

Salary diversity

Australian universities and their general staff

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This statistical note updates earlier work on the salaries paid to general staff working at Australia's public universities, and the levels at which universities classify those staff. In 2017, higher proportions of general staff in more senior grades could be found at the University of Technology Sydney, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, the University of Canberra, and Monash and Macquarie Universities. Similarly, based on the median salary classification across Australian universities, the universities offering the highest salaries to staff in the median classification were the University of Sydney, the University of New South Wales, Macquarie University, the University of Melbourne and Curtin University of Technology.

Keywords: general staff, professional staff, university salaries, non-academics (sic)

Introduction

Several years ago, I did some work that identified the better-paying universities and identified those that had more of their general staff classified in relatively senior classifications (Dobson, 2009). In one sense, this paper is an update of that work, and it has been based on data from two sources: staff numbers obtained from the Department of Education and Training, and salaries information summarised by the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU).

Staff expressed as 'full-time equivalents' (FTE) were provided in table form by the University Statistics Section of the federal Department of Education and Training. Customised tables had to be obtained because the Department's online uCube system (accessible at <http://highereducationstatistics.education.gov.au/>) does not provide information on general staff by level, in contrast with the more detailed provision on staff with academic appointments. It should also be noted that only staff on permanent or limited-term contracts of employment have been included, and therefore casually-employed staff have been excluded. Obtaining reliable data on casual staff is difficult, and figures for 'actual casual' staff are not

available until year following that to which they relate. The term 'general staff' has been used in this paper to indicate university staff not employed in academic classifications. I grew up with 'general staff', but these days, 'professional staff' is also commonly used as the appropriate descriptor.

As an aside, it is a pity that the government department responsible for universities continues to refer to this staff grouping as 'non-academic' staff (sic), thereby failing to appreciate that it is not appropriate to describe university workers in terms of what they are not. In fact, this observation could also be made about several universities, and many academic staff. There has been a reasonable amount of commentary on the inappropriate terminology in the past (see for example, Moodie, 1996; Rodan, 1997; Conway, 2000; Dobson, 2000), but it seems that the path to redemption is a slow-moving one. Of course, we should remember that academic staff are in the minority, representing about 43 per cent of the total university staff in 2017 (Department of Education and Training, 2018: Table 1.2).

Most general staff at Australian universities are employed according to a schedule of levels from one to ten, generally referred to as 'higher education worker' (HEW) levels. Although the terminology used within an individual

university can differ, many describe their general staff as being classified in groups from HEW 1 to HEW 10. In addition, staff employed at some universities as trainees or apprentices (for example) are employed at 'Below HEW 1', and senior management staff, employed at salary rates not usually reported, are classified at 'Above HEW 10'.

Information on general staff salary scales by university is generally available from university enterprise agreement documents, and most universities also provide salary schedules on their institutional websites. In this instance, the NTEU provided a summary table of salaries used in this paper, using data obtained from enterprise agreements.

Distribution of staff by HEW level

One might presume that the nature of work undertaken by general staff at one university will closely resemble equivalent work undertaken at other universities. Although this is probably true to a certain extent, at the margins there are differences between universities. For example, some universities are 'dual sector' institutions in which some staff have responsibilities for working in vocational education and training which has a distinct state/territory-based set of funding and regulatory arrangements for higher education. Other universities might be involved more heavily in research, a factor which might also change patterns of hierarchical distribution of general staff. It is also the case that some states (such as Victoria) are required to describe some 'research' roles as 'academic' that in other states would be described as 'non-academic' (sic) (Dobson, 2009). It has also been the case that some universities have gone down the track of changing the career path for some senior 'admin' positions (Rodan, 1997). At some universities, positions that for many decades would have been the final step into a senior position for a career administrator are now accorded a 'Pro-Vice-Chancellor' title, with people who had spent their previous career as an academic being appointed to these senior administrative roles. This manoeuvre has the effect of reducing the number of career HEW positions near the top of some university organisations. Although I was never a victim of this three-card trick, one was aware of senior administrative roles going to 'PVCs' who had excelled in neither academia nor administration.

That said, there are considerable variations between universities as to the distribution of staff from Below HEW 1 to Above HEW 10. Two tables relating to the distribution of general staff by HEW level and university have been included as appendices to this paper. These show the number of FTE staff by HEW level (Appendix

1), and percentages of the same (Appendix 2). The HEW classification tables in this paper have been constructed from those appendices.

One way to rank universities according to the structure of their general staffing is to work out the median HEW classification for each university. The median is the point at which half of the staff are below, and half are above. Table 1 provides various pieces of information for 2017, such as there were 59,905 FTE general staff Australia-wide, excluding casual staff. As can be observed, the number of FTE general staff varied from nearly 4,000 at Monash University, to 506 at Southern Cross University (SCU). Table 1 also shows the median HEW classification for each university, that is, the classification within which the 50th percentile of FTE staff falls. The national median classification is HEW 6, and this average is also the situation at 24 of the 37 universities. However, the median for general staff occurs at the HEW 5 level at two universities, whilst for the remaining 11 universities, the median falls within HEW 7. Table 1 is ranked according to the proportion of staff employed at classifications above the national median. The proportion exceeds 50 per cent at 11 universities, with University of Technology Sydney, (UTS) the University of Canberra and RMIT University at the top. Seventeen universities had between 40 and 50 per cent at levels above HEW 6. Nine universities had less than 40 per cent of the general staff employed at categories above HEW 6, with SCU, Central Queensland University (CQU) and Federation University Australia (FUA) at the bottom of this ranked list.

