

MINUTES

MEETING: COVID-19 RESPONSE COMMITTEE

HELD ON: Tuesday 11 August 2020

TIME: 11:04am to 12:18pm

LOCATION: Online via Zoom

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Nick Forbutt, Vice President, Chair (via audio-visual link)

Jess Reed, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Deputy Chair (via audio-visual link)

Ruolin Ma, President (via audio-visual link to 12:13pm)

Ruby Lotz, Director (via audio-visual link)

Kailin Qin, Director (via audio-visual link)

Nicholas Rigby, Director (via audio-visual link)

Connor Wherrett, Immediate Past President (via audio-visual link to 12:07pm)

Rebecca Sahni, Director of Finance (via audio-visual link)

Nicole Saadeh, People and Culture Business Partner (via audio-visual link)

Robyn Matthews, Staff Representative (via audio-visual link)

USU STAFF

Dane Luo, Board Secretary (via audio-visual link)

MINUTES

OPEN OF MEETING
<p>The Chair opened the meeting at 11:04am.</p> <p>The Chair made an Acknowledgement of Country.</p>
1. Apologies and Leaves of Absence
<p>Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was conducted online via audio-visual link.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to conduct the meeting online via audio-visual link and noted that all members were present.</p>
2. Declarations of Conflicts of Interest
<p>No declarations of conflicts of interest.</p>
3. General Business
<p>3.1 Update on COVID-19 in New South Wales</p> <p>Nicholas Rigby provided an update to the Committee on his research of the COVID-19 pandemic and government restrictions in New South Wales. Since the last meeting of the BOARD OF DIRECTORS, the COVID-19 response has worsened. The number of daily cases has fluctuated between 10-25 cases per day but there have been worrying outbreaks, including at Tangara School for Girls. However, the state is on high alert because there are 1-3 mystery cases per day and there has been a worrying drop of tests. There is a risk of following the dark track of Victoria however contact tracing has been exemplary. Overall, we are at a middle point where New South Wales remains alert but not near levels that trigger lockdowns.</p>
<p>3.2 Update on face-to-face teaching at the University of Sydney</p> <p>Jess Reed and Ruolin Ma provided an update on their meetings and correspondence with the University of Sydney, and noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The University are proceeding ahead with face-to-face teaching because they are concerned about maintaining enrolment numbers. About 50% of small tutorials and seminars will be conducted on campus but lectures and large classes will remain online;• All classes will be conducted with physical distancing;• They estimate that the number of students on campus would be approximately 30% of their usual numbers;• Fisher Library has opened for full service this week; and• The University remains cautious about an outbreak and have taken steps to move orientation events online and have asked the SRC to conduct their elections online. <p>The Committee noted that the current risks from COVID-19 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A worsening of the outbreak, resulting to a move to Stage 3 restrictions;• A COVID-19 case at a USU outlet or on campus; and• A cancellation or reduction in face-to-face teaching in semester 2.

3.3 Update on Financial State of the USU and Review of Staff Capacity Changes

The Cash Flow Update (as of 9 August 2020) was taken as read.

Jess Reed provided an update on the financial state of the USU and noted:

- The [REDACTED];
- The outlet performance is better than forecasted and encouraging. [REDACTED]; and
- [REDACTED].

The Committee discussed the following:

- The BOARD OF DIRECTORS has used forecasts that expected an April-like lockdown for the remainder of the year. It is prudent for rational decision-making that we consider an alternate reality where there is no lockdown;
- [REDACTED]. If the continual trend of outlet sales is increasing, we make up the staff capacity saving;
- Concerns were raised about the sustainability of doing capacity reductions in the long-term. Some staff are struggling to meet the expectations and requirements of their work. [REDACTED];
- [REDACTED]; and
- [REDACTED].

Staff members on the Committee informed the Committee about the impact of the capacity reduction on the work of employees. The following was noted:

- The capacity reduction has been coordinated with staff within the same Department working different days, which is hampering communication, agility and work;
- The capacity reduction has impacted on the level of community and created anxiety to meet expectations;
- Some key positions have unique skills, which, if vacated, will be challenging to fill;
- There are concerns that some of the stood down staff can be usefully employed;
- It was suggested that there would be a detrimental effect of increasing and then quickly decreasing the capacity of staff, preferring consistency and certainty; and
- Based on the current plan to open Laneway and two other outlets, it is manageable with the capacity reduction. However, if we wish to open more outlets, we would need to look at greater resourcing including from middle management.

The Committee noted the following:

- [REDACTED];
- [REDACTED].

The Committee discussed the appropriateness of increasing staff capacity. The salient features of that discussion include the following:

- The *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) has not changed so the JobKeeper-enabling stand down directions will expire at the end of September, which would return staff to 100% capacity;
- [REDACTED];
- [REDACTED];
- [REDACTED].¹
- Some members of the Committee favoured strategic stand down directions ([REDACTED]) instead of across-the-board capacity reductions. Other members of the Committee disagreed, stating that it would be challenging to explain why some staff are stood down and others are not;
- Some members of the Committee believed that the positive outlet performance so far would likely increase as students return to campus for face-to-face teaching, and the Committee should proceed to recommend an increase in capacity soon. Other members of the Committee said that the Committee would benefit from seeing outlet performance in semester 1 as the current sample is unrepresentative and dramatic events may occur; and
- Some members of the Committee suggested to inform staff with certainty of a date of the next change. Other members of the Committee argued that it would not be proper to publish a statement with hard dates without approval from the BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Connor Wherrett left the meeting at 12:07pm. Ruolin Ma left the meeting at 12:13pm.

After the discussion, **the Committee** agreed to meet next week and consider making a recommendation to the BOARD OF DIRECTORS to increase staff capacity when a series of threshold are met. It was suggested that the thresholds could include:

- A minimum amount of weekly outlet sales;
- A maximum number of daily cases in New South Wales;
- Being contingent on face-to-face teaching continuing; and
- Being contingent of no new cases at the University of Sydney.

The Committee made the following action items for its next meeting:

- Jess Reed will do a reforecast with different sales levels and a roadmap; and
- [REDACTED].

3.4 Claims for financial special consideration

The Committee noted:

- The BOARD OF DIRECTORS has tasked this Committee with the power to exempt employees from the capacity reduction if they are experiencing financial hardship;
- [REDACTED];
- [REDACTED]; and
- No employee has currently applied for special consideration.

¹ Board Secretary Summary: There was discussion about small incremental changes. However, other members of the Committee noted that small incremental changes would be unworkable.

Jess Reed and **Nicole Saadeh** agreed to draft a financial hardship criteria and present it to the next meeting of the Committee.

4. Other Business

There was no other business.

5. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee determined that the next meeting of the Committee shall be Tuesday 18 August 2020 at a time to be determined.

CLOSE OF MEETING

The Chair closed the meeting at 12:18pm.