

Concurrent Session A
Monday 31 August
10.50am – 11.40am



Session 2

Leader Of The Pack: Which University Pays Its General Staff The Best?

Dr Ian Dobson

Federation University/Monash University

Ian Dobson was a career administrator until 2005, at which time his position at Monash University was declared redundant. Since then he has been a small 'c' consultant and editor. As a consultant he has undertaken data analysis jobs for the Office of the Chief Scientist, the Australian Council of Deans of Science, the Australian Academy of the Humanities and several universities. He is a co-resident of Australia and Finland, and worked for 2.5 years as research director of a higher education research group at the University of Helsinki until the end of 2012. He has authored or co-authored about 80 book chapters and scholarly papers. He revises English, including about 25 PhD dissertations, dozens of papers, policy documents and websites for clients in Australia and several European countries. He was awarded a PhD by Monash University in 2004, on the topic of university access and Australian equity policy.

There was a time when university staff were paid according to a common salary schedule, no matter which university they were at. However, this is no longer the case. Each university now strikes an enterprise agreement with its own staff, and over time, it has transpired that some universities have become better payers than others. Although the level of staff salaries is important, there is a second variable: some universities rely more heavily on staff in junior ranks. Therefore, it would seem that the chance of being promoted to a more senior post is better at some places than others.

This paper is based on desktop research, whereby the salary schedules in enterprise agreements will be summarised and compared. The distribution of general staff by university will be examined via tables purchased from the Department of Education. Purchasing data is necessary because the Department publishes no information on the general staff Higher Education Worker levels; published data are restricted to a single row 'Non-academic Staff'.

As the research has yet to be undertaken, no preliminary results can be provided. However, previous analyses of salary distributions have shown that there is a considerable gap between the top and bottom universities with respect to salaries paid, and that there is a similar gap between universities in the relative seniority of general staff within universities.

This paper will also examine the situation according university blocs, particularly the self-designated blocs such as the Group of Eight, etc. Other comparisons to be examined are regional / urban universities and whether these are differences between the main capital cities. Changes over time (if any) will be highlighted, and assertions about the competition between universities for staff will be outlined.