

'The final straw'

Insights into workplace culture and staff well-being at Southern Cross University

Prepared by the National Tertiary Education Union (NSW Division)

August 2022



Better Workplaces
Better Universities



National Tertiary
Education Union

Background

This report presents key results from an online survey of current and recently-employed staff members at Southern Cross University (SCU) examining attitudes to aspects of workplace culture. It was conducted in July 2022 by the NSW Division of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU).

The survey was initiated as a response to sustained and consistently negative reports the union received about university management and work practices, and workplace culture.

In particular, the survey sought to interrogate potential psychosocial hazards, as identified by *Safe Work Australia*¹.

Issue areas

The results outlined here cover five areas:

- 1 Work Health & Safety
- 2 Workloads
- 3 Respect at Work
- 4 Quality of Staff & Student Experience
- 5 Workplace Culture

One might reasonably expect that workers would have positive experiences in these areas in order for the institution to fulfil its public role.

Significance

The results and conclusions outlined here are drawn from a statistically significant sample size based on a 95% confidence interval and acceptable margin of error approaching 5%. This was achieved despite significant challenges.

$$\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2} \div 1 + \left(\frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2 N} \right)$$

N = population size
e = Margin of error (% in decimal form)
z = z-score

Challenges

Maximising participation rates in surveys of this nature is generally a challenge for trade unions, due to the prerogative with which employers are empowered under the *Fair Work Act*, combined with the levels of insecurity and fear experienced by workers in workplaces with significant dysfunction. This is particularly the case at Southern Cross university.

Notably, **SCU management actively blocked access to the survey** from both university email systems and the university network.

Around the country, the NTEU regularly conducts surveys of university staff over a range of issues. It is extremely unusual for a university management to take such a course of action. However, after examining the survey results here, one perhaps can see why.

Blocking the survey is the final straw.
Current SCU academic staff member

The levels of workplace stress identified make for upsetting reading and indicate a workforce and an institution ostensibly subject to significant risk.

NTEU firmly believes that no worker, let alone one working at a public university in receipt of hundreds of millions of dollars of public funding, should be exposed to the circumstances identified in this survey.

National Tertiary Education Union (NSW)

August 2022

¹ <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/managing-health-and-safety/mental-health/psychosocial-hazards/job-demands>

1. Work Health and Safety

Every worker has a fundamental right to a safe workplace, and employers have a primary duty of care for staff. Risks are not only physical; a *psychosocial hazard* is anything that could cause psychological harm.

Although a very high number of respondents experienced at least one psychosocial hazard, less than 2% had reported them.

The most common reasons for not lodging a report in SCU's risk management system, *Riskware*, were:

- Fear of reprisal or job loss if they raised these concerns.
- A feeling that raising concerns was pointless, that nothing would get done.
- They didn't know what *Riskware* was or that they were able to lodge a report about psychosocial hazards

Of the few who had reported psychosocial hazards in *Riskware*, none were happy with how SCU management dealt with their concerns and generally reported that the issues were not dealt with at all.



Comments regarding health and safety in the workplace

Excessive workload is dangerous and stressful and I am fearful for my health.

Current SCU academic staff member

Harassment and bullying goes unchecked.

Current SCU professional staff member

A safe working environment should be understanding the implications of workload management or mismanagement. The debilitating stress caused by my extreme workload as a teaching scholar and lack of care for my well being and mental health ultimately [led] me to leaving SCU and a profession I loved.

Former SCU academic staff member

Physical safety is visible. However, the well-being of staff and students is stretched over and over due to the reactive approach by the executive team of SCU.

Current SCU professional staff member

The excessive workloads, lack of institutional support, an often volatile and high-needs student body, and the contemptuous and callous attitude of exec contribute to a highly unsafe working environment. I had never had mental health issues until my time at SCU, and since leaving I feel immensely better.

Former SCU academic staff member

In my opinion, the workplace is unsafe. Staff are being stretched to their absolute limit.