About two-thirds of Australian universities (employing nearly 78 per cent of the nation's university general staff) have aggregated themselves into university 'blocs' 'to promote the mutual objectives of the member universities.... the groupings do represent universities which have a similar style and focus, and the formation of these groups will most likely accentuate these similarities' (Australian Education Network, n.d.). These blocs are: ATN, the Australian Technology Network (five universities); Go8, the 'Group of Eight' research-intensive universities; IRU, the Innovative Research Universities (seven); and RUN, the Regional University Network (six). The remaining universities are 'ungrouped' (UnG). Given the 'self-selection' of universities into these blocs, and because the blocs transcend state and territory borders, it seemed reasonable to investigate differences between and within them. If universities self-select into discrete groupings, should we expect similar patterns in the classification of their general staff? Table 2 has been arranged so it is possible to examine inter and intra-bloc variations.

Table 1: Accumulated Proportion of General Staff (FTE) by University, Bloc & HEW Classification. Ranked by % > HEW 6

University	Bloc	<HEW 5	HEW 5	HEW 6	HEW 7	HEW 8	HEW 9	>HEW 9	TOTAL FTE	% > HEW 6
UTS	ATN	9%	25%	44%	61%	79%	87%	100%	1714	56%
RMIT	ATN	6%	24%	45%	63%	80%	89%	100%	1895	55%
Canberra	UNG	8%	29%	46%	61%	78%	86%	100%	576	54%
UNSW	GO8	9%	26%	47%	65%	80%	91%	100%	3135	53%
Monash	GO8	9%	29%	47%	68%	83%	93%	100%	3919	53%
Victoria	UNG	9%	24%	47%	67%	81%	91%	100%	798	53%
Macquarie	UNG	7%	23%	48%	67%	81%	91%	100%	1532	52%
WSU	IRU	8%	26%	48%	66%	84%	93%	100%	1503	52%
Sydney	GO8	10%	25%	49%	68%	82%	90%	100%	3658	51%
ANU	GO8	12%	32%	49%	66%	84%	87%	100%	2227	51%
Swinburne	UNG	6%	23%	49%	67%	81%	88%	100%	860	51%
La Trobe	IRU	8%	30%	50%	69%	82%	91%	100%	1586	50%
ACU	UNG	8%	31%	51%	70%	84%	95%	100%	1179	49%
Melbourne	GO8	11%	32%	51%	69%	82%	91%	100%	3632	49%
Deakin	UNG	8%	32%	53%	72%	85%	93%	100%	2043	47%
Australia		14%	34%	54%	72%	85%	92%	100%	59905	46%
QUT	ATN	14%	35%	54%	70%	86%	92%	100%	2348	46%
USC	RUN	14%	33%	55%	76%	86%	92%	100%	572	45%
Curtin	ATN	11%	36%	55%	70%	84%	93%	100%	1917	45%
Adelaide	GO8	19%	38%	56%	75%	88%	95%	100%	1920	44%
Newcastle	UNG	17%	39%	58%	78%	90%	96%	100%	1658	42%
Wollongong	UNG	20%	45%	59%	81%	88%	94%	100%	1224	41%
ECU	UNG	22%	44%	59%	74%	89%	96%	100%	972	41%
UNE	RUN	15%	39%	59%	76%	85%	91%	100%	672	41%
CDU	IRU	16%	40%	59%	75%	84%	92%	100%	352	41%
Murdoch	IRU	19%	39%	60%	74%	84%	91%	100%	857	40%
Flinders	IRU	18%	42%	60%	76%	90%	95%	100%	1090	40%
UWA	GO8	17%	37%	60%	77%	87%	94%	100%	1891	40%
USQ	RUN	14%	40%	60%	76%	89%	95%	100%	957	40%
Griffith	IRU	23%	44%	61%	76%	88%	92%	100%	2246	39%
UQ	GO8	17%	41%	63%	79%	91%	96%	100%	3841	37%
UniSA	ATN	26%	44%	63%	78%	91%	95%	100%	1473	37%
JCU	IRU	16%	44%	63%	77%	89%	93%	100%	1084	37%
Tasmania	UNG	19%	44%	64%	79%	89%	91%	100%	1404	36%
GSU	UNG	24%	47%	67%	84%	91%	96%	100%	1160	33%
CQU	RUN	25%	47%	68%	83%	90%	94%	100%	770	32%
SCU	RUN	25%	50%	69%	87%	93%	95%	100%	506	31%
FUA	RUN	30%	55%	70%	83%	92%	96%	100%	737	30%

Source: Calculated from tables obtained from the Department of Education and Training.

Note: Darker shading indicates the median HEW classification for each university.

