

## 2 August 2016 - EBA Bargaining Meeting Update

This meeting discussed the following issues:

### Change management and consultation

Significant progress has been made towards creating a simpler and clearer Change Management and Consultation clause. However, two areas remain where a common understanding has not been achieved:

#### ***Consultation on Changes to Policy and Procedures***

The current agreement provides that changes to “*University Policies and Procedures which have a significant and material **impact on the career and promotional opportunities** for identifiable groups of academic or professional and general staff members*” require a formal consultation process to occur. In addition, any changes to policies and procedures that could result in **changes to the workforce composition, hours of operation, restructuring of jobs causing significant impact on day-to-day work practices or redundancies** also require formal consultation to occur.

While Curtin has proposed some changes to clarify the language used in the change management clause, it is not proposing any changes to the circumstances around which formal consultation would occur. This means the University proposes to continue with formal consultation processes for any changes to policy and procedures fitting the circumstances noted above. In addition, Curtin proposes to continue the current practice of publishing any suggested changes to policy for staff consideration and feedback for at least a two-week period: proposed changes are now published in Curtin Weekly with links provided to the appropriate website to provide feedback.

The NTEU is seeking to have the EBA provisions extended to “any policy changes” that “significantly or **materially affect the workplace**”. Curtin does not support this increase in scope as it is impractical and well beyond what is envisaged by the formal consultation process. For instance, a change in the Health and Safety legislation by government would flow through to a change in Curtin policies and procedures. This could materially affect the workplace but a formal consultation process would add nothing as Curtin has no choice but to implement changes to legislation. Similarly, activities of TEQSA or many other agencies could place Curtin in a similar position of requiring to change policies and procedures. Staff would, however, still have an opportunity to be informed of the changes and provide feedback via notifications in Curtin Weekly.

#### ***Transfer of Staff to Suitable Alternative Positions***

In circumstances where role restructuring or major change occurs, Curtin generally seeks to minimise the number of positions that are declared redundant. The transfer provisions within the agreement that apply to professional and general staff can be used to place staff in suitable alternative roles before their original role is declared redundant, thereby helping to maintain their employment. Curtin would like to extend this option to academic staff. While it is acknowledged that opportunities of this type are likely to be limited, it seems unfair that academic staff aren’t provided with the same opportunities to remain employed at Curtin where a transfer might meet their career aspirations.

Curtin’s understanding of the countering arguments put by the NTEU include the proposition that all staff in such a position should have the choice of either being made redundant or accepting a transfer or redeployment opportunity. Preventing Curtin from pursuing transfers for anyone who finds

themselves in such an unfortunate circumstance appears to be inconsistent with the concept of improving job security.

## **Career Development Fund**

The NTEU has proposed that a \$250,000 per year Career Development Fund be established to support opportunities for professional and general staff. Curtin currently spends between \$7 and \$8 million per year on training and development of academic and professional staff and they can also access up to five hours per week of study leave at full pay. Establishing a small, special-purpose fund, and extending funding as proposed by the NTEU, is not considered necessary.

## **Academic issues: Academic Roles, Workload and Probation**

Curtin's Provost, Professor John Cordery, led a discussion of academic matters including Curtin's proposed amendments to extend academic probation from one year to three years. This would allow new staff a more reasonable opportunity to demonstrate their capability in their role. The concept was broadly supported although some further discussion is required.

Revised academic roles and workload clauses were tabled by Curtin. Discussion is in its early phase and has focused on:

- the separation of academic roles and workload into two distinct clauses
- a workload process based on principles that would be implemented at the local level
- the ongoing application of the Academic Workload Management System (AWMS)
- consideration of the concepts of excellence and leadership introduced by Curtin into role definitions
- a new concept of Innovation and Scholarship of Learning and Teaching
- a concept of peer review of workload introduced by the NTEU.

Workload is a key issue and further exploration of academic roles and workload will occur over the next few weeks.

## **Other workplace matters**

**Staff Assistance Program (proposed removal of clause):** Curtin's provision of assessment, counselling and personal development programs for staff meets the obligations of Occupational Health and Safety legislation and is actively promoted in our 'Curtin Life' website. The NTEU has agreed in principle for this clause to be removed to help simplify the agreement.

**Workplace bullying (proposed removal of clause):** Curtin already complies with numerous elements of relevant legislation in this area (Fair Work Act and Occupational Health and Safety Act). The NTEU suggested it would consider removing this clause from the agreement if Curtin developed a workplace bullying policy and Curtin has agreed to consider this.

**Workplace rehabilitation (proposed removal of clause):** Again, Curtin already complies with relevant legislation in this area and wants to remove this non-industrial issue from the agreement. This is still under consideration by the NTEU.

*The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 9 August.*