Current SCU academic staff member

<p><i>The psychological stress associated with directives that fail to offer best practice teaching and misrepresenting what we taught to students and accrediting body was chronic.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I feel we are overworked... My mental health has been impacted by this.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>The mental health of all staff is seriously declining since the change in VC.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>I'm not coping with workload/responsibilities I'm not paid for...and I was told to keep going. This is dangerous and I became suicidal and once called lifeline from my desk. I spent 60-70 hours working month after month until I lost touch with reality and it still wasn't enough for them. I am now on anxiety and depression medication for the first time in my life.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Stress and burnout has never been higher.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>...many do not feel safe or supported - I feel overwhelmed most of the time which leave me tired and sad in my workplace- it creates stress and illness physically and mentally.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>OH&S culture more focussed on ticking boxes than actually managing real risks.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>Issues have to be escalated multiple times before any action is done regardless of the seriousness of an allegation or incident.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>I have already asked for and received a mental health plan from my GP to help me work out if I can stay in this job.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>You need to work over 50h per week or sometime even 70h to be able to do all allocated tasks; then it stops being a safe work environment.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>There's lots of talk about 'thank you for working so hard' and 'we're all in this together' but it's meaningless if the workload issues and lack of staff support isn't addressed.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I'm currently on long term leave for medical issues I attribute to stress and burn out from this job.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>[I] have already taken 3 long periods of stress leave.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>High stress due to pressure on workload and turn around times. Insufficient technology programs to support role and efficiencies. Offices need modernising with stand up desks and better facilities for staff.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>Onerous workload is unsafe. Mental health is clearly not a genuine concern, despite SCU propaganda and 'tick box' initiatives.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>SCU is the worst workplace for mental health I have ever worked at.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Stress is a constant.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Cultural awareness, wellness and cultural safety, including actions towards Aboriginal Reconciliation have slipped are no longer supported.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>

<p><i>Staff are expected to work excessive hours.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>From snakes left in buildings for days without giving notice to staff, to complete lack of protection against harassment and hostility from students, to crushing workloads this is a highly unsafe workplace.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Burnout is high, stress is high, we haven't gotten much support for working from home and subsidising the university through the whole pandemic.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>Job insecurity is fundamentally unsafe for people.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>SCU management have never cared about the wellbeing of their staff.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>	

Comments regarding the (non)reporting of psychosocial hazards

<p><i>I just think it would be pointless.</i></p> <p><i>They don't care.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Concerns with confidentiality and feeling that I will be at risk of being singled out by management.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>It's part of the culture and not really worth reporting.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>Won't get me anywhere but get me unduly noticed.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>The bullying & harassment is institutional... APO and VC are the main source of the issue.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Don't want to stand out - won't be taken seriously anyway.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>It's better to keep your head down.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>Fear of losing my job.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	

2. Workloads

The workloads experienced by SCU staff are a serious concern, with a clear majority of academic staff rarely or never completing all their work within their allocated hours, and two-fifths of professional staff reporting similar.

The results suggest clear contributing factors:

1. Changes to the Academic Workload Formula, the tool used to calculate academic workloads for individual staff academic staff members
2. Drastic changes to the SCU teaching calendar towards a so-called “6x6 model”, with teaching performed in six 6-week teaching sessions per year, rather than semesters
3. Since 2019, the SCU workforce shrinking from approximately 2,200 staff² to 1,561 in 2021³.

NTEU members have been in dispute with SCU management for some time over workloads and workload models, and the data suggest that the issue needs to urgently be addressed. It is, quite clearly, an unsustainable situation.



Comments regarding workloads

<p><i>Workload is ridiculous and makes me feel like a complete failure - I am miserable, overwhelmed and burnt out.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>There is expectation that you will just do 'what needs to be done' regardless of how many additional hours it takes. This year I would be regularly working 10-15 hours per week in excess of my contracted hours (management knows but they just look the other way).</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Always working out of office hours and on weekends to meet workload.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>I usually work an additional 5 to 15 hours per week unrecorded and unpaid.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>Work on weekends and it is accepted by supervisors that this is necessary.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I often work on weekends to answer student queries.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>
<p><i>Crushing workloads at SCU have caused me to burn out and I now have an acquired disability as a result.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Staff cannot keep up with the extra workloads caused by the SCU model. As staff leave (and they are leaving in droves), positions are not filled</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>Workloads have exploded and adding on top of that is the 6x6 curriculum writing. It's too much.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>