From Table 2, three of the five ATN universities have HEW 6, the national median, as the median classification of their general staff, while at the other two, the median falls within HEW 7. For Go8 universities, the median falls within HEW 6 at four universities, and HEW 7 at four others. Six of the seven IRU universities have a median classification of HEW 6, and one at HEW 7. Finally, two RUN universities have a median salary classification of HEW 5, and the other four are at HEW 6. The pattern among ungrouped universities is that there are seven with a median classification within HEW 6, and four within HEW 7.

There is considerable variation within each university bloc. Overall, the Australian Technology Network bloc has a higher proportion of its general staff at levels above HEW 6 compared with the national average, but amongst the individual universities, large variations can be noted. Looking at the junior grades (Below HEW 5 for the purposes of this paper), the University of South Australia (UniSA) has 26 per cent of its staff in lower grades, but at RMIT, the proportion is only six per cent. UniSA also has a relatively low proportion of its general staff classified at grades above HEW 6: 37 per cent, *cf.* the average for the ATN of 48 per cent, and far lower than at UTS and RMIT (with 56 and 55 per cent, respectively).

There is also variability within the universities that make up the Group of Eight. The Go8 universities also tend to be the older universities, with Monash, the Australian National University (ANU) and the University of New South Wales (UNSW) being 'newer chums', relatively speaking. The University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia (UWA) and University of Queensland (UQ) all have an average of general staff at levels above HEW 6 that is beneath the bloc average (48 per cent) and the national average (46 per cent). Similarly, these three universities have a much higher proportion employed at below HEW 5. The Go8 average for staff in these lower classifications is 12 per cent (national average 14 per cent), but UWA and UQ each have 17 per cent each and the University of Adelaide has 19 per cent. UNSW and Monash University have only nine per cent of their staff employed at these lower levels.

Within the Innovative Research Universities, one of its seven members had HEW 7 as the median classification (Western Sydney University), with the other six being at the national average (HEW 6). Looking more closely, only one of the seven universities had more than half its general staff classified at levels above HEW 6, and the other six universities had fewer of their general staff than the average proportion in positions above HEW 6. At the

lower end of the scale, the IRU average for staff employed at levels below HEW 5 was 15 per cent, with considerable variations amongst its members. Griffith had 23 per cent of its general staff in lower grades, with 19 per cent at Murdoch University and 18 per cent at Flinders University. Western Sydney University (WSU) and LaTrobe University had a less immodest eight per cent each in these HEW classifications.

Among the Regional Network Universities, two of the six had a median appointment level at HEW 5 (SCU and FUA). No RUN universities had more than 50 per cent of their general staff employed at above HEW 6, and the RUN average was only 36 per cent, compared with a national average of 46 per cent, and a figure of 48 per cent for the ATN and Go8 university blocs. CQU, SCU and FUA also had the highest proportions of their staff employed in junior grades, as high as 30 per cent at FUA. CQU and SCU each had 25 per cent in these lower grades, with only UniSA (ATN, 26 per cent) and Griffith University (IRU, 23 per cent) coming close. To reiterate, the national average for staff in classifications Below HEW 5 is 14 per cent.

From this brief examination, the bloc universities have aligned themselves which may not have a strong impact on the distribution of general staff between HEW classifications. That said, universities in the RUN bloc have only 36 per cent of their general staff employed at levels above HEW 6, and 20 per cent below HEW 5. Both these figures are considerably adrift of the national average figures of 46 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively.

The 'ungrouped' universities do not form a 'bloc', but it is interesting to note that there is considerable variation among these universities, with the proportion of general staff occupying positions above HEW 6 varying from 54 per cent to 33 per cent, and at the other end of the scale, from six per cent to 24 per cent being classified in positions below HEW 5. Amongst the ungrouped universities are two universities that were previously members of the IRU Bloc.

Which universities pay the highest salaries?

This section is based on the variation across universities of the annual salary paid to entry-level HEW 6 staff. The salaries for each university as at June 2018 are presented in Table 3. Some of the variation between universities is likely to be due to the timing of enterprise bargaining rounds, but of course, any university lagging other universities could choose to institute a 'catch-up' that would eliminate the timing gap.

Table 2: Proportion of General Staff by Bloc, University and HEW Classification. Ranked by % > HEW 6

