

Fat Cat and Friends

Which university pays its general staff the best?

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Universities are required by legislation to provide annual staff unit record files to the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). Most universities seem to undertake this task with appropriate diligence. This paper examines the latest staff aggregated data set released by DEST (2005 data), in order to compare average salaries paid by universities to general ('non-academic') staff, and to identify the top salaries paid.

Introduction

Under Subdivision 19E, 19-70 (1) of the *Higher Education Support Act (2003)*

A higher education provider must give to the Minister such statistical and other information that the Minister by notice in writing requires from the provider in respect of:

- (a) the provision of higher education by the provider; and
- (b) compliance by the provider with the requirements of this Act.

Within this requirement, universities must provide the government with a wide range of statistics, on students, finance, research and staff. Among the information reported by universities on full time and fractional full time staff are details of age, sex, tenure, various details about jobs, and for those staff designated as 'non-academic', their equivalent full time annual salary. This paper uses publicly available aggregated staff statistics to establish which universities are the highest payers. Salary information has never been collected for academic staff, perhaps because such salaries were presumed to be 'known'. Until the introduction of enterprise bargaining in 1993, academic salaries were set centrally.

The data file can be downloaded from http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/statistics/higher_education_statistics_collection.btm#Data_from_the_Staff_Collection (Accessed 25 March 2007).

Some system-wide statistics

Tables 1 and 2 show the derivation and distribution of staff used for this paper. The net full time equivalent (FTE) general staff population of 45,995 was derived from DEST's aggregated staff data set for 2004 by removing (in order):

- All academic staff, and
- General staff in:
 - independent operations – controlled entities
 - TAFE / VET entities, and
 - Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs).

General staff in the three last-mentioned categories were removed on the grounds that these entities are not uniformly represented across the sector. The staff population analysed, therefore, includes only higher education staff, classified as 'non-academic', occupying a full time or fractional full time position, and not working in independent operations, TAFE or CRCs.

In 2005 (as 31 March), Australian universities reported a workforce numbering over 82,000 full time equivalent staff (excluding casual staff) which can be divided roughly between 'academic' staff engaged primarily in teaching and research (42 per cent) and 'general' staff (also frequently described as 'non-academic') charged with providing support for that academic work (58 per cent). The general staff are also reported according to their 'function'. Of the total of 45,995 general staff, about 2,780 were reported as having a 'research only' function (laboratory support staff in the main), the balance

Table 1: Derivation of the General Staff Population 2005

	Full Time Equivalent (No.)	Full Time Equivalent (%)
Total full time / fractional full time population on DEST File	82275	100.0%
Less:		
Academic Staff	34520	42.0%
Independent Operations	933	1.1%
TAFE	634	0.8%
Cooperative Research Centres	193	0.2%
Net general staff	45995	55.9%

reported as having an ‘other’ function. The remaining functions, ‘teaching-only’ and ‘teaching and research’ are the reserve of academic staff only. It should be noted that some universities report few or no general staff as having a ‘research only’ function, so to analyse data on this group separately provides no conclusive observations about numbers of staff employed in laboratories or other places of research. In fact there is legislation in place in Victoria at least which requires universities to classify many more Research Only staff as ‘academic’ than in other states. This has ramifications for the number of staff taken into account in calculations of research productivity, but that is the topic for another paper.

In the Australian university sector, members of staff are classified into twelve groups of Higher Education Worker (HEW), ascending according to salary from Below HEW Level 1 to Above HEW Level 10. As shown in Table 2, 55 per cent of general staff occupy positions at HEW Levels 4, 5 and 6.

Table 2: General Staff 2005, by HEW Level

Higher Education Worker (HEW) Level	Full Time Equivalent (No.)	Full Time Equivalent (%)
Below HEW Level 1	151	0.4%
HEW Level 1	373	0.9%
HEW Level 2	1168	2.8%
HEW Level 3	4379	10.0%
HEW Level 4	7772	17.4%
HEW Level 5	9606	20.9%
HEW Level 6	7993	17.0%
HEW Level 7	6043	12.8%
HEW Level 8	4060	8.7%
HEW Level 9	2088	4.2%
HEW Level 10	1116	2.3%
Above HEW Level 10	1245	2.6%
Total	45995	100.0%

General Staff Salaries

At most universities, equivalent full time salaries offered for HEW Levels 1 to 9 are similar between universities, but salaries in the HEW Level 10 and Above HEW Level 10 grade are more variable. Many staff members are now remunerated in part by non-salary benefits, ranging from tax-beneficial arrangements of ‘packaging’ cars, mobile telephones, laptop computers, superannuation etc, through to staff being provided with fully maintained cars or other non-cash benefits.

