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

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

Opening comments (Elizabeth Deane and Mick Serena)

The review is intended to drive administrative improvements which will benefit both students and staff through the provision of better services and better career opportunities. It follows a wider review of the halls undertaken last year.

This forum marks the start of a period of consultation: a working party will be formed to work out the detailed operational aspects of the change. This working party will include Karen Hill, Nadine White and Michael Shortland. It will look at functions, roles and activities. There is no intention to shed jobs as a result of the process; it is likely that there will be reporting line changes. (ED)

A number of external factors have prompted the University to review current administrative arrangements. By 2012, an additional 1000+ beds will be available, making a total of around 4700 beds managed by the University. Managing this is a significant task. This review is about examining current processes and the student experience in University accommodation and the integration of accommodation with other University activities, in particular academic activities. (MS)

Remarks from the floor (remarks in bold)

Is there any room for negotiation on the review recommendations?

There is room for negotiation. The working party will look at each recommendation and consider the feasibility of implementing it. There will be wide consultation.

Is it possible to have a structure, to see where the new structures fit in the broader organisation of the University?

The working party will undertake a mapping of functions and roles from the old structure into the new structure. Currently there are facilities facing functions/structures and student facing functions/structures. These need to be mapped to new structures. It is intended that any new structure will provide academic uplift to the student residential experience.

Current roles and structures will be examined with a view to seeing how they might be improved. Admissions processes will continue to happen in individual halls, but staff involved in admissions will also see themselves as belonging to a larger team. Staffs in halls often see themselves as working for a particular hall, but they are employed by the University and need to take a broader perspective.
Is this a Facilities and Services takeover bid, particularly as the review was undertaken by F&S which could be seen as having a conflict of interest?

This is not a takeover bid. It is about pulling functions into a more cohesive structure. The working party will figure out how this is best done. We encourage honest, constructive input to the working party.

The review paints the halls as dysfunctional and ignorant of their roles. It seems to want to divide and conquer and an attempt by F&S to ‘empire build’.

There is no attempt by F&S to grab power. The review document needs to be seen as a trigger for constructive consultation on how things can be done better.

The pastoral and academic matters cannot be separated from the managerial and administrative aspects of student residences. Heads need management responsibility and should not be separated from managers. The student experience will not be enhanced by removing the management function from Heads.

The relationship between Heads and staff is likely to remain similar to what it is at present.

The review recommends that managers be rotated yearly and suggests that there will be no service level agreements.

There are likely to be service level agreements. Although managers might be responsible to someone other than the Head of Hall, they will need to remain responsive to the Head. Such a reporting structure is not unusual.

The review feels like an airing of a number of performance management issues which have never before been raised.

If read as a preliminary document, though, it lays open issues that need to be addressed.

The key issue is not about raising problems, but making things work better.

What is the timeframe for the working party?

There is no timeframe for the review at the moment. Terms of reference will be drawn up in the next week and work will start soon after.

F&S is not looking to empire build. At no stage has the steering committee discussed redundancies or savings and these are not part of the agenda. The review is not prescriptive. ANU needs to be able to have a conversation about how things can be done better.
No-one is objecting to the review. People are feeling threatened.

The tension and fear needs to be acknowledged. There has been a tendency in Australia to centralise management of student residences. Worldwide the trend is to make management residence based.

Is the Director of Residential Life model off the table?

Funding is the difficulty with this model. The review is ambiguous in relation to line management. It is important that residences maintain their collegial strength and build on existing strengths. The review and subsequent consultation will look at improving support structures and career paths for staff.

The two reviews (last year’s and the current review) are different and to an extent contradictory. Are we starting again?

The first review had a focus on the enhancement of the student experience.

The second review has a focus on the administrative and operational.

It is hard to separate the two reviews. We need to determine what the University wants the Halls and Colleges to do and in this context what the Heads of these should do, including their management and resource authority. Once this is done the question is whether the sort of person you want as a Head would be interested in the job.

What will be the membership of the working party? Will it include anyone with halls experience?

The working party will include Karen Hill, Nadine White and Michael Shortland. Michael has experience of Halls at LaTrobe and Melbourne universities.

The review does not seem to be informed of what is happening in the wider community, particularly in halls in other universities.

If University Accommodation ceases to exist where will students go when they have problems?

They will most likely go to their Hall office as is currently the case.

If the University Accommodation is transferred to F&S will it remain dedicated to Halls or will it be subsumed into broader F&S functions?

This is a matter for consideration by the working party.
People were anxious as they did not realise that there would be a working party. Once the working party has final recommendations what will happen?

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They will be provided to the Vice-Chancellor, but first will available for comment.

**Will the maintenance functions be subsumed by F&S?**

This is a matter for the working party to consider.

**Halls currently have vacant positions. Can these be filled permanently?**

Halls should wait for the outcome of the process before filling positions permanently. It may be necessary to extend the term of a fixed term position. HR would likely look on such requests sympathetically, given the circumstances.

**Will there be an opportunity to comment on the recommendations that come from the working party in an open forum such as this?**

Yes.

**The review process needs transparency and consultation with students.**

**Recommendation 5 concerns shifting the admissions process to DRSS: is this still planned?**

It will be considered by the working party. The review of applications in residences will continue. A separate review is looking at aligning the academic and accommodation admissions processes.