Bloc / University	<HEW 5	HEW 5	HEW 6	HEW 7	HEW 8	HEW 9	>HEW 9	TOTAL - %	% > HEW 6	TOTAL - No.
ATN										
UTS	9%	16%	19%	16%	19%	8%	13%	100%	56%	1714
RMIT	6%	18%	21%	18%	16%	9%	11%	100%	55%	1895
QUT	14%	21%	19%	15%	16%	6%	8%	100%	46%	2348
Curtin	11%	25%	19%	15%	14%	9%	7%	100%	45%	1917
UniSA	26%	18%	19%	16%	13%	4%	5%	100%	37%	1473
ATN Average	13%	20%	20%	16%	16%	7%	9%	100%	48%	9347
Australia	14%	21%	20%	17%	13%	7%	8%	100%	46%	59905
G08										
UNSW	9%	17%	21%	18%	15%	11%	9%	100%	53%	3135
Monash	9%	20%	18%	21%	15%	10%	7%	100%	53%	3919
Sydney	10%	15%	24%	19%	14%	8%	10%	100%	51%	3658
ANU	12%	20%	17%	17%	18%	3%	13%	100%	51%	2227
Melbourne	11%	20%	20%	17%	14%	9%	9%	100%	49%	3632
Adelaide	19%	19%	18%	19%	13%	7%	5%	100%	44%	1920
UWA	17%	20%	23%	16%	10%	7%	6%	100%	40%	1891
UQ	17%	24%	21%	16%	12%	6%	4%	100%	37%	3841
Go8 Average	12%	20%	20%	18%	14%	8%	8%	100%	48%	24221
Australia	14%	21%	20%	17%	13%	7%	8%	100%	46%	59905
IRU										
WSU	8%	18%	22%	18%	18%	9%	7%	100%	52%	1503
La Trobe	8%	22%	20%	19%	14%	9%	9%	100%	50%	1586
CDU	16%	24%	19%	16%	9%	7%	8%	100%	41%	352
Murdoch	19%	20%	21%	14%	11%	6%	9%	100%	40%	857
Flinders	18%	24%	18%	16%	14%	5%	5%	100%	40%	1090
Griffith	23%	22%	17%	15%	12%	4%	8%	100%	39%	2246
JCU	16%	28%	19%	13%	12%	4%	7%	100%	37%	1084
IRU Average	15%	22%	19%	16%	13%	6%	8%	100%	43%	8718
Australia	14%	21%	20%	17%	13%	7%	8%	100%	46%	59905
RUN										
USC	14%	18%	22%	21%	10%	6%	8%	100%	45%	572
UNE	15%	24%	20%	17%	10%	6%	9%	100%	41%	672
USQ	14%	26%	20%	16%	13%	6%	5%	100%	40%	957
CQU	25%	21%	22%	15%	7%	4%	6%	100%	32%	770
SCU	25%	25%	19%	18%	6%	2%	5%	100%	31%	506
FUA	30%	25%	15%	13%	8%	5%	4%	100%	30%	737
RUN Average	20%	23%	20%	16%	9%	5%	6%	100%	36%	4213
Australia	14%	21%	20%	17%	13%	7%	8%	100%	46%	59905

Note: Darker shading indicates the median HEW classification for each university.

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Table 2 continued...

Bloc / University	<HEW 5	HEW 5	HEW 6	HEW 7	HEW 8	HEW 9	>HEW 9	TOTAL - %	% > HEW 6	TOTAL - No.
Ungrouped										
Canberra	8%	21%	18%	15%	17%	8%	14%	100%	54%	576
Victoria	9%	15%	23%	20%	14%	10%	9%	100%	53%	798
Macquarie	7%	16%	25%	19%	14%	10%	9%	100%	52%	1532
Swinburne	6%	17%	26%	18%	14%	7%	12%	100%	51%	860
ACU	8%	23%	20%	19%	14%	11%	5%	100%	49%	1179
Deakin	8%	23%	21%	20%	13%	8%	7%	100%	47%	2043
Newcastle	17%	22%	19%	19%	13%	6%	4%	100%	42%	1658
Wollongong	20%	25%	14%	22%	7%	6%	6%	100%	41%	1224
ECU	22%	22%	15%	15%	14%	8%	4%	100%	41%	972
Tasmania	19%	24%	20%	15%	10%	2%	9%	100%	36%	1404
GSU	24%	23%	21%	17%	7%	5%	4%	100%	33%	1160
UnG Average	14%	21%	20%	18%	12%	7%	7%	100%	45%	13406
Australia	14%	21%	20%	17%	13%	7%	8%	100%	46%	59905

Source: Source: Calculated from tables obtained from the Department of Education and Training.

Note: Darker shading indicates the median HEW classification for each university.

It also seems to be the case that some universities have 'adjusted' aspects of HEW levels and the number of increments therein. For instance, ANU reduced the number of steps within each HEW in the last round of enterprise bargaining by eliminating the lowest step. If this is the case, perhaps their HEW 6 entry level is what their old second increment of HEW 6 used to be. The University of Tasmania has also been 'adjusting' increments within HEW levels. Perhaps trying to compare university salaries will eventually become as difficult as trying to compare electricity and gas prices in the wonderful privatised world of domestic energy supplies!

At June 2018, the University of Sydney paid its HEW 6 entry level staff the highest salary. The gap between the highest and lowest-paying university was nearly \$11,000, or about \$211 per week. This represents a gap of around 13 per cent. Is this gap too large and how much of the gap is due to the timing of this snapshot?

University blocs do not undertake joint or coordinated salary negotiations as blocs, but it is interesting to note that six of the seven members of the IRU Bloc are among the payers of lower salaries. WSU, a recent addition to the IRU fold, is the exception. The 'top ten' universities in terms of salaries paid in June 2018 includes four Go8, two ATN and two ungrouped universities, and one each of the RUN and IRU universities. Within the Go8 bloc there is a considerable gap between the University of Sydney and the University of Queensland (nearly \$9,000 p.a., in fact).

