

ITEM 17 NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR JESS WHITTAKER - CALL TO END THE JOB CUTS AT UOW

Councillor Jess Whittaker has submitted the following Notice of Motion –

“I formally move that Council -

- 1 Urgently write to University of Wollongong (UOW) management regarding their plan to cut another 181 positions and staff from our local public university noting -
 - a UOW is the second largest single local employer in the Illawarra and the proposed cuts, on top of at least 91 Academic staff roles lost in early 2025, constitutes an approximate 10% reduction in the UOW workforce in 2025. This could see our community and economy over \$45 million in good, secure jobs from the Wollongong LGA.
 - b That UOW staff in support teaching, library, research and community engagement roles are now being asked to bear the brunt of cost cutting, due to the universities challenging financial position.
- 2 Call upon the university management to stop the job cuts plan now and instead engage directly with the staff doing the day-to-day work of supporting teaching, research and community engagement at UOW. Talk to staff to find alternative savings or revenue, rather than job cuts as the first option.”

Background provided by Councillor Jess Whittaker:

Since the COVID pandemic hit Australia in February 2020 our university sector has been one of the most impacted industries. Despite being Australia’s second largest export industry (via onshore and offshore International Student Revenue) and with thousands of jobs being under the threat, the then Morrison Government failed to provide Job Seeker support to university staff.

Hundreds of UOW jobs were lost by early 2022 and now, with further VISA restrictions, VISA costs and flagged International Students Caps, University management has turned to further job cuts to deal with a revenue shortfall.

The proposed cuts to 181 staff jobs at UOW, to take effect on and after August 2025, will, based on feedback I have received from UOW staff, seriously impact key university operations. Access for students, staff and the community to the Wollongong Campus and Regional Campus Libraries could be compromised by lack of staffing. The Research Office, that supports research grant applications, acquittals and industry partnerships could be heavily compromised and the proposed mergers of Schools into mega Schools within only 3 combined Faculty will likely mean less on the ground staff support for students in the Illawarra.

Staff are genuinely concerned this proposed change and job cuts plan, in its scale and scope, could fundamentally compromise the ability of our local university to function in the years ahead.

I urge Councillors and the Mayor to support the sending of correspondence to university management that, as per my Motion, asks the UOW Executive staff, including the new incoming Vice Chancellor, Professor Max Lu to stop the cuts. Instead come and talk to staff about alternative savings, separate from more job cuts, cuts that will seriously affect our community and economy. This is an opportunity to use our voice as Councillors make a call on university management: ‘Don’t cut the heart out of our UOW’.