

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SCC)

Notes of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Committee** held at 10.00am
on Wednesday 14 August 2024 via Zoom & CH-205

PRESENT:

University – Mark Hoffman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic); Martin Sainsbury, Chief People & Culture Officer; Mark Wylie, Associate Director, HR Operations, and Ruth Hartmann, Senior Employment Relations Specialist.

NTEU – Terrence Summers; Annika Westrenius; Decheng Sun (NTEU Industrial Officer); and Sinead Francis-Coan (NTEU Newcastle Branch Organiser).

CPSU – Mark Smith; Rubi Tabuteau (CPSU Industrial Officer), and Ian Braithwaite (CPSU Organiser).

Chair – Terry Summers.

Guests - Simone Jordan, Indigenous Employment Partner (item 1); and Megan Clark, Associate Director, Wellbeing Health and Safety (item 6).

APOLOGIES – Ros Larkin, Shell Dillon, Roy Murcutt, and Zain Hamid.

Notetaker: Ruth Hartmann.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- a) *Nominations for inquiry officers/independent chairs agreed pools - NTEU to confirm.*
- b)) *Nomination of 1 SCC Teacher member - NTEU to confirm.*
- c) *A/D Workplace Relations, Governance and Policy to follow up on differences in workload reports provided to some individuals compared to the workload published in the University workload system – University to report back to NTEU*
- d) *A/D Workplace Relations, Governance and Policy to follow up on student to staff ratio calculations for QS rankings and ratios reported by the University to the government. – University to report back to the NTEU.*

1. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT – STANDING ITEM

Simone Jordan, Indigenous Employment Partner, Office of Indigenous Strategy and Leadership attended the meeting for this item to provide an update on the Maligagu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy including that the number of staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander now sits at 103, representing 3.12% of staff across the University in continuing / fixed term positions.

Information was provided on current roles being advertised in addition to an update on the merging of Wollotuka and the Office of Indigenous Strategy and Leadership (OISL). Ms Jordan also provided a report on staff completing the Thirri Wirri Leadership program; SBAT Cadet program as well as information on the ISN Gathering held in July; community partnerships and other recent activities. Discussion followed on budgeting for identified roles with Ms Jordan confirming that the employment costs of these roles is the responsibility of the relevant College or Division. Funding support is not available from OISL or Wollotuka.

2. POLICIES AFFECTING WORKING CONDITIONS OF STAFF

2.1 Flexible Work Policy

In response to a query from CPSU Industrial Officer, Rubi Tabuteau regarding any impact of the recent announcement to roll back NSW Public Sector working from home arrangements, Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury explained that the University is not covered by the Premier's Circular and instead has a flexible work policy with the fundamental principle of 'campus first but not always'. Working from home is one of a number of flexible work options but is not the default. While there is no intention to change the policy at this time, Mr Sainsbury noted the EA

requirement to consult with the SCC on development of policy and guidelines that affects the working conditions of staff.

2.2 International Student Number Caps

CPSU Industrial Officer, Rubi Tabuteau flagged the Government caps on international student numbers as an emerging issue for the higher education sector and sought information on potential operational impact to the University of Newcastle, specifically staffing.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Mark Hoffman explained that the University of Newcastle is not as dependent as some other universities on international student numbers. As such, the capping is not a dominant concern but is among other factors being monitored closely by the University.

3. CASUAL AND FIXED TERM EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION

Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury provided an overview of the University's response to addressing upcoming legislative changes. While the sector currently has a deferral for the new fixed term legislation the casual changes will apply from 26 August 2024. Casual contracts in place before that date will not be impacted, however, new documentation will be issued to casual staff commencing from the date the new legislation becomes effective.

Martin Sainsbury also presented information on the University's budgeting and workforce planning processes that will inform the legislative reforms as well as the EA commitment to decasualisation (14 FTE Academic positions).

4. MAJOR WORKPLACE CHANGE – STANDING ITEM

4.1 Pre - major workplace change reviews

Nil.

4.2 Current major workplace change processes

a) Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education (CEEHE) staff relocation

University representatives advised that the proposed CEEHE staff relocation to NUSpace Level 4, continues to be on hold pending further discussion with the Space Optimisation team and the leader of the group returning from a period of extended leave.

b) Future Students

University representatives reported that the final Proposal Paper for this change was approved to progress to implementation on 11 July 2024.

Action: University - circulate final Proposal Paper to Union representatives.

4.3 Post-Implementation Reviews

Nil.

5. EA IMPLEMENTATION – STANDING ITEM

5.1 SCC membership

NTEU to confirm 1 Teacher nomination for SCC membership.

5.2 Establishment of agreed pool of inquiry officers / independent chairs

NTEU to confirm nominations for inquiry officers / independent chairs for decisions regarding misconduct and underperformance.

6. WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Health and Safety report for the quarter was circulated to SCC members prior to the meeting. Associate Director, Wellbeing Health and Safety, Megan Clark attended the meeting for this item and provided an overview of Health and Safety event reporting for Q2 including: 221 events reported in AIMS, and three events notified to SafeWork NSW. Ms

Clarke provided an update on changes to relevant legislation and the regulatory environment as well as an overview of Wellbeing Health and Safety risk areas being psychological safety, physical environment safety, WHS accountability for controlled entities, global travel/catastrophic events response, and contractor safety management. In addition, EAP utilisation was reported with 830 contact sessions for quarter 2, 25% of which were classified by the EAP provider as work-related.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Academic Calendar: - Professor Hoffman provided an update on the consultation program for the Academic Calendar including, a webinar session being held for tomorrow at 10am. All staff will be sent an email with the options paper to view before the further consultation sessions are scheduled.

Workplace Relations: - Mr Sainsbury reported on the reporting line change for Workplace Relations staff from HR Services to Legal and Compliance including Associate Director, Workplace Relations, Policy and Compliance. As a result, Mr Cairns will no longer attend SCC meetings and Committee members should direct enquiries and correspondence to Ruth Hartmann, Senior Employee Relations Specialist until further advised.

Business Improvement Program: - Mr Sainsbury provided an update on the Business Improvement Program that comprises four streams of work. Workshops are underway as part of the people and process stream and 'ask me anything' weekly sessions are scheduled for staff.

Action: University – schedule Business Improvement Program update at next SCC meeting.

University childcare: - NTEU representatives requested an update at the next SCC meeting on tax implications and the impact on salary sacrifice arrangements for staff with children in University based child care centres.

Action: University – schedule update on impact on tax implications for staff utilising University based child care centres at next SCC meeting.

8. ACADEMIC SPECIFIC ITEMS

Nil.

Meeting concluded approx. 11.30am