

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SCC)

Notes of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Committee** held at 9.00am on Tuesday 26 August 2020
by Zoom Video Conference

PRESENT:

University – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Mark Hoffman; Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury; Associate Director, Employee Relations and Work Health & Safety, Mark Wylie; Mark Kelly; Dan Cummins; Ruth Badham; Lisa Fairlie; Omali Marshall; and Emma McPhee

NTEU – Terry Summers; Paul Chojenta; David Rambaldi; Emma Joel; Louise Noell; Elizabeth Adamczyk and, Industrial Officer Sam Ramsay

CPSU – Mark Smith; Sue Freeman, Industrial Officer - Lisa Nelson and Branch Organiser - Ian Braithwaite

Chair – Mark Wylie

Note-taker – Ruth Hartmann

BUINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- **CASUAL STAFF SALARY REVIEW**

Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury referred to the recent all-staff communication regarding the casual salary review. He reported that the review had identified some inconsistencies for casual salary claims, particularly overtime for casual professional staff, however, no systemic payroll issues were found. Adjustments are being made to the claims process as well as the payroll system, including incorporation on-line forms. Educational material has also been implemented including, a time and attendance procedure, fact sheets and training modules in Discover as well as briefing sessions for supervisors and timesheet approvers. Work to identify any underpayments is in progress although the number of impacted staff and monetary amount will likely not be known until November 2020.

NTEU representatives sought clarification if these processes would have implications for fixed term and ongoing professional staff too.

NTEU representatives reported that some areas had not paid casual staff for work completed during COVID, specifically unavoidable work required for online delivery.

Mr. Sainsbury recommended that staff should discuss payment claims with their supervisor in the first instance. Should the claim not be resolved, he requested that impacted staff forward relevant information to HR Services for follow up.

- **CLEANING OF TEACHING SPACES AND CLASSROOM**

Further to previous discussions regarding the University response to health and safety responsibilities with respect to COVID-19. Associate Director, Employee Relations and Work Health & Safety, Mark Wylie reported that protocols and procedures in place are in accordance with the NSW public health orders. Measures include deep cleaning teaching spaces and classrooms every night and, making available cleaning equipment for staff and students to clean equipment between classes. Staff with specific concerns regarding access to cleaning materials should contact the Work Health & Safety team.

NTEU representatives flagged the need to ensure cleaning equipment is available at teaching spaces at Ourimbah and Gosford locations as well as Callaghan and Newcastle City campus.

Mr. Wylie advised that WHS representatives are continuing to monitor availability of supplies across locations and have been in touch with TAFE who share the Ourimbah campus with the University. It was reported that TAFE representatives had flagged issues with complacency of staff and student use of the cleaning equipment as well as instances of loss/theft of equipment and supplies.

- **PERSONAL LEAVE**

Responding to a request from Union representatives, Mr. Wylie explained the process for accruing personal leave (sick) in relation to the following circumstances:

- If a full-time staff member accesses 15 days sick leave as part of their personal leave provision, no sick leave will be accrued i.e. added to the staff member's 'sick leave bank' for that year.
- If a full-time staff members accesses 16 days sick leave as part of their personal leave provision, no sick leave will be accrued for that year, however, accrued/banked sick leave is only required to be accessed when the staff member has exhausted all of the paid personal leave provision for that year.
- If a full-time staff member commences employment mid-way through a calendar year, they have a pro-rata entitlement to personal leave for that year.
- Personal Leave may be approved in advance, however, this may result in a negative balance or overpayment should the staff member leave the University prior to completing a full year of service.

Staff with specific concerns regarding leave should contact HR Services for advice.

1. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Lindsay Hardy, Indigenous Employment Partner, attended the meeting 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 Indigenous staff headcount to 83 and an overall institutional level of 2.4%; including an Academic position – Deputy Head of School of Nursing and Midwifery and, a professional staff position in the Faculty of Education and Arts. A further Academic appointment is confirmed to commence in November in the School of Psychology and, interviews are scheduled for next week for a professional staff position in the Global Engagement and Partnerships Division.
- The Indigenous Employment Committee chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy and Leadership, Nathan Towney met last week. Membership includes academic and professional staff representatives as well as HR Business Partners. The Committee will meet four times per year.
- Expressions of interest via the University website called for potential academic and professional staff positions
- Development of an 'Indigenous Talent' database identifying academic and professional staff appointments across the higher education sector.

- Preparations in progress for the University to host a virtual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Expo in November 2020.
- Continuing engagement with the University Talent Acquisition team, external partners, employment agencies and community organisations to identify and attract Indigenous candidates.

Committee members acknowledged and appreciated Mr. Hardy's continued efforts to raise awareness of and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and representation at the University.

2. ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE – STANDING ITEM

2.1 University representatives reported on the following change processes:

2.1.1 IT SERVICES

Currently in implementation, 4 staff members have been detached - 1 elected redeployment and 3 not yet decided; 5 staff members accepted VSPs with various exit dates until January 2021; 1 staff member has been redeployed to another position internal to the University; progressing through the schedule of recruitment that is internal to eligible ITS staff only at this time.

2.1.2 UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Currently in implementation, 12 staff members accepted VSPs with various end dates up to end of November 2020; progressing through the schedule of recruitment that is internal to eligible Library staff only at this time.

2.1.3 SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND LIFE SCIENCES

The staff forum for this change is scheduled today. The Proposal Paper and any recommendations will then be forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor for consideration and determination.

2.1.4 RELOCATION OF STAFF TO ANOTHER CAMPUS

Associate Director, Human Resource Services, Mark Kelly reported that Creative Industries staff occupying space at Callaghan and NUSpace/City Campus will be relocated to the new purpose-built facility at Honeysuckle early next year. This relocation forms part of the transition to City Campus organisational change process and does not involve a reduction in current staffing levels.

Mr. Kelly also reported staff based at Ourimbah primarily in Nursing are proposed to be relocated to the Central Coast Medical School at Gosford Hospital that is currently under construction and expected to be ready for occupancy by April 2021. While there is no likely impact on staffing levels, the relocation of staff requires consultation under the organisational change provisions of the University's Enterprise Agreements. Mr. Kelly indicated a Consultation Paper is in development for release in October.

NTEU representatives relayed some concerns from staff about the relocations for consideration, including compatibility of the University and Central Coast Local Health District IT systems, as well as students relocated to Gosford being able access key university support services, such as library and counselling.

2.1.5 FACULTY RESTRUCTURE AND COURSE OPTIMISATION PROJECT

Mr. Sainsbury referred to recent all staff communications regarding the intention to reduce the number of University faculties and the subsequent announcement of the PVC appointments. While noting discussions on this item are subject to a dispute notified by the NTEU, Mr. Sainsbury explained that the University is developing an overarching consultation process for both the faculty restructure and course optimisation projects. Regular meetings with NTEU and CPSU representatives will be arranged to provide information on timeframes and consultation mechanisms. Further correspondence on these items would likely be sent to union representatives by the end of this week.

2.2 POST-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

University representatives reported that areas subject to organisational change in 2019 are in the process of developing surveys for gain feedback from area staff directly impacted by the change. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic and Vice-President, Mark Hoffman further advised that the survey for the Academic Division change is expected to be sent to all Division staff later this week.

NTEU representatives enquired whether they could contribute questions for inclusion in the staff surveys. Professor Hoffman agreed to consider the union questions provided they were received by the end of this week.

NTEU representatives sought clarification regarding the post-implementation reviews including time frames for reviews, focus of the reviews, and communication to staff about the review process and findings. It was noted that the reviews would require questions relevant to the specific change process. This would include HR Business Partners consulting with the leaders of the various areas regarding aspects of the questionnaire, subsequent review and communication with staff.

