

Australian Services Union Submission
On the Proposal
For the Restructure of General Staff In The
School of Dentistry
August 2008

The Australian Services Union (ASU) after consultations with members working at the School of Dentistry, would like to bring to your attention some of the concerns in relation to the Proposal as outlined by the University.

We understand the need for change in consideration of the findings of the report handed down by the Academic Review Board, and we concede that the restructure is necessary to place the School in a better position to continue offering a strong education program for students. We also understand that the support work that enables such programs to operate effectively requires refinement and our members have taken this on board and contributed to those consultations in good faith.

However, with such change and as major as this Proposal suggests, the University needs to understand of the heightened need to ensure that the employment conditions that are impacted by this decision are addressed and not left to languish long after the change has been implemented.

There are some 17 positions to be disestablished and 13 new positions which will replace those disestablished. The Proposal, in recognizing the new direction in which the school should head, suggests that it will put in the necessary staff to support the needs for the future.

We are concerned that existing staff through the transition of this proposal will lose out on roles in the new School of Dentistry, over and above what has been highlighted in the Proposal. In some instances for example, where positions have been made redundant and recreated into another role at a higher level, or remodeled into a position at a lower classification level, the concern is that staff will not have the necessary skills or confidence to apply for the higher level. Equally, staff may not wish to drop in classification or wages either and therefore, ultimately may no longer have a role with the University.

We also acknowledge the length of service that some of our members have with the University. Some exceeding thirty years. Years, of experience and knowledge that the University risks losing. We believe that these staff, as all staff should, be provided with every effort to explore alternative roles within the University and that they be afforded due dignity and support throughout this process. Some questions arise as to what the University's position is, for those staff who have employment letters which state, "to retirement" and therefore as staff rightly question, "will this

mean that the University will continue to employ me right up to the time of my retirement”?

In terms of the consultation: Staff feel that there were periods of times where there was little information available, and that they anxiously awaited the release of the Proposal to see what and how the restructure would impact on them. Further feedback also indicates that throughout the dialogue with the University, no consultation has taken place on any of the new position descriptions and now we have a genuine worry about what impact these new roles will have on workloads and how realistic they are.

Ideally we seek to recommend a review in 12 months time for all position descriptions for the purposes of ensuring staff are not struggling and overworked within the new structure and for a commitment by the University to correct any deficiencies where found, particularly if the University is committed to the retention of its skilled workforce.

We provide the following examples of concerns that have been raised in contexts of the Proposal and in which we would like to bring to your attention.

Cashier and Finance Assistant

The Cashier’s office is currently open for business from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm each day. Additional time for daily set-up and end of day balancing procedures increase the hours required to cover this position to 9 hours and 15 minutes each day. This is the amount of time required to provide coverage to the cashiering function, yet the Restructure Proposal does not acknowledge this.

The Restructure Proposal says:-

Brief description of minor change to position of Cashier and Finance Assistant:-

Position will have a second full-time colleague with whom to provide coverage for the Cashiering function. Opportunities for training are increased as well as scope for handling a wider range of operational finance duties as some cashiering times can now be covered by the new position.

Primary purpose of Finance Assistant and Cashier position:-

To support the financial and human resource (HR) operations of the School by

- **Undertaking operations related to finance and human resources – 80%**
- **Acting as a second Cashier for the School (share workload, span of hours and absences with Cashier and Finance Assistant position) – approx 20%**

If the new Finance Assistant spends 20% of their day providing coverage to the Cashier position then they would be allocating 1 hour and 27 minutes to this task. Currently, the Cashier is responsible for operating the cashiers office 100% of her time, and an additional 2 hours and 20 minutes (or 33% of daily work hours) is required from a second person just to allow the cashier’s office to remain operational for the required times.

Having someone cover the Cashier position, while the Cashier has meal and tea breaks, does not increase the Cashier's opportunity for training or handling a wider range of operational finance duties.

The Restructure Proposal says:

Extract from section 5.2:-

At present the School has one position assigned to the nearly full-time role of cashiering, and it is important to create better opportunities for cross-coverage of this key operational function. Having two positions fully trained to handle cashiering duties will allow this team of two staff to better manage workload and training requirements, and will also provide the opportunity for better coverage of the cashiering function during peak times in the teaching semester periods. Having both positions cross trained in all aspects of the range of finance and casual salary duties will also allow for a better spread of workload distribution and planning.

Currently 2.5 positions are fully trained in cashiering duties. The current part-time Clerical Assistant has always acted as relief and back-up to the cashiering role. The current Administrative Officer has always provided coverage in the part-time Clerical Assistant's absence and also whenever the Cashier has been absent. The restructure proposal decreases the coverage of this key operational function.

The proposal that the Cashier be cross-trained and able to undertake all aspects of the range of finance and casual salary duties would require more than a minor change to this position. In proposing the 80% finance task, 20% cashiering duties split for the Finance Assistant, the Cashier position has been left with 100% cashiering duty responsibility during her working day, making it impossible for her to gain (and maintain) the knowledge and experience necessary to be able to carry out the full range of financial duties as proposed.

The positions of Cashier and Finance Assistant, and Finance Assistant and Cashier have the potential to be closely aligned. This proposal however, despite listing common duties, has deeply divided the positions.

In addition, staff have raised more valid points to the Finance area:

| Current structure of finance area:- | Proposed structure of finance area:- |
|--|---|
| One HEW level 6 | One HEW level 6 (yet to be classified) |
| One HEW level 4 | One HEW level 4 |
| 0.5 HEW level 3 | One HEW level 4 (yet to be classified) |

1. The current Clerical Assistant position in finance was rejected for reclassification to a HEW level 4, yet the new position description for the **Finance Assistant and Cashier** (HEW level 4 yet to be classified) covers many of the duties presently undertaken. The one duty that has been re-

allocated has been assigned to a position to be classified as a HEW level 5. The present incumbent is disadvantaged by making the position full-time and it would be to the detriment of the finance area to lose this experience and knowledge. Is this a “done deal” or would management consider two 0.5 positions if requested by any interested parties?

2. The current position of **Cashier** would by default change significantly if the position duties of **Cashier and Finance Assistant** and **Finance Assistant and Cashier** were to be shared as suggested. Detailed descriptions of all positions (not only new positions) are essential if continuing staff are to be fully aware of their duties and responsibilities.
3. It is of concern that there are so many duties described in the new position **Finance and Human Resource Officer** as the finance area struggles with the current volume of work. The increase in staffing levels would only amount to 0.5 yet the new position of **Finance and Human Resource Officer** has attracted many duties previously handled by the School Manager.

We are genuinely worried that the current finance area will be expected to take on much of the HR Management Accounting and Budgeting that the School Manager has currently been doing as well as coping with the new implementation of Patient database, Unifi (University’s new accounting package), One Stop (the new cashier package) and Timekeeper (the new academic appointment package). This is much more responsibility, with only an additional 0.5 position. Also, the Finance and HR Manager will basically be taking up the role of School Manager (currently HEW 7) which is now expected to be a HEW 6. **The ASU considers this to be extremely unfair and makes a recommendation for the University to review this decision and upgrade to present HEW 7.**

4. Previous to the creation of a School Manager the finance area was staffed by:-

One HEW level 7
One HEW level 5
One HEW level 4

In conclusion, the ASU fears the new structure will lead to far greater workloads for some staff and we recommend that the University monitors this on a regular basis with a commitment to review in 12 months. We also seek a commitment if the review demonstrates that staff have been negatively impacted, that immediate steps are taken to ensure correct staffing levels are in place. Other areas of particular concern are the Secretarial staff, dental technicians and senior student administration officers.