

Union lashes the university's million-dollar man

Staff at the University of Tasmania are not happy, criticising what they described as poor governance as well as cuts to staff numbers, excessive casualisation and shoddy consultation.

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THE University of Tasmania's Vice-Chancellor was being handed a top tier pay packet while staff at the institution languished at the bottom of the salary league table, their union says.

The Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into the Provisions of the University of Tasmania Act has been holding public hearings in Hobart this week.

Representatives of the National Tertiary Education Union — which represents academic staff at the University — gave evidence on Thursday.

In their written submission, the union criticised what they described as poor governance as well as cuts to staff numbers, excessive casualisation and shoddy consultation.

The submission took special aim at the salary package paid to Vice Chancellor Rufus Black.

"The salary of the Vice-Chancellor is well above the expectations of the Tasmanian community," it said.

"In 2020 the Vice-Chancellor received a gross salary in the range \$975,000 to \$990,000, well above the national average.

"In 2021, the salary of the Vice-Chancellor ranked 13th of 37 V-C salaries across the country.

"As a different point of comparison, in 2020 the UTAS Vice-Chancellor was paid over three times the salary of the Tasmanian Premier.

"The disproportionate nature of the Vice-Chancellor's salary is further evidence of the corporatised culture which has developed at the University under the direction of the UTAS Council."

The union said that even though the Vice Chancellor was being paid rather well, staff at the uni were not quite so well paid.

"While the Vice-Chancellor is remunerated at a level that is above the national median,

the same can not be said about the staff of the University," it said.

"The attached charts show that at mid-2022, salaries of UTAS academic staff ranked 34th of 37 universities, while professional staff ranked 35th of 37 universities."

And the union compiled comments from its members about what it was like to work for the university.

Among them:

* "I firmly believe that UTAS has strayed from the path of being an education provider."

* "My criticisms are borne of long and frustrated experience poorly conceived, poorly argued and poorly enacted forms of imposed change have hampered the work of teaching and research on many occasions."

* "How is it that in a public university we still can't see the minutes of the University Council meetings?"

* "No dissent is tolerated and staff are often browbeaten into accepting outcomes that are detrimental to operations in order to save face for those in positions of authority who cannot seem to fail."

* "Many staff operate in an environment of fear and suspicion. You cannot speak out."

* "Staff are disenfranchised, disillusioned, and actively seeking alternative employment."

* "Where we were once proud to say we work at the University we now keep quiet when asked and colour with embarrassment when forced to admit it."

* "In the decade I've been at UTAS the entrance requirements have been slashed, examination criteria dumbed down and a pervasive culture of just pushing students through regardless has been actively encouraged, while contrary voices and dissent is silenced."

* "I used to be so proud to work for this institution, now I'm embarrassed. Poor decisions by the VC have marked us all in the community."

* "I love my students and colleagues, I enjoy teaching and contributing knowledge into the world, but I can't keep going. This place is killing me."

