in School of Public Health, and an overall level of 2.4%;
- In recruitment for a level B Academic position in the School of Psychology and 2 professional staff positions based in Wollotuka;
- Collaborating with Faculty and Divisions to recruit additional Indigenous positions in Infrastructure and Facilities Services, Global Engagement and Partnerships, IT Services, Faculty of Science and, as well as, six positions in the University Library;
- Preparations in progress to host an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Expo at the Callaghan campus at the end of 2020. Interest in participating expressed from 30 parties at this stage;
- Continuing engagement with external partners and employment agencies to identify Indigenous candidates.

Discussion followed regarding the 3.9% Indigenous employment target. Mr. Hardy noted that despite current limitations due to COVID-19, the employment strategy launched in November 2019 is progressing well and based on current appointments a further 38 appointments are required to achieve the target.

Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury, reported that the consultation timeframe for the draft Cultural Capability Framework has been extended and that staff are encouraged to contribute feedback by COB Friday 29th May, 2020 to help guide the development of the final framework.

2. ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE – STANDING ITEM

University representatives reported on the following change processes:

2.1 IT SERVICES

Currently in implementation with the first round of the internal EOIs for new positions due to close next Monday. Several requests for VSP had been accepted.

2.2 ACADEMIC DIVISION

Implementation almost complete. Currently recruiting for the Director, Pathways and Learning Support position and the Director, Student Engagement & Advancement and Academic Registrar role is expected to be advertised shortly.

2.3 PORT MACQUARIE

In implementation including extended teach out period. One staff member accepted for VSP.

2.4 UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Mark Hoffman advised that due to the COVID-19 situation, a change process for the Library previously flagged to commence in April will be deferred. The Consultation Paper will be re-assessed for release at the end of next month.

3. WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

3.1 UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS

Associate Director, Employee Relations and Work Health & Safety, Mark Wylie noted that the University's critical incident team was continuing to meet regularly to monitor and respond to the COVID-19 crisis. With the increased number of staff working remotely, coverage for building wardens and first aiders is being assessed. One approach being explored is the deployment of a location tool to assist security to more accurately determine the location of staff working on campus where required, for example, in the event of a medical incident. The tool is accessible via a tile on the 'My UON' home page.

Union representatives requested that communications to staff regarding the location tool include assurances that the collection and use of any personal information would meet privacy obligations, only be used for the purpose it was intended and, for a defined time period.

Action 3.1: University – share and seek input on communication to staff from unions regarding use of location tool.

3.2 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SYDNEY CAMPUS

Responding to a request for information on the impact of COVID-19 for Sydney campus, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Mark Hoffman reported that there were currently very few students studying on-site at this location. Professor Hoffman reported that while institutional student numbers for semester one 2020 were achieved, the government restrictions and challenges of COVID-19 will have a significant effect on the University's pipeline of international students as evidenced by the reduction in students for ELICOS. This reduction has impacted the availability of work for casual ELICOS staff. Casual work in other areas of the University has also been impacted, however, this is different across campuses and faculties. The University is continuing to monitor the situation and is considering approaches to move forward.

Discussion followed as to whether the University will stand-down staff. Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury acknowledged that the impact of COVID-19 is significant and the University is

considering what measures may be available for the present time and for the future. However, Mr. Sainsbury confirmed, as communicated by the Vice-Chancellor to staff and unions, standing down staff is viewed as a measure of last resort by the University.

4. PERSONAL LEAVE

Discussion regarding accrual of Personal Leave deferred.

ACADEMIC STAFF

5. INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Mark Hoffman noted a draft Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom has been developed by the University in response to a review initiated by the Federal Minister for Education. Staff and students are encouraged to provide feedback on the draft code. Consultation will remain open until Monday 8 June 2020.

6. WORK HEALTH & SAFETY

Discussion regarding WHS for clinical labs, specifically social distancing requirements, room configuration and PPE in health areas at Ourimbah. Item removed from agenda and to be discussed further off-line.

TEACHERS

7. CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYMENT

University representatives will circulate a report on Teachers staffing ratios averaged for the 2019 census. Data for previous years had indicated a balance in the categories of employment using the third principle.

Action 7: University – circulate report of Teachers staffing ratios at census dates.

8. JOB SECURITY

NTEU representatives reported that work for permanent ELICOS staff based at Sydney was being prioritised over casual staff based at Callaghan and requested information on measures to support casual staff experiencing a downturn in work.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) responded that there is not a clear intention to prioritise work for Sydney based staff, however, retaining continuing and contingent staff is a priority for the University. Professor Hoffman acknowledged the skills and experience of casual teaching staff and, while the University wishes to retain as many staff as possible, if student numbers are not achieved it is challenging to maintain casual staff employment.

Discussion followed regarding support for casual staff with reduced or no work available. University representatives advised that it does not appear that the University would meet the eligibility criteria for the government's JobKeeper initiative, at this time. However, affected staff are encouraged to contact the government agency, Centrelink, to discuss eligibility for JobSeeker benefits.

Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury acknowledged that the University's priority has been dealing with the immediate response to COVID-19. Should there continue to be levelling of cases and

relaxing of restrictions there would be more capacity to explore forward strategies and options. This would include consultation with union representatives.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

No other items discussed.

Meeting closed at approx. 10.00am