Rank v. Salary

In this section, HEW 6 salaries paid by each university (within bloc) are compared with the proportion of staff in classifications above HEW 6 (June 2018). In the scheme of things, some universities pay higher salaries than others and have a higher proportion of their staff in positions classified higher than the national median classification. Figure 1 summarises this information and should be interpreted as follows. The columns represent the salary paid by each university (entry level HEW 6), shown within university blocs (or ungrouped), ranked in ascending order. These relate to the left axis. The diamonds indicate the proportion of staff employed in classifications above HEW 6, which relate to the right axis.

To take a couple of examples, the university paying the highest salary (HEW 6 level) in June 2018 is the University of Sydney, as mentioned earlier. This was also shown in Table 3. At the same time, in terms of seniority, the University of Sydney ranked 11th in terms of the proportion of its general staff occupying positions higher than HEW 6 (see Table 1). At the other end of the scale, James Cook University (JCU) ranks lowest (37th) in terms of the HEW 6 salaries it pays its staff in June 2018 (Table 3), and it ranks 32nd in the proportion of staff in levels above HEW 6 in 2017 (Table 1). The latter university, therefore, both remunerates its staff at a lower rate than elsewhere, but it also has a lower relative preponderance of general

Table 3: Entry Level Salary at HEW 6 Level (June 2018), by University, Ranked by Salary; Variation from Highest Salary Paid

Rank	University	Bloc	Salary HEW 6	Variation
1	Sydney	GO8	\$84,334	
2	UNSW	GO8	\$83,653	-\$681
3	Macquarie	UNG	\$81,434	-\$2,900
4	Melbourne	GO8	\$79,910	-\$4,424
5	Curtin	ATN	\$79,627	-\$4,707
6	UTS	ATN	\$79,217	-\$5,117
7	SCU	RUN	\$78,996	-\$5,338
8	ANU	GO8	\$78,956	-\$5,378
9	WSU	IRU	\$78,589	-\$5,745
10	ECU	UNG	\$78,578	-\$5,756
11	UWA	GO8	\$78,222	-\$6,112
12	Deakin	UNG	\$78,117	-\$6,217
13	Swinburne	UNG	\$77,616	-\$6,718
14	Monash	GO8	\$77,511	-\$6,823
15	UniSA	ATN	\$77,454	-\$6,880
16	Adelaide	GO8	\$77,316	-\$7,018
17	ACU	UNG	\$77,242	-\$7,092
18	RMIT	ATN	\$77,090	-\$7,244
19	USC	RUN	\$77,060	-\$7,274
20	FUA	RUN	\$76,801	-\$7,533
21	CQU	RUN	\$76,692	-\$7,642
22	Newcastle	UNG	\$76,400	-\$7,934
23	Wollongong	UNG	\$76,180	-\$8,154
24	Tasmania	UNG	\$76,147	-\$8,187
25	Canberra	UNG	\$76,007	-\$8,327
26	QUT	ATN	\$75,502	-\$8,832
27	UNE	RUN	\$75,418	-\$8,916
28	VU	UNG	\$75,359	-\$8,975
29	UQ	GO8	\$75,359	-\$8975
30	Flinders	IRU	\$75,223	-\$9,111
31	La Trobe	IRU	\$75,073	-\$9,261
32	Murdoch	IRU	\$75,054	-\$9,280
33	Griffith	IRU	\$74,973	-\$9,361
34	USQ	RUN	\$74,332	-\$10,002
35	CSU	UNG	\$74,278	-\$10,056
36	CDU	IRU	\$73,671	-\$10,663
37	JCU	IRU	\$73,429	-\$10,905
	Australia (Average)		\$77,169	-\$7,165

Source: NTEU. Salaries @ June 2018

staff in higher-level grades. About 37 per cent of JCU's staff were employed at levels above HEW 6, compared with 51 per cent of staff at the University of Sydney.

Other patterns can be observed from Figure 1, such as the salaries paid by IRU universities tending to be lower than elsewhere in the sector (except for recent IRU member WSU). Similarly, most of these universities also have a 'seniority' pattern that is relatively low in the national context, except for WSU and La Trobe University. Some universities appear to pay more modestly than others but have a relatively higher proportion of their general staff in positions classified at levels above HEW 6. RMIT is an example of this pattern. Charles Sturt University (CSU) exemplifies a university that pays lower salaries than many others and has relatively fewer of its general staff classified in positions above HEW 6.

Are variations between universities random, or is location a major driver? Based on a taxonomy of metropolitan/capital universities *cf.* universities in regional towns and cities, most regionally-located universities, as at June 2018 could be found at the lower end of the spectrum for both salary paid and the proportion of general staff in more senior positions. For instance, several of the RUN universities (except for SCU) seem to be near the bottom on both scales. Among metropolitan universities, the University of Queensland appears to be an outlier, especially when compared with most other 'older' metropolitan universities. Perhaps their university management thinks that it is possible to attract good staff without paying 'premium' salaries.

