Staff forum following the Review of Administrative Arrangements within the University Accommodation Division

23 July 2010, 12.30pm, Burton and Garran Hall Meeting Room

Opening comments (Elizabeth Deane)

The forum is intended to give interested parties an opportunity to comment on the review document.

The Implementation Working Party is working out the detail and feasibility of how the recommendations will be implemented in consultation with stakeholders.

In 2009 the University reviewed the role of residences in student life. This review was ambiguous about the nature of the administrative structure supporting residences. The review recommended that the Heads of residences report directly to the PVC (Students) and this recommendation has been implemented. Some of the other recommendations in the 2009 review have been rejected. This review is available on the website of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor.

Administrative support to the residences is provided through University Accommodation, Facilities and Services and residences staff. The administrative review had the objective of looking at how administrative support could best contribute to enriching the student experience; and how administrative processes and structures could be improved so that they uplift the residences. The Implementation Working Party will focus on roles and functions; function will largely determine the form of new structures and processes.

Karen Hill is leading the Implementation Working Party. She has worked at the ANU for 10 years, the last four as General Manager of the College of Asia and the Pacific. She has experience in the processes involved in change management. Other members of the Implementation Working Party are Nadine White, Michael Shortland and Andrew Smith.

A website providing information about the consultation process has been established. The anxiety of some staff members is acknowledged. Constructive contributions to the Implementation Working Party are sought.

Remarks from the floor (remarks in bold)

Have the recommendations been endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor and are they set in stone?

The 2009 review was endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor. He has seen the administrative review report and is aware that this consultation process is occurring. There is still the possibility of change, though the broad direction of this change is outlined. Where there are problems with the recommendations the Implementation Working Party will look for solutions and options.
The consultation process has reduced the anxiety, and open communications are important to this. Records of meetings with staff will be placed on the website.

The student experience needs to be at the core of what happens and what decisions are made.

Students have not been consulted about the report and have not been adequately represented. Lack of student consultation seems to be becoming systematic. The difficulty with the report is its ambiguity. There is not an aversion to change. Ambiguity is the problem. The timeline for written comments does not give residents’ associations adequate time to consult with residents.

There was consultation with students during the 2009 review and during the current review. Written comments are now sought. The deadline for comments has already been extended and two open forums held to enable concerns and comments to be aired. However, the deadline will be extended for a further two weeks, until 9 August.

It has not been clearly demonstrated how these recommendations will improve the students experience. This needs to be teased out. There is concern about the loss of direct connection between students and staff in the residences.

Collective arrangements can empower people, provide them with greater opportunities and facilitate greater consistency of support to students and staff.

Academic areas are different from residences. Staff are part of the residential community. The residences are people’s homes.

We take on board that there is a distinction between staff in academic departments and those in residences, but see more parallels between the ‘community’ of an academic department and the ‘community’ of a residence. It is important that staff across the residences work as a team and share best practice.

A lot of staff have worked in the residences for a long time.

The responsibilities of the Head of a residence are similar in some respects to those of the head of an academic department. Both need to ensure that their plant, equipment and facilities are operating effectively so that students can have a high-quality experience. The current recommended approach would mean that Heads have greater focus on the student experience rather than managing the facility.

Business is currently at a standstill. Can maintenance and works be done?

Yes, though the development of a campus master plan may cause some delays.