



COMMUNITY & PUBLIC SECTOR UNION ♦ SPSF GROUP NSW BRANCH

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26 March 2015

IN REPLY
PLEASE QUOTE
FILE NUMBER:

JJ:ljm: A15/0065

Sharon Champness
Director, People & Workforce Strategy
Human Resource Services
Vice-Chancellor's Division (CH368)
The University of Newcastle
CALLAGHAN NSW 2308

By email: Sharon.Champness@newcastle.edu.au

Dear Ms Champness,

Re: CPSU / PSA - Submission re UoN Consultation Paper - Financial Services

We thank you for the opportunity to provide a formal response to the organizational change proposed for Financial Services.

The PSA is dismayed that for such a significant change proposal, only two weeks has been allowed for consultation with affected staff and less for the remaining body of staff employed by the University of Newcastle who will be affected by the implementation of the change. The change paper and positions descriptors were posted late Friday, 13 March 2015.

Our members have advised that, whilst they had been informed that changes would be required, they were dismayed to see the full extent and impact on gradings in the proposed structure. Further it is unclear as to how the proposed structure will address workflow and operational processes.

We do not support the deletion of 20.7 EFT positions and the apparent intent to downgrade positions in Financial Services. The removal of HEW 9 and 5 positions removes promotional and development opportunities for staff which is inconsistent to the introduction of an enhanced Performance Development system - PRD captured in the enterprise agreement

Further clarification is sought to ensure that the 'General Principles' stated on the Consultation Paper are adhered to. The identification of '*Roles that are unchanging and roles that are 'new' or changing*' is unclear. This makes the identification of affected positions in the current structure difficult.

Communication and misunderstandings

Members have advised of inconsistencies in advice being provided to different staff which is causing significant concern. In particular we seek written clarification of utilization of the transitional positions, and the management of entitlements including voluntary redundancies when the position expires.

Rationale

We also wish to see the business case and financial modelling to support the decision to cut positions and the associated risk assessments that have been conducted.

In the absence of any meaningful supportive material it is easy to assume that the rationale for this change is merely about budget savings without the required assessment of the reduction in quality or quantity of service provision.

Consultation

This is a very large change and there is too much information to absorb in the limited consultation period allowed. This means that feedback from most contributors will be limited only to areas of particular interest. This is likely to compromise assessment of the broader proposal in a holistic way.

The late release of the paper to the broader University staff will impact on the opportunity to respond with considered feedback. Members have requested further time in which to respond. In support of our members we request an extension to the consultation period.

Positions

Many of our members found it difficult to provide detailed feedback on this proposal due to the fact that the position descriptions have been reworked several times across the consultation period. That consultants are still developing the position descriptors is an indication that the release of the change proposal paper was too early.

The generic nature of current duty statements combined with a team based approach makes it difficult for staff to provide considered and constructive feedback. They have advised that it is unclear as to how the proposed structure will address workflow and operational processes.

With reference to the proposed Financial Services structure (page 13 Consultation paper), it is unclear how the interactions between the four new Groups (Process Ownership, Finance and Operations, Business Support and Strategic Procurement) will provide best practice in financial operations and our members are concerned that the structure provides the opportunity for communication and process ownership failures.

The statement to 'remove manual and low value work' under process improvements without identification of the work or tasks has created uncertainty for our members in lower graded positions. We request more information as to what work will be removed and the impact on staff and the function of the unit.

Analysis of the draft position descriptors shows that the duties of the HEW 4 and HEW 8 are consistent with those of the current HEW 5 and HEW 9. This appears to be a downgrading of positions without the commensurate reduction in duties and responsibilities. This is inappropriate.

Finance Business Partners

Five (5) Finance Business Partner positions are aligned to particular faculties in the proposed Financial Planning and Business Support unit (page 16 Consultation paper).

These positions emulate the current 8.6 HEW 7 positions. The re-grading at HEW 8 level appears to be made on a work volume basis rather than work content. It appears that the proposed reduction of positions has resulted in an increase in position grading. This is not in keeping with grading principles.

There is a reference to Student Billing-Revenue as a current position or function. Members seek clarification on this as they are not aware of such a position.

The unions were advised that an advanced capability in reporting is required with the example of "Advance Excel" expertise. We wish to explore the rationale to delete a position to bring this expertise into the unit when members have advised that the program "Tech 1" has reporting functions. We suggest that training in the interpretation of these Tech 1 reports may assist the Academic and Faculty staff without the need to rely on a simplistic Office based system such as Excel and ensure retention of existing staff with organisational knowledge.

Impact of IT Division restructure

We have concerns as to how the upcoming restructure of the IT Division will impact on the 5.6 EFT positions moved across from the Financial Services change proposal. The entitlements, health and safety of staff must be considered as they will be facing another restructure within a short time of being impacted by the Financial Services change.

We seek clarification that the 5.6 positions being transferred are funded.

Further the broader impact on the function and operations of the IT Division must be examined. The change proposal paper does not describe how the transferred positions will interact.

We remind the University of the inequities and angst that resulted following the transfer of functions to the IT division, without the associated staff, during the CTL restructure.

This is an issue that we are still currently working with the University to resolve and we are keen to avoid further such problems.

General comments on staffing the structure.

The CPSU/PSA emphasizes the need to deliver training and development opportunities to ensure maximum placement of affected staff. Existing staff have already been told they don't have the required skill set to fulfil roles – despite being qualified accountants with considerable experience. The PSA submits that this is not indicative of a transparent process.

There is no mention of the opportunities for ongoing staff to work in the transitional positions and no clear explanation of the placement opportunities and the interaction of entitlements when a transitional position finishes.

We reiterate that 'new' positions must be advertised and filled via an internal process with external advertisement only as the final step in the placement process after all efforts have been made to place existing staff. We note the University's commitment in the enterprise agreement to job re-design as a tool to promote job security rather than simply deleting positions.

There has been no reference to any risk assessments conducted to mitigate the personal and business risks and we request that these be conducted to ensure the health and safety of our members is assured.

Members have been advised that a refusal of a direct placement negates the right to a redundancy. We insist that entitlements under the enterprise agreement be adhered to and seek clarification on the University's advice to staff.

Yours sincerely,



Dorothy Molyneux
Manager Industrial Services

cc. Mr Paul Munro by email : Paul.Munro@newcastle.edu.au