Discussion

Do the data in this paper present a 'story', or is what has been presented here merely due to 'coincidence'? This is perhaps one of several questions that could be addressed. By looking at Table 3, five of the higher-paying universities are in metropolitan Sydney, with two in Perth, and another in each of Canberra and Melbourne. Should staff located in state capitals (or the national capital) expect to be paid more than staff in regional areas? If so, why don't universities in Adelaide or Brisbane feature among the higher-paying universities? For example, the Go8 universities in these two capital cities pay at the lower end of what the Go8 universities pay and have relatively low proportions of general staff employed at levels above HEW 6. UWA seems to be a relatively better payer, but also has fewer of its general staff in classifications above HEW 6.

Perhaps the metropolitan/regional nexus is something that could be explored. Speaking as someone who left

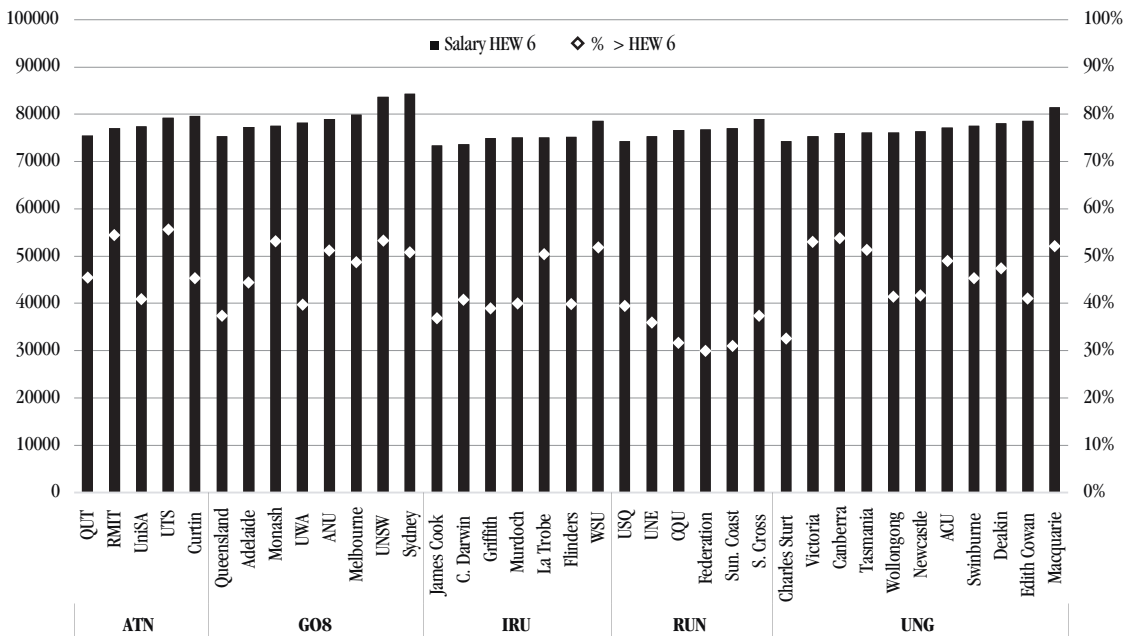


Figure 1: Salary Rank (June 2018) cf. Seniority Rank (% > HEW 6, 2017) by Bloc and University

Melbourne for the regional Victorian city of Ballarat about two years ago, I can confirm that the difference in housing prices in Ballarat compared with Melbourne is immense. According to material available from a real estate website, the median house price in Ballarat was about \$403,000 in late 2017, compared with \$904,000 in Melbourne (Domain, n.d.a.; n.d.b.). Perhaps this pattern is replicated in the other regional towns which are home to members of the RUN bloc of universities, for example.

If the university work undertaken by general staff is common across the sector, what reasons could there be for the considerable variety of salaries paid and the ranks that predominate at different universities? Should a worker be paid more or less because of where they live, or because of the labour market situation in that region? Should there be loadings that reflect the higher costs in some areas? What about universities with campuses in both state capitals and regional centres?

On seeing the figures used in this paper, some universities might seek to explain the situation by saying that the timing of their own enterprise bargaining situation is behind that of the higher-paying universities. However, one presumes that if they chose to do so, those universities could start a 'catch up' process.

Other questions could also be asked. Should universities aspire to have at least half of their general staff classified in grades above HEW 6, as is the case with the better-paying universities? Reciprocally, should they be trying to reduce the proportion of

staff in lower grades, or would this represent a form of 'bracket creep'?

There is also the matter of 'has anything changed'? When I last looked at this topic, many of the higher payers in 2009 were the same as those a decade later, and the same could be said of the universities at the other end of the scale. In 2009, the Universities of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney and Melbourne, and SCU and UTS made up the Top 5. Back then, the gap between top and bottom universities at HEW 6 level was up to 19 per cent, with the gap between the Top 5 and the Bottom 5 being about 12 per cent (Dobson, 2009). My methodology when writing the 2009 paper was to 'adjust' for the timing of the effective date of enterprise agreements. However, a rethink on this matter over the intervening period inclines me to the view that those universities that have been a bit 'slow' in getting enterprise agreements into place should lift their game. Staff at those laggard universities might think that catching up should be a priority. In 2018, the gap between top and bottom payers (based on HEW 6 salaries) was around 13 per cent, with the gap between the national average and the highest payer being just over eight per cent.

These issues are all part of (university) life's rich tapestry!

