

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SCC)

Notes of a meeting of the **Staff Consultative Committee** held at 10.00am

on Wednesday 19 February 2025 via Zoom & CH-205

PRESENT:

University – Professor 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 – Terry Summers; Annika Westrenius; Sharon Cooper; Trisha Pender; Decheng Sun (Industrial Officer); and Sinead Francis-Coan (Newcastle Branch Organiser).

CPSU – Mark Smith; and Rubi Tabuteau (Industrial Officer).

Chair – Mark Smith.

Guests - Megan Clark, Associate Director, Wellbeing Health and Safety (item 5); Naomi Fibbens (HRBP); Jess Fitzpatrick (HRBP), and Kate Havrilka (HRPB).

APOLOGIES – Roy Murcutt; Tom Carey; Zain Hamid; Lisa Nelson and Ian Braithwaite. Simone Jordan (regular SCC guest) was unavailable to attend at short notice.

Notetaker: Ruth Hartmann.

1. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT – STANDING ITEM

Simone Jordan, Indigenous Employment Partner, Office of Indigenous Strategy and Leadership was unavailable to attend the meeting at short notice. The report will be circulated to committee members when available.

NTEU representatives requested a meeting be convened for the parties to confer with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Committee with a view to determining what measures must be taken to ensure the institutional employment target will be met.

Action: University – circulate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander report to committee members.

Action: University – arrange a meeting with NTEU and CPSU representatives to confer with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Committee on institutional employment target.

2. MAJOR WORKPLACE CHANGE – STANDING ITEM

2.1 Pre - major workplace change reviews

Nil

2.2 Current major workplace change processes

Nil

2.3 Post-Implementation Reviews

Nil

3. WORKING AT THE UNIVERSITY

3.1 Terms of employment – employment contracts

Discussion on the 'end-date' recording of employment contracts in the University payroll system. Mark Wylie, Associate Director, HR Operations explained that the date recorded aligns with the 'end-of-life' date of the payroll system rather than a date for employment to end. Mr Wylie resolved to make this clearer in information to staff, particularly casuals, by updating FAQs.

Chief People and Culture Officer, Martin Sainsbury provided an update on the University's response to addressing legislative changes that has specific impact on the higher education sector. The sector currently has a deferral for the new fixed term legislation until November 2025 and some fixed term contracts, specifically for clinical education support, had been issued with an end date of October 2025 to reflect the scheduled implementation date of the new legislation and to review arrangements for how this support is appropriately provided moving forward.

3.2 Categories of employment – casual employment

University representatives noted that changes in casual legislation applied from 26 August 2024 which significantly effects the employment of sessional casuals in the University sector.

Mr Sainsbury acknowledged that the changes had led to a high degree of uncertainty for managers and staff at the University. Discussion followed on support for casual staff not engaged in 2025 including continued access to EAP. In addition to EAP, Mr Sainsbury advised that the University explored other support options such as career development opportunities but take up from staff had been very limited.

With respect to the EA commitment to decasualisation (14 FTE Academic positions), Mr Sainsbury reported that this had been exceeded.

4. EA IMPLEMENTATION – STANDING ITEM

4.1 Staffing levels report

Action: University – Report to be presented at a future meeting subject to tabling of the University Annual Report in parliament.

4.2 Long Service Leave (LSL)

NTEU representatives sought an update on their request regarding the University's calculation of LSL for casual staff.

Mr Sainsbury advised that the circumstances are currently under review and the University will confirm in due course.

4.3 Redeployment and redundancy

Mr Sainsbury advised that there was not currently a program of redundancies targeting Professional Staff positions.

5. WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Health and Safety report for Q4, 2024 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 a summary of event reporting for Q4 as well as presenting an overview of the 2024 Year in Review for Work Health Safety at the University.

NTEU representatives reported feedback from staff that they had lost faith in EAP claiming that the support was not working well for them.

Ms Clarke advised that this was not represented in EAP utilisation data, however, she committed to follow up if further details could be shared.

Discussion followed on the annual number of EAP sessions that University staff may access for both personal and work-related matters. Ms Clarke noted that EAP is provided as a brief intervention and where longer care is required staff are directed to appropriate support beyond EAP.

SCC members acknowledged Ms. Clark's appointment as President, Australian University Safety Association.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

Business Improvement Program: - Mr Sainsbury provided an overview of the streams being reviewed in 2025 as part of the Business Improvement Program. While details of the timeline and impacts are not known at this time, information on the BIP continues to be shared in 'ask me anything' staff sessions and meetings with the unions.

Academic Division vacancies – Mr Sainsbury advised that there had been additional governance applied in reviewing recruitment activities to ensure some areas, including Academic Division have adequate budget for staffing resources for 2025. While this review had impacted recruitment timeframes it is expected this will soon be resolved with role criticality being a priority. Mr Sainsbury reported that there is currently not a significant number of vacancies across the University awaiting approval.

Responding to a request for information from NTEU representatives on workload implications of any roles not recruited, Mr Sainsbury advised that areas need to adjust the staff profile to meet budget including making decisions on role requirements, criticality and workloads.

Departure of DVC-A – Committee members acknowledged that this is the last SCC meeting Professor Hoffman will attend before leaving the DVC-A role at the University and, thanked him for his contribution.

7. ACADEMIC SPECIFIC ITEMS

7.1 University Workload allocation system

Mark Wylie, Associate Director, HR Operations reported that WAMS will continue as the University's IT platform for recording academic work allocations in 2025. All data for 2025 had been entered by Schools by end of January.

7.2 Workload

NTEU representatives reported that Academic staff in some Schools are being told that they have to teach for more than 40% of their annual workload.

In order to respond, Mr Sainsbury explained that more details would need to be provided but noted that the EA has clear processes for staff and the NTEU to raise workload concerns that have worked effectively during the life of the Agreement.

The NTEU committed to provide evidence to University representatives to support the claims regarding workload allocation expressed in this meeting

University representatives will review the information provided by the NTEU and report on de-identified workload trends at a future SCC meeting.

Action: NTEU – provide information/evidence on workload allocations to University.

Action: University – report workload allocation trends at a future SCC meeting.

Meeting concluded at. 12.00Noon