

THE **campus backbone**

CPSU - Macquarie University Branch



THE **GENERAL STAFF UNION**

YOUR GENERAL STAFF AGREEMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

November 2009

SEPARATE AGREEMENTS WORK FOR GENERAL STAFF

The CPSU, the General Staff Union, has received a number of enquires from staff interested in how separate general and academic staff agreements will affect them. The CPSU believes that separate agreements are of great benefit to general staff. There are many reasons why separate enterprise agreements are better for General Staff:

- 1. Better Outcomes:**
Separate agreements consistently deliver better outcomes for General Staff.
- 2. A Stronger Voice:**
Separate agreements give General Staff a much stronger voice in negotiations.
- 3. Self-determination:**
Separate agreements give General Staff the power to accept or reject an offer from their employer in their own right. Under the framework of a single "all staff agreement" General Staff can be bound to an agreement they don't support.
- 4. No "Claytons" Agreement:**
The current Macquarie University agreement is a single agreement in name only. It has a number of distinct conditions for General and Academic staff.
- 5. Simplicity:**
Separate agreements are less complex because you do not need different provisions and different parts applying to some staff and not others.
- 6. Prioritising General Staff:**
Negotiating separate agreements means that the parties can more effectively prioritise the issues that matter to a particular group of staff; there is no haggling over what issues are dealt with first.
- 7. No Horse Trading:**
Negotiating a separate General Staff Agreement means that General Staff conditions cannot be traded off for Academic Staff conditions, or vice versa.
- 8. Sector Standard:**
Universities have historically had separate agreements and awards for General and Academic staff.
- 9. Endorsed by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission:**
The Full Bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission endorsed this approach by recently releasing separate modern awards for General and Academic staff.

83% OF GENERAL STAFF BACK A SEPARATE AGREEMENT

University of New England General Staff recently voted 83% in favour of a separate General Staff Enterprise Agreement.

The Agreement provides a 17% compounded pay rise over three years, uncapped sick leave, five (5) weeks annual leave, new workload protections, an additional purchase leave scheme, comprehensive trade union rights and much more.

Jen Mitchell, CPSU UNE Branch President, said "like General Staff at Macquarie, we were coming from a single, all-staff agreement. Under that framework academic staff issues tended to dominate negotiations. Management took the view that once the academic claims were resolved, bargaining was over. This time around, we campaigned hard for a separate agreement, and once we got agreement from UNE on that format, we had a much stronger platform for General Staff negotiations."

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Are separate agreements divisive?

A. No they are not. Many universities have separate Agreements for General Staff and the relationship between Academic and General staff is no different than at Macquarie University. The relationship between General and

Academic Staff is based on trust and mutual respect and does not depend on the industrial instrument that covers them. Universities with separate General Staff agreements include UTS, UNSW, UWS, Wollongong, Newcastle and recently the staff of the University of New England voted 83% in favour of their new General Staff Agreement.

Q. Won't we lose our power by having separate agreements?

A. No, in fact you will gain power because for the first time in more than 10 years General Staff matters will have priority in an enterprise agreement at Macquarie Uni.

Q. What will happen if we make our agreement first and then the Academics get a better pay increase?

A. That won't happen. The CPSU has already received a written assurance that the University will match General and Academic Staff increases.

Q. What about 'united we bargain, divided we beg'?

A. We will not be divided. General Staff at the University of New England overwhelmingly endorsed a separate General Staff Agreement by a margin of 83% (for) to 17% (against). The new agreement was negotiated by both unions and we will continue to negotiate with the NTEU for a separate General Staff agreement at Macquarie. UNE General Staff chose to return to a separate general staff agreement after trying a single agreement in the previous round of bargaining.

The conditions negotiated for General Staff at UNE are in fact better than those of Academics at UNE. The UNE Agreement has provided many new benefits for General Staff. They now have a general staff workload clause, a vastly improved job classification process, limits on the use of fixed term contracts and have retained conditions such as uncapped sick leave, 5 weeks annual leave and paid shut down won by the CPSU in previous General Staff agreements.

Q. Do we have a better chance of improving our conditions in a single agreement?

A. Macquarie University has had a single agreement for around 10 years. General Staff still have no career progression, no career development, no way to get promotion and no workloads clause.

The CPSU log of claims seeks for the new agreement to provide:

- A comprehensive process for equitably resolving workload concerns raised by individuals or groups of General Staff.
- Other measures to assist General Staff to continue to develop their career lifetime education. These measures are to include:
 - Career break leave arrangements.
 - Genuine access to study leave arrangements using a broad definition of study, including equity of time off for alternative delivery methods i.e correspondence external study.
 - A comprehensive, funded and equitable career training and development scheme for General Staff.
 - Access to Career Progression Training, (i.e. training in areas outside of current Position Description to aid in career advancement within the University).
 - Comprehensive on the job training for all General Staff.
 - The equitable utilisation of "higher duties" opportunities for career development.
 - Accelerated progression, and access to study at the University at a discounted rate.

Q. Will this cause a rift between the Unions?

A. Both unions have different opinions on separate vs single agreements. It has always been the position of the CPSU that separate General Staff agreements consistently deliver better outcomes for General Staff.

At UNE, the CPSU ran a very positive, inclusive and informative campaign that resulted in a vastly improved agreement for General Staff that was negotiated by both unions.

Q. Shouldn't we have one workplace, one agreement?

A. There are already a number Enterprise Agreements here at Macquarie Uni, Access Macquarie, at MGSM, and Students @MQ. Macquarie Uni is a very large employer engaging over 3500 staff. There is a lot of diversity in employment, most critically, between General and Academic staff.

Q. What about strength in numbers?

A. So far that has not resulted in better conditions for General Staff and recently the industrial action taken by the academics union after only 4 bargaining sessions had little impact on anyone. The CPSU respects another unions right to take industrial action but will only use industrial action as a last resort rather than a first resort. We are extremely aware that strike actions result in a loss of a days pay for our members.

Q. Will a separate Agreement make the bargaining time longer?

A. No, at UNE General Staff have already voted for their new agreement and the academic agreement is still being negotiated. This means that the General Staff agreement was not held up by discussion of academic issues.

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