Acknowledgements

I should like to acknowledge the information provided by NTEU staffers Renee Veal and Paul Kniest and the helpful

comments and editing from my editorial board colleague
Neil Mudford.

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Appendix 1 *Distribution of General Staff 2017 by HEW Level and University. Full-time Equivalents (Numbers)*

University	Bloc	HEW median	% > HEW 6	HEW 1*	HEW 2	HEW 3	HEW 4	HEW 5	HEW 6	HEW 7	HEW 8	HEW 9	HEW 10	>HEW 10	TOTAL
ACU	UNG	HEW 6	49%		3	27	66	275	231	227	160	130		60	1179
Adelaide	GO8	HEW 6	44%		19	85	253	367	344	365	254	135	45	53	1920
ANU	GO8	HEW 7	51%		18	80	180	441	369	377	401	65	170	126	2227
Canberra	UNG	HEW 7	54%		3	8	35	119	101	85	96	49	32	49	576
CDU	IRU	HEW 6	41%		4	8	43	86	67	55	33	26	20	10	352
CSU	UNG	HEW 6	33%	12	11	43	211	265	241	192	86	55	12	33	1160
CQU	RUN	HEW 6	32%	11	6	44	135	163	168	116	53	29		45	770
Curtin	ATN	HEW 6	45%	3	4	38	172	471	363	297	265	164	57	85	1917
Deakin	UNG	HEW 6	47%		7	18	146	475	430	399	258	166	37	108	2043
ECU	UNG	HEW 6	41%	2	1	16	192	214	149	147	140	75	36		972
FUA	RUN	HEW 5	30%	21	47	37	116	182	114	98	60	34	9	19	737
Flinders	IRU	HEW 6	40%		11	55	128	266	196	174	152	53	22	35	1090
Griffith	IRU	HEW 6	39%	91	10	94	310	493	372	332	275	99	61	109	2246
JCU	IRU	HEW 6	37%	3	16	30	128	300	208	146	135	43	56	20	1084
La Trobe	IRU	HEW 6	50%	1	5	19	106	343	312	302	217	137	61	83	1586
Macquarie	UNG	HEW 7	52%	1	11	17	78	248	377	295	216	152	106	30	1532
Melbourne	GO8	HEW 6	49%		9	105	297	739	714	631	500	315	239	85	3632
Monash	GO8	HEW 7	53%	2	15	86	231	786	715	835	570	386	204	89	3919
Murdoch	IRU	HEW 6	40%	4	2	42	117	171	179	117	92	54	19	60	857
Newcastle	UNG	HEW 6	42%	3	16	74	194	360	321	319	209	96	10	56	1658
UQ	GO8	HEW 6	37%	27	35	180	408	934	819	616	469	212	140	2	3841
QUT	ATN	HEW 6	46%	12	10	51	255	494	457	358	371	141	117	81	2348
RMIT	ATN	HEW 7	55%	1		26	91	345	399	335	313	176	137	73	1895
SCU	RUN	HEW 5	31%		1	10	116	125	98	90	30	12	9	16	506
USC	RUN	HEW 6	45%			23	58	106	126	121	57	34	29	19	572
Swinburne	UNG	HEW 7	51%		0	3	49	146	224	155	123	59	45	56	860
Sydney	GO8	HEW 7	51%	5	26	142	181	557	869	690	512	300	67	310	3658
Tasmania	UNG	HEW 6	36%	2	6	45	215	344	287	215	135	35	45	76	1404
UNE	RUN	HEW 6	41%		4	12	85	161	136	112	64	38	12	49	672
UniSA	ATN	HEW 6	37%		4	51	331	258	277	228	194	56		72	1473
UNSW	GO8	HEW 7	53%	29	20	60	166	531	661	560	480	339	196	94	3135
USQ	RUN	HEW 6	40%		4	21	110	251	193	150	121	58	27	23	957
UTS	ATN	HEW 7	56%	0	4	24	124	273	334	279	318	143		215	1714
UWA	GO8	HEW 6	40%	22	12	77	202	382	444	311	195	138	27	80	1891
Victoria	UNG	HEW 7	53%		2	20	47	123	182	160	112	77	27	48	798
W'gong	UNG	HEW 6	41%	11	4	60	166	304	171	274	84	69	43	37	1224
WSU	IRU	HEW 7	52%	3		57	58	271	336	269	270	139	71	30	1503
Australia		HEW 6	46%	266	349	1787	5799	12368	11981	10434	8016	4286	2188	2433	59905

Blocs are: ATN Australian Technology Network; GO8 Group of Eight; IRU Innovative Research Universities; RUN Regional University Network; and UNG Ungrouped. * Below HEW 1 and HEW 1. Minor rounding errors apply

Appendix 2 Distribution of General Staff 2017 by HEW Level and University. Full-time Equivalents (Percentages)

