

## **Making Students Come First: Issues raised in discussion**

[Note: Participants believed that strengthening the Branch would lead to better workplace relations and a more equitable workplace with an emphasis on quality in teaching/learning related issues.]

### **Branch Communication**

#### **Desired Outcomes**

- Desired--good two-way

#### **Challenges**

- Top-down-bottom up (National, state, branch, members)
- Misunderstanding too hierarchical, grass roots excluded.
- PR: Staff need to know who does what?

#### **Opportunities**

- Some good communication already established (E-mail list, Soapbox, feedback from Council and other sessions)
- Non-members receive information about what the union is doing (use it as a recruitment tool). [‘I hope you are happy to receive this pay rise to ease your individual conscience about getting this pay rise for nothing.’]

#### **Strategy for Achieving**

- Could do better scheduling of meetings
- Use delegates to pass information
- Improve services to individual members.
- Need more of the same communication.
- Need feedback on individual industrial cases so that members are aware that the union is working on the case.
- Employ a PR person for the NTEU. Establish the purpose of a PR campaign. The branch should employ an administrative assistant to help the branch members do this PR work. Get a person to synthesis all the information and issues to avoid information overload for members.

### **Recruitment**

#### **Desired Outcomes**

- Recruit new members
- Retain old members
- Engage members
- Change the mindset “me vs union”

#### **Challenges**

- What can I contribute to the union. The union is comprised of people. Need for a balance between the two. Work out why I am in the union. Is it only for ‘insurance’?

#### **Opportunities**

- NTEU services for non-union members.

- What do I want out of the union (empowering, value-adding to our career, mentoring of staff to fill the role of delegates)? Take other staff members explaining the issues to other staff in their own words (more faces = more sense of diversity).

## Strategy for Achieving

- Introduce union training and education.
- Survey members “Why are you here?” “What do you want to do for the union?”
- Train replacements for the people who are currently active.
- Getting a home for our union on the campus.
- TUTA time and opportunities
- Liaise with the National Office.

## Relationships

### Desired Outcomes

- Improve active partnerships with other unions

### Challenges

- Regional campuses (including Rockhampton) onto local Trades Councils.

### Opportunities

- The Student Association; take the initiative to improve this relationship ourselves as we have an ongoing membership whereas theirs is a rolling membership. Keep the relationship fresh.
- The coal mines (eg. their members are postgraduate students; can merge resources on the campaign at election time; get involved on the local level).
- Sharing will improve the later positions (eg. the MUA supported the NTEU campaign on the UQ campus.) There are many ways we can help the other unions and vice versa. The Council of Trade Unions was one of the first to initiate interaction.

## Strategy for Achieving

- Involve members in local Trades Councils
- Community Forum
- Present a united front

## Rocky-Centric

### Desired Outcomes

- Aim for inclusively and a borderless operation.

### Challenges

- Other campuses feel locked out of discussions.
- The ISL system is a barrier to communication across campuses. Can the union make better use of the ISL technology, recognising that its use is constrained by ISL timetable.
- Other universities have begun locating the management out of the main campus which necessitates the NTEU following suit.
- Getting home(s) for our union on the campuses.

### Opportunities

- Two-way communication already established as far as possible between regional campuses and Rocky. We need to establish the mobility and flexibility of the NTEU branch.

- Membership density is lowest at those places where it could be highest.

## Strategy for Achieving

- Increase delegates on other campuses (including possibly delegates from Faculties)
- Investigate the potential of Griffith University's sub-branch system. Sub-branches have funding and information about the whole operations. That is, have an organisation on the ground which works for you at a particular place.
- Never have only one person at a site so that that person doesn't feel totally isolated.
- Continue and extend visits by NTEU staff to other campuses. Take advantage when visiting campuses/centres for other purposes to make contacts on behalf of the NTEU.

## Public-Private

### Desired Outcomes

- More accountability from CQU regarding the commercial campus and other commercial operations to ensure that quality is maintained and public funding not being used to support commercial operations.
- Workplace improvement, including equity for commercial campus staff, on both public and commercial campuses to ensure quality outcomes.

### Challenges

- The agreement between CQU and commercial companies should increase in transparency and accountability and should not be shrouded under 'commercial-in-confidence' agreements and the role of Council.

### Opportunities

- State Auditors General have been quick to inquire into arrangements with private arms.
- Important to articulate that it is about public interest. Universities were found to be supporting associated companies (not vice versa).
- Questions being asked by the office of higher education who are very concerned to protect the public interest.
- Accounts of controlled entities now required to be published (cf. Melbourne University's controlled entity viewed as part of the structure of the university). (Corporations Law applicability?)
- States are now concerned to ascertain whether or not universities provide a quality product and whether or not they are contributing to the economics of the local area.

## Strategy for Achieving

- Obtain staffing profiles on commercial campuses to increase knowledge of who and what.
- Lobby State Parliament to put new members on Council to honour their fiduciary/governance responsibilities.
- Use the Auditor General's role in the Office of Higher Education as a strategy for achieving desired outcomes.
- Timing of the Senate inquiry into higher education crucial and has implications for policy vacuum. NTEU should look at inquiry terms of reference. Issues relate to quality and the role of the university.

## Students Come First

### Desired Outcomes

- Improvement in university image and staff/student morale.

- Aim to replace current ‘Students Come First’ slogan with a better slogan focusing on learning, education outcomes.

## **Challenges**

- The welfare of students is a social issue with industrial implications. It affects our workplace and working conditions because of the expectations.
- Lack of inclusion in the initial discussions have produced a lack of ownership.
- 2 views: (a) bad/poor slogan and (b) could be a good slogan but we can’t follow through.
  - The slogan is meaningless and a source of mirth in the general community.
  - It affects morale because it is rhetoric and lip service only to an ideal which is difficult to achieve.
  - Students don’t see they are getting value for money.

## **Opportunities**

- Could be used to galvanise opinions about CQU brand.
- The slogan could be used to engage people who are not strong unionists in a debate which has common interest.
- Could be incorporated into the broader issues surrounding EBA III on the topic of ‘does this slogan support student retention’.

## **Strategy for Achieving**

- Run a campaign to change slogan.
  - Argue that current slogan is detrimental
  - Possibly survey opinions.