² <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/68329/0022%20National%20Tertiary%20Education%20Union.pdf>

³ 2021 SCU WGEA report, <https://data.wgea.gov.au/organisations/1568>

<p><i>In 2010 a team of 4 used to handle 25% of the work that the current team of 2 is expected to handle.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>The new Academic Workload Formula has made this very challenging as we now have less or no time allocated for aspects of our job (such as running smaller units, student consultation/support, etc.).</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Normal workload is fine. However there are only 2 of us in my work unit - if the other person is away, there is NO back up or support - we basically do two people's jobs for the duration of their absence, whether it is one day, or 4 weeks. This has been ongoing for nearly 10 years.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>
<p><i>The workload, the expectations and the constant changes underpinned by a ridiculous staff to student ratio beggars belief.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I work on weekends and late at night every week.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Less staff (due to previous redundancies and non replacements) have to do the workload that has increased.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>
<p><i>It was exhausting and demoralising, and worse than that were gaslighting messages from exec claiming that this wasn't happening at all, that workloads were reasonable and if you felt overwhelmed you were just working too hard - it was your fault. I frequently marked papers, wrote lectures, and performed service activities on weekends and late on weeknights because there just wasn't enough time during work hours.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>There is an expectation from supervisors to respond on leave, after hours.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>The [academic workload formula] is designed to extract maximum free labour from staff by exploiting our desire to do right by our students</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>

3. Respect at Work

Universtiy workers have a right to a safe, productive and respectful workplace culture where they can *just get on with the job*.

This should be easy, particularly as they are highly qualified and capable, collectively responsible for the delivery of the education, training and research that is highly regarded in the community, especially in our regional areas.

It is to the credit of SCU staff that they generally feel respected by their workmates, even in a difficult workplace environment.

Unfortunately, they also report quite clearly that respect is not often received from their supervisors and managers.

Of great concern is that the overwhelming majority of staff cannot rely on SCU senior management to afford them the respect that is required for a safe, fair and productive work environment.



Comments regarding respect at work

<p><i>I have worked at SCU for 10+ years and in the last 2 years have never been more disrespected.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>No time for respect when everyone is in survival mode.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Blocking the NTEU survey is an example of [how we are not respected by senior management].</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>On the whole, it is not an environment where good supervisors can flourish because of the top-down institutional culture that makes everyone powerless and overworked.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Time pressures and management pressures trickle down into relationships. We feel forced to turn work around quickly, there is no time for consultation and questions are greeted with hostility and not respect or openness.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>The current executive are by-and-large self-serving egotistical individuals who have completely lost touch with the realities of frontline academic work.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>Staff are treated as if they are robots.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>The VC appears to have little respect - he lacks transparency. This creates a very toxic culture.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>There is almost no chance to engage with senior management, especially over the last couple of years. Rarely hear anything positive about them. Hear lots about their lack of people management skills and when issues are raised they bring in the HR 'dogs' to bluster and bully those they want gone. At last resort they will simply pay people to go away.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>

<p><i>I felt absolutely disrespected and disempowered during my time at SCU. I had no faith that exec had staff or students' best interests at heart. I was continually frustrated by having questions dismissed and seeing colleagues treated like idiots or troublemakers for raising reasonable objections or asking for clarity.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Senior management has no respect. They expect so much yet can't even offer secure employment.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>Management are liars and bullies.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>The new academic workload framework demonstrates [senior management's] pure disdain for their most important asset.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>The SCU supervisor/manager demands un-earned respect and unquestioning obedience, while they reciprocate with derision, threats, and condescension.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>We do not feel respected by Senior management.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>[Senior management] would not have a clue what we are facing and they don't care.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>[Senior management] are on another planet. A clear case of decision making on tasks (i.e. teaching) that they don't do. Gaslighting at its finest with regard to workload model. Doggedly pursuing initiatives that severely affect staff wellbeing.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>My work is often undermined by senior management.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>There is nothing respectful about behavior of senior staff at this university.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>My experience with senior management is that they mock, are toxic, vindictive and bear no responsibility for their failures.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>[Senior Management] are evasive, untruthful and dismiss concerns.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>If it weren't for my colleagues, I would've left a long time ago. It's heartbreaking to see them suffering too.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>If we were respected we would be resourced to the extent that comparable departments in other universities are.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>This has been one of the most toxic Universities I have ever worked for.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>
<p><i>There are many fantastic staff at SCU who do their very best to support each other. Their work is never recognised or rewarded, so these are not the staff that end up in senior management roles.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Most colleagues have a deep respect for one another, under very trying circumstances, within an organisation that has a terrible 'top down' culture.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	

