

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SCC)

Notes of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Committee** held at 9.00am on
Wednesday 9 December 2020
In the EF122 and by Zoom Video Conference

PRESENT:

University –Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury; Associate Director, Employee Relations and Work Health & Safety, Mark Wylie; Associate Director Human Resource Services, Mark Kelly; HR Business Partners: Dan Cummins and Joanne Mouthier.

NTEU –Terry Summers; Paul Chojenta; Emma Joel; Alistair Rolls; Dan Conway; and, Industrial Officer, Sam Ramsay

CPSU – Mark Smith; Industrial Officer, Lisa Nelson and Branch Organiser, Ian Braithwaite.

Chair – Dan Conway

Incompetent Note-taker – Mark Wylie

BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- **SPECIAL STUDIES PROGRAM (SSP)**

Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury updated members of the Committee regarding the deferred SSP applications. Faculty meetings had occurred in late Nov and early December and all applicants had been advised of the status of their application. Mr Sainsbury reported that over 20 applications for SSP had been confirmed for 2021 which is a more positive outcome than earlier in the year. It was noted that the reasons for declined applications can still be improved as part of overall improved communication in this regard.

NTEU representatives also made the point that the reasons for declining SSP need to be included as part of the PRD process so that improvements can be made.

Mr Sainsbury suggested that statistics around SSP could be reported in 2021.

- **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Associate Director, Employee Relations and Work Health and Safety, Mark Wylie undertook to provide the committee with EAP statistics on a quarterly basis in 2021. This will be an area that perhaps the new AD WHS can report going forward.

1. ABORGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Lindsay Hardy, Indigenous Employment Partner, was unable to attend the meeting in person. Mr Wylie gave a brief update that was provided around the Indigenous Careers Virtual Conference where it was noted that 180 attendees were involved. There was strong representation from our regions, and it looks likely that the conference will be continued in the future.

The NTEU asked a question in relation to a comment that the VC had made about the University reaching its indigenous employment targets.

Mr Sainsbury undertook to ensure that Mr Hardy would be able to speak to this at the next meeting. Mr Sainsbury also briefly described the cultural competence framework that PVC Indigenous Strategy and Leadership, Nathan Towney is implementing that highlighted on-country experience and cultural immersion in addition to online training.

2. ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE – STANDING ITEM

2.1 University representatives reported on the following change processes:

2.1.1 IT SERVICES

No update provided.

2.1.2 UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Mr Wylie reported that 17 staff had elected VSPs, 2 elected redeployment and one staff member's election had yet to be determined prior to Christmas.

2.1.3 SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND LIFE SCIENCES

Currently in implementation: 3 staff yet to declare their choice of options.

2.1.4 RELOCATION OF STAFF TO ANOTHER CAMPUS

Associate Director, Human Resource Services, Mark Kelly reported that the change paper for the move of a small number of Ourimbah to the Central Coast Medical School was drafted and the paper detailing the final move of Creative Industries to Honeysuckle was still in progress. Mr Kelly reiterated that there were no job losses associated with either change.

2.1.5 FACULTY RESTRUCTURE PROJECT

Mr. Sainsbury reported that the College change paper had been released and that there was a small number of requests for increased time to lodge submissions beyond the 10th of December.

Mr Sainsbury was asked by the NTEU if a late submission would be accepted (possibly following a shorter version that could arrive by the 10th). NTEU representatives reported that staff had indicated that it was difficult to make comments at this time of the year due to work pressure. The NTEU also commented that there was some time between the submission closure date and when the Extraordinary SCC meeting was due to be held, so perhaps there was room for an extension.

Mr Sainsbury provided a general update on the themes that were coming from staff forums relating to the change, that included:

- Mapping of staff to roles
- WHS responsibilities
- FTE reduction impact on workload and how this relates to future school changes
- VSPs and potential timings

2.2 POST-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

University representatives reported on post-implementation review findings as follows:

Newcastle Business School's survey received 43 responses (56% of staff). Major themes included:

- Need for more performance data up front
- Better communication during implementation
- Speed of change was a positive

Port Macquarie change feedback which was facilitated by Strategy Planning and Performance. Themes and comments included:

- Appreciation that the VC came personally to speak with affected staff
- Student impact – communication could be improved (and has been improved with increased forums and updated)
- More details regarding the reasons for the change could have been communicated earlier
- More senior management presence at the campus
- More clarity about the potential arrangements with CSU for alternative employment
- Improving communication with the rest of the university about what was happening at PM.

The NTEU commented that the level of detail in the Port Macquarie report was a great improvement and it was hoped that this would be reflected in reports on the Academic Division change (2020) and other changes in the future. The NTEU also noted that the EA clause required that feedback be communicated back to staff in the area and not just the SCC.

3. HIRING FREEZE

Mr. Sainsbury reported that clarity around 2021 financial outlook would not be available until around April. This would be the most logical time for a review of hiring restrictions. Mr Sainsbury noted that a more flexible approach may be needed in consideration of the impact of College changes, however this would also be balanced by the number of staff seeking redeployment opportunities. Individual areas could still seek an exemption based on critical needs.

NTEU representatives raised concerns about the impact of the hiring freeze on workload while College changes play out. A request to consider extending fixed-term roles to ensure continuity during change was made. Further comments by the NTEU representatives were made around the responsibility to meet EA obligations in respect to offering fixed term contract and ensuring 'coal face' areas being appropriately staffed ahead of more abstract hires.

Mr Sainsbury cautioned that due to the potentially gloomier 2021 outlook, care needed to be taken not to create a situation where knee-jerk approaches to back-filling roles would necessitate more significant restructuring in the future, whereas careful use of fixed-term and casual staff may be more appropriate.

4. WORKING FROM HOME

CPSU representatives requested an update regarding the University's position on working from home.

Mr Sainsbury discussed the impact of the Public Health order update scheduled for 18 December and the fact that the working from home criteria would need to be revised in the new year to reflect this. Mr Sainsbury confirmed that there would still be grounds on which staff could apply to work from home for COVID reasons, but also reminded the group that normal work from home / flexible work arrangements would still be available.

Mr Sainsbury confirmed that the University was not intending to cease all face to face lectures as has been the case with some Universities.

NTEU representatives raised the question as to whether the University would be considering reviewing the range of flexible work arrangements available, particularly with consideration to equity and diversity.

Mr Sainsbury acknowledged that COVID has created an institutional discussion on how it operates and delivers an activated campus. Mr Sainsbury indicated that this would most likely be a topic of discussion in 2021.

5. SPACE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The NTEU raised the need for further discussion on how space management guidelines into 2021 (based on data provided in previous meeting). It was noted that this was a matter for both the Callaghan and Ourimbah campuses.

Mr Sainsbury reiterated that the rescinding of the guidelines was not a move to an uncoordinated approach to space management and acknowledged that COVID had created many questions, examples and new issues around remote working / hot desking and space management that had to be looked at in the context of large projects such as the Hunter Building exit and course delivery in the future.

NTEU representatives raised concerns around how space management considerations were addressed in the recent School of Creative Industries seating arrangements.

6. PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS FRAMEWORK

Mark Wylie confirmed that PVC Academic Excellence, Jenifer Milam will discuss the results of the PEF survey and related matters at the next SCC in 2021.