There was further discussion regarding the Academic Division change review with NTEU representatives noting the tight timeframe to develop the review, and the need to ensure it was suitable for purpose and inclusive for all staff from the area directly impacted by the change to participate. NTEU representatives pressed that all staff should be able to participate in the Academic Division change review, as feedback they had received indicated that staff were not happy, experiencing morale low, and feeling that the change process 'got it wrong'.

Professor Hoffman clarified that the Academic Division questionnaire would include free text fields for participants to add further information or feedback on the change. As outlined in the Enterprise Agreement the findings of the review, when available, will be discussed at a Consultative Committee meeting as well as with staff of the affected area.

Action 2.2: Unions– send questions to be considered for inclusion in the Academic Division organisational change staff survey by end of this week.

3. UNIVERSITY FINANCE BRIEFING – STANDING ITEM

Mr. Sainsbury reported that the University's Chief Financial Officer, Paula Johnston was scheduled to attend the meeting to provide a financial briefing but had been called to another meeting and would no

longer be attending. University representatives will follow up with Ms. Johnston as to possible alternative dates in the next month and advise the Committee.

Action 3: University – follow up with Chief Financial Officer re alternative dates for financial briefing

4. FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS – WORKING FROM HOME

NTEU Industrial Officer, Sam Ramsay referred to the recent all-staff communication from Pro Vice-Chancellor, Liz Burd regarding the procedure for staff to request to work from home. Ms. Ramsay expressed concern with that the communication appears to require staff to disclose personal medical information to be considered eligible to work from home.

Mr. Sainsbury responded that the University is entitled to ask staff seeking to work from home if they have a medical condition that impacts on their ability to work on campus. With consideration to the dispute notified by the NTEU, Mr. Sainsbury requested that further discussion on this item be referred to the meetings as part of the dispute resolution process.

5. SPECIAL STUDIES PROGRAM – ACADEMIC

NTEU representatives requested a follow up to discussion regarding Special Studies Program (SSP) applications.

Noting this matter is subject to a dispute notified by the NTEU, Mr. Sainsbury reported that the University was reviewing approved applications and confirming intentions with individual staff as to whether they wish to continue with the approved plan or defer the program. He indicated that the University should be able to report back on this within the next fortnight.

6. CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYMENT – TEACHERS

NTEU representatives requested further information on the proposed Early Retirement Scheme, specifically whether it would be available to all categories of staff.

Mr. Sainsbury reported that details of scheme are being formalised for submission to the Australian Tax Office. However, based on benchmarking of previous schemes across the sector, eligibility for the University's scheme would not likely include non-continuing staff.

NTEU representatives sought clarification regarding Newstep teacher duties specifically marking. Noting that there had been discussion on this item during the last round of enterprise bargaining, Mr. Wylie agreed to arrange for further discussions with local managers.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Union representatives requested further guidance be provided to staff regarding use of own leave during the University shutdown for 2020-2021

Union representatives also requested clarification regarding the requirement for staff to take accrued long service leave in excess of 6 months.

University HR representatives explained that accrued long service leave will be managed proactively by requiring staff to develop an agreed leave plan with their supervisor for the taking of leave by the end of

2020. Where a staff member does not have an agreed leave plan and their long service leave accrual is in excess of 6 months, the University will direct the taking of long service leave. However, it is not expected that there will be directions to take accrued long service leave in 2020.

Union representatives also flagged concerns about taking leave with specific consideration to the timing of the course optimisation project and faculty restructuring and workload implication for staff.

NTEU representatives noted that in accordance with the Enterprise Agreement staff on substantial periods of long service leave will have their positions backfilled unless suitable alternative arrangements are made to address workload.

CPSU representatives noted that saving measures meetings had been held with both unions separately to the Staff Consultative Committee. As part of these discussions it was agreed that there would be as much flexibility as possible in the taking of leave, for example, staff being able to take 1 day of long service leave per week over an extended period rather than in one block of leave to minimise workload impact and the need for backfilling.

Meeting closed at approx. 10.45am