4. Quality of Staff & Student Experience

It has long been a slogan of NTEU members that 'staff working conditions are student learning conditions'. That is, the quality of the student experience - and the reputation of the university - is fundamentally reliant on the conditions of work experienced by staff.

In the case of SCU, it appears that SCU management have failed to heed this lesson. Among staff, there is a widely held concern that there is simply not enough capacity to deliver a quality learning experience, that too many corners have been cut, and that a focus on online delivery and the new "6 x 6" teaching model has reduced staff capacity to provide a good student experience.

This of course, is not only a major concern to SCU staff and students. More seriously, it exposes the institution to significant reputational harm.



Comments regarding the quality of the staff and student experience

<p><i>RIP SCU... The university has lost its way in terms of its legislated purpose of serving the tertiary education needs of northern NSW.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>SCU's collegial culture has deteriorated to a point where its claim to be a university is highly questionable. Especially since the arrival of Tyrone Carlin. What a horribly toxic individual!!! He is a corporate sociopath with a disdain for anyone who does not share his myopic worldview. He was appointed through an illegitimate process which has set the tone for poor governance across the institution ever since.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>There are not enough staff to provide a good learning experience.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>
<p><i>The lack of staff, a focus on saving money, online delivery and the new 6 x 6 model has reduced staff capacity to provide a good student experience.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>The attitude seems to be that as long as students pass, it doesn't matter if they actually get a quality experience.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>SCU only cares about money and not student experience.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>There is simply not enough capacity to deliver a quality learning experience as too many corners have been cut. Students do not have a voice at SCU, and dissenters are often silenced.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>It's a game and I have to look like I am enjoying things that are totally ludicrous like the transition to the 6x6 model, which no-one asked for and no-one has time to do.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>SCU doesn't ask us what we think the best possible learning experience for students is - they decide and then impose it on us.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>

<p><i>Most colleagues try their best despite workload burdens and SCU model shortcomings. Nonetheless, an onerous workload and an educational model that is unfit for purpose make it impossible for students to receive a high quality learning experience.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>You can't do your best on skeletal staff levels, as you can only hope to tick boxes.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>...senior management didn't seem to care about the student experience.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>We were told by our faculty dean to provide a "minimum viable product" when it came to teaching, because of limited resources and increased workloads. This was incredibly demoralising and offensive. It was not possible to provide students with a quality learning experience under the working conditions at SCU.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>When I raised the issues of having to work such long hours I was often told I was doing too much and needed to do enough to tick the box. This did not align with what I considered my best work and unfortunately I was disadvantaged because of wanting to do a good job.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>The time allocated for student support is not sufficient to provide quality service.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>I find the Academics are so busy, they are not giving the time & attention to the students as they need, deserve, or are paying for.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>Given the workload, sometimes I just make do, since I don't have the time to do my best.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Individual academics work SO hard to provide great learning experiences - and are consistently undermined/overruled by senior management.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>As our resources (peoples, support systems etc.) have dwindled, it is increasingly difficult to do so - the Academic Workload Model does not promote best practice - in fact, the opposite - this is because a lot of the work to support good teaching and learning is not given any recognition/support in the AWF.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Resources have been reduced, prep time cut to almost nothing, contact time with students is being cut back further.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>SCU is adept and using corporate euphemisms and weasel words to claim they give students the best learning experience, while in reality the students get simplistic, compressed compliance check-a-box experiences.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>My colleagues by and large are wonderful and supportive and we do our best but there are not enough of us and we have not had a long term employment strategy in place - backfilling with casuals or taking on extra work is taking its toll as is the overload of change to contend with each and every week. There is no room for research or down time.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>It's impossible to support students with the current staff to student ratios.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>We should be run as an educational institution, not a fee grabbing business.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>
<p><i>The workload the new academic model and the new workload tool prevent any support structures- everyone is just treading water.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>New teaching model makes it very challenging for meaningful learning experiences as it is too rushed.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	