University	Bloc	HEW median	% > HEW 6	HEW 1*	HEW 2	HEW 3	HEW 4	HEW 5	HEW 6	HEW 7	HEW 8	HEW 9	HEW 10	>HEW 10	TOTAL
ACU	UNG	HEW 6	49%	0%	0%	2%	6%	23%	20%	19%	14%	11%	0%	5%	100%
Adelaide	GO8	HEW 6	44%	0%	1%	4%	13%	19%	18%	19%	13%	7%	2%	3%	100%
ANU	GO8	HEW 7	51%	0%	1%	4%	8%	20%	17%	17%	18%	3%	8%	6%	100%
Canberra	UNG	HEW 7	54%	0%	1%	1%	6%	21%	18%	15%	17%	8%	6%	9%	100%
CDU	IRU	HEW 6	41%	0%	1%	2%	12%	24%	19%	16%	9%	7%	6%	3%	100%
CSU	UNG	HEW 6	33%	1%	1%	4%	18%	23%	21%	17%	7%	5%	1%	3%	100%
CQU	RUN	HEW 6	32%	1%	1%	6%	18%	21%	22%	15%	7%	4%	0%	6%	100%
Curtin	ATN	HEW 6	45%	0%	0%	2%	9%	25%	19%	15%	14%	9%	3%	4%	100%
Deakin	UNG	HEW 6	47%	0%	0%	1%	7%	23%	21%	20%	13%	8%	2%	5%	100%
ECU	UNG	HEW 6	41%	0%	0%	2%	20%	22%	15%	15%	14%	8%	4%	0%	100%
FUA	RUN	HEW 5	30%	3%	6%	5%	16%	25%	15%	13%	8%	5%	1%	3%	100%
Flinders	IRU	HEW 6	40%	0%	1%	5%	12%	24%	18%	16%	14%	5%	2%	3%	100%
Griffith	IRU	HEW 6	39%	4%	0%	4%	14%	22%	17%	15%	12%	4%	3%	5%	100%
JCU	IRU	HEW 6	37%	0%	1%	3%	12%	28%	19%	13%	12%	4%	5%	2%	100%
La Trobe	IRU	HEW 6	50%	0%	0%	1%	7%	22%	20%	19%	14%	9%	4%	5%	100%
Macquarie	UNG	HEW 7	52%	0%	1%	1%	5%	16%	25%	19%	14%	10%	7%	2%	100%
Melbourne	GO8	HEW 6	49%	0%	0%	3%	8%	20%	20%	17%	14%	9%	7%	2%	100%
Monash	GO8	HEW 7	53%	0%	0%	2%	6%	20%	18%	21%	15%	10%	5%	2%	100%
Murdoch	IRU	HEW 6	40%	0%	0%	5%	14%	20%	21%	14%	11%	6%	2%	7%	100%
Newcastle	UNG	HEW 6	42%	0%	1%	4%	12%	22%	19%	19%	13%	6%	1%	3%	100%
UQ	GO8	HEW 6	37%	1%	1%	5%	11%	24%	21%	16%	12%	6%	4%	0%	100%
QUT	ATN	HEW 6	46%	1%	0%	2%	11%	21%	19%	15%	16%	6%	5%	3%	100%
RMIT	ATN	HEW 7	55%	0%	0%	1%	5%	18%	21%	18%	16%	9%	7%	4%	100%
SCU	RUN	HEW 5	31%	0%	0%	2%	23%	25%	19%	18%	6%	2%	2%	3%	100%
USC	RUN	HEW 6	45%	0%	0%	4%	10%	18%	22%	21%	10%	6%	5%	3%	100%
Swinburne	UNG	HEW 7	51%	0%	0%	0%	6%	17%	26%	18%	14%	7%	5%	6%	100%
Sydney	GO8	HEW 7	51%	0%	1%	4%	5%	15%	24%	19%	14%	8%	2%	8%	100%
Tasmania	UNG	HEW 6	36%	0%	0%	3%	15%	24%	20%	15%	10%	2%	3%	5%	100%
UNE	RUN	HEW 6	41%	0%	1%	2%	13%	24%	20%	17%	10%	6%	2%	7%	100%
UniSA	ATN	HEW 6	37%	0%	0%	3%	22%	18%	19%	16%	13%	4%	0%	5%	100%
UNSW	GO8	HEW 7	53%	1%	1%	2%	5%	17%	21%	18%	15%	11%	6%	3%	100%
USQ	RUN	HEW 6	40%	0%	0%	2%	12%	26%	20%	16%	13%	6%	3%	2%	100%
UTS	ATN	HEW 7	56%	0%	0%	1%	7%	16%	19%	16%	19%	8%	0%	13%	100%
UWA	GO8	HEW 6	40%	1%	1%	4%	11%	20%	23%	16%	10%	7%	1%	4%	100%
Victoria	UNG	HEW 7	53%	0%	0%	3%	6%	15%	23%	20%	14%	10%	3%	6%	100%
W'gong	UNG	HEW 6	41%	1%	0%	5%	14%	25%	14%	22%	7%	6%	4%	3%	100%
WSU	IRU	HEW 7	52%	0%	0%	4%	4%	18%	22%	18%	18%	9%	5%	2%	100%
Australia		HEW 6	46%	0%	1%	3%	10%	21%	20%	17%	13%	7%	4%	4%	100%

Blocs are: ATN Australian Technology Network; GO8 Group of Eight; IRU Innovative Research Universities; RUN Regional University Network; and UNG Ungrouped. * Below HEW 1 and HEW Minor rounding errors apply