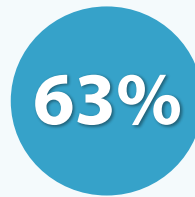
5. Workplace Culture

A positive, supportive workplace culture should not be too much to expect, especially at our public universities. Being responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars of public funding, university managements are obligated to create a positive work culture in service of the public good.

Unfortunately, the stresses and conditions of work experienced by SCU staff provide significant barriers.

Many staff have simply reached their limit, with a significant proportion of respondents unable to recommend SCU as a place to work, and many considering resignation.

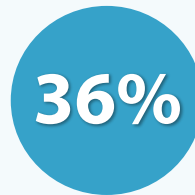
There are very few workplaces, if any, that could tolerate such a state of affairs.



of respondents rated the workplace culture at SCU as **negative** or **extremely negative**



of respondents said they were **unlikely** or **very unlikely** to recommend working at SCU to friends and colleagues



of current staff said they are **likely** or **very likely** to resign from SCU

Comments regarding workplace culture

The most toxic and harmful workplace I have ever worked.

Current SCU academic staff member

I feel myself being 'on the edge' nearing exhaustion more & more often.

Current SCU academic staff member

I enjoy the work (teaching & designing unit content)...but I do not like the workplace, culture or current processes / requirements on all staff.

Current SCU academic staff member

There is a very misogynist culture at SCU. It is not uniform but is strong where it is present. Women get overlooked, ignored and devalued, and treated like the 'secretaries' to all their male colleagues.

Current SCU academic staff member

The culture of favouritism and nepotism under Carlin and Robin Stonecash created an environment which created resentment in the school I worked in.

Former SCU academic staff member

SCU has a habit of hiring sociopathic individuals into management positions who are poorly vetted.

Former SCU academic staff member

Based on past experience (nearly 30 years), there is no point raising any concerns with HR - they always back managers, and poor management is rewarded not censured or corrected.

Current SCU academic staff member

When bullying is role modelled from the leadership team. We stand very little change of any positive change for the better.

Current SCU professional staff member

Management's approach is too heavy handed... individuals do not have the skills to engage with genuine empathy or support staff in appropriate ways. They do NOT care about the health and safety of staff. It is "my way or the highway" and bullying to get what they want. Students are not given due respect and are not required to learn - just submit assignments.

Former SCU academic staff member

<p><i>I have never taken sick leave because of work related stress but feel that I am reaching my tipping point.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>I really love the work and the people in our department. I have no plans to leave but... I am constantly being reminded that my position is always at risk. Its like being held hostage to try and work myself to death I feel some days.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>With over 40 years in the workforce, most of which has been away from academia, I have never experienced such a lack of respect for staff. Often late and in contravention with requirements of the EA. Staff have not had enough capacity to cover all work to be done. Never any spare capacity to cover for illness or people leaving. The highest level of staff turnover I have ever seen and no investigation as to why.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>Management seems to be "requiring" that staff have a positive attitude. I have been "spoken to" (not quite disciplined) about expressing honest concerns and told that it is time to move on (without the issues being addressed). Staff who are too negative feel that their jobs are threatened so many (including myself) refrain from speaking - it's a repressive workplace :-)</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>I have had some good years, but its steadily degenerated in terms of excess workload and supervisor support. It's a stressful and unpleasant place to work, with a major lack of acknowledgement spreading through from above down.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Toxic work culture.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>

Comments about recommending SCU as an employer

<p><i>When a friend of mine asked why I hadn't forwarded them a job ad I said 'friends don't let friends work for SCU'.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>I have been very honest with friends and colleagues looking at working at SCU - I have warned them about extremely high workloads and a hostile management culture.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>20 odd years ago I was proud to work at the uni and it was a great employer with great benefits however other industries, e.g. local government organisation, employment agencies, health have overtaken us in pay and benefits and career progression opportunities.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>
<p><i>I would feel guilty if I recommended it. I wouldn't be able to lie and say it was a good place to work!</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>With this new model - I'm finding it hard to recommend. I love the work but seriously, its just too much for students and tutors in technical areas.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>It is an awful environment-very few people are happy or respect management's decisions.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>
<p><i>It's not worth the personal sacrifices necessary. SCU's business model is to squeeze as much out of staff as possible.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I am actively seeking out friends and colleagues and telling them not to go.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Anyone who asks about working or studying at SCU I tell to steer clear.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>

<p><i>Under the new management, and the absolutely ABSURD 6x6 teaching schedule, I would not recommend SCU to anyone.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I don't feel comfortable recommending scu to colleagues in the current environment.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>Never. In fact my recommendation would be to not start working for SCU under any circumstance.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>I would not recommend SCU to others until they fix their current workload model... Staff need to be treated as individuals and humans, not robots that complete each task to a rigid time allocation.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I would recommend any prospective staff or student to steer well away, and have been turning away amazing prospective PhD students because I know they will not get support at this uni.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>NEVER will I suggest SCU as an institution for staff or students. Management need a complete overhaul. In fact, a vote of no-confidence in senior management is needed... starting with the VC.</i></p> <p>Former SCU academic staff member</p>

Comments from current staff about leaving SCU

<p><i>Just not sure it is worth [staying] even though I love teaching so much. Very sad.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I intend to resign next year and leave academia after 15 years due to my experiences.</i></p> <p>Current (but not for much longer) SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I love my teaching role, I love seeing students flourish. That's what keeps me here. But it's a thin thread. I am only working part time at the moment, I am fortunate to be able to but there's no way I want to be full time as the workload model is so flawed and the place is toxic.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>I have already resigned because of the workload the expectations and the culture.</i></p> <p>Current (but not for much longer) SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>There is no other work locally that fits with my skillset so I am held over a barrel literally.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>The only thing keeping me here is that I would have to relocate - SCU exploits its relative isolation to keep staff.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>
<p><i>Actively looking at opportunities outside SCU.</i></p> <p>Current SCU professional staff member</p>	<p><i>Can't sustain the workload and awful management decisions for much longer.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I am always actively looking for work elsewhere.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>
<p><i>If the workload system were fixed, I would love to stay in my current job and job strain would reduce significantly... Trust your staff. Create a flexible workload system to increase job satisfaction, reduce job strain, retain more staff and capacity, reduce sick days, increase the reputation of the uni, improve relationships between staff and managers - there's so much to gain from a more fair workload allocation system.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I am actively looking at other opportunities outside of SCU.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>	<p><i>I'm on a treadmill here - the hope we can turn this place around is the only thing that keeps me coming back.</i></p> <p>Current SCU academic staff member</p>

Conclusions

It is clear from the results of this survey that Southern Cross University is a public institution facing significant risks, not just to the wellbeing of an unacceptable proportion of staff, but to the reputation of the university itself.

As previously stated, the levels of workplace stress identified here make for upsetting reading.

It is incumbent on SCU management to urgently, openly and thoroughly address the issues identified, in line with its Work Health and Safety obligations under law, in consultation with, and in the service of, the SCU community. Not only are the issues extremely serious, there is an ostensibly lack of education and awareness of psychosocial hazards, appropriate methods of reporting, and the employer's responsibilities in this regard.

Practically, the NTEU calls on SCU management to commit to workplace improvement through:

1. A full review of the '6 x 6' teaching model
2. Negotiated improvements to both job security and workloads through the current enterprise bargaining negotiations with the NTEU

Further, the NTEU calls for SCU management to reorient its practice in line with community expectations and sector norms.