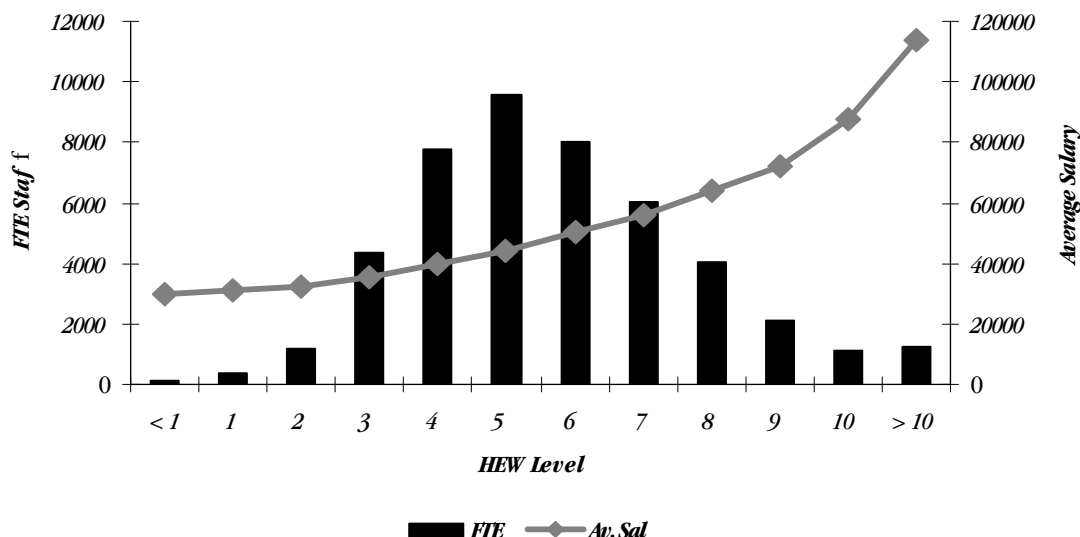


Figure 1: University General Staff, 2004: Numbers (FTE) and Average Salaries by HEW Level

Such forms of ‘income’ are not reported to DEST, and therefore are not included in the analysis which follows. It has been rumoured from time to time that some universities also run a ‘second payroll’ through which senior staff receive additional remuneration. Perhaps this is an urban legend.

If universities have followed DEST’s instructions to the letter, salaries reported for fractional full time staff will be those that those staff would have earned had they been full time (i.e. occupying a 100 per cent position). The average salary earned by the 45,995 persons who made up the 2005 general staff population was \$50,328. Figure 1 plots the numbers of staff and the average salary earned in each HEW level. Around 55 per cent of general staff occupied posts in HEW Levels 4, 5 and 6, and universities reported that these staff received salaries in the range of about \$39,500 to \$50,000. The average salary reported for staff classified as Above HEW Level 10 was a little under \$114,000.

In university statistics, staff members are classified according to the type of department they work in. Figure 2 shows the distribution of general staff and the average salaries they received in 2005, by organisational group. Around 41 per cent of general staff are employed in academic departments, and a further 32 per cent in ‘central administration’, including cleaning and security. Libraries, computer centres and student services departments were the homes for a further 9 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively. General staff earned higher average salaries in computer centres and administration and overhead services. Lower average salaries were paid to general staff in libraries and building-related services.

Fat Cats: which universities pay the most?

So, which universities should be targeted by career-minded general staff with aspirations for the top? Further, which universities have the most staff ‘at the top’? Table 3 summarises the numbers of general staff at each university and shows average salaries reported in 2005 for several HEW bands. The highest individual salary reported by each university is also shown.

According to what was reported by universities to DEST in 2005, the average general staff salary paid by RMIT was the highest. On average, they paid their staff \$57,530, with UTS, UNSW, and Macquarie all reporting that they paid general staff an average salary in excess of \$55,000. At the bottom end of the scale were Wollongong, Notre Dame, Ballarat, Charles Darwin and the Australian Maritime College (AMC).

At the most typical HEW levels 4, 5 and 6, the average salary calculated from the information reported by universities was \$44,673 per annum. The better paying institutions to staff at these levels (on average) were the Universities of Sydney and Western Australia, and UTS all three of which reported paying an average in excess of \$47,000. The universities reporting the lowest salaries were the Universities of Ballarat, Wollongong and Notre Dame, reporting that they paid less than \$40,000 to their staff at HEW Levels 4 to 6. For staff at HEW Levels 7 to 9, Batchelor Institute, and the Universities of Sydney, Western Australia and NSW all reported an average above \$64,000.

Looking at the top end of the salary scales, a total of 55 general staff members received salaries of \$200,000 or higher, 120 received between \$150,000 and \$199,999 and 684 general staff earned between \$100,000 and \$149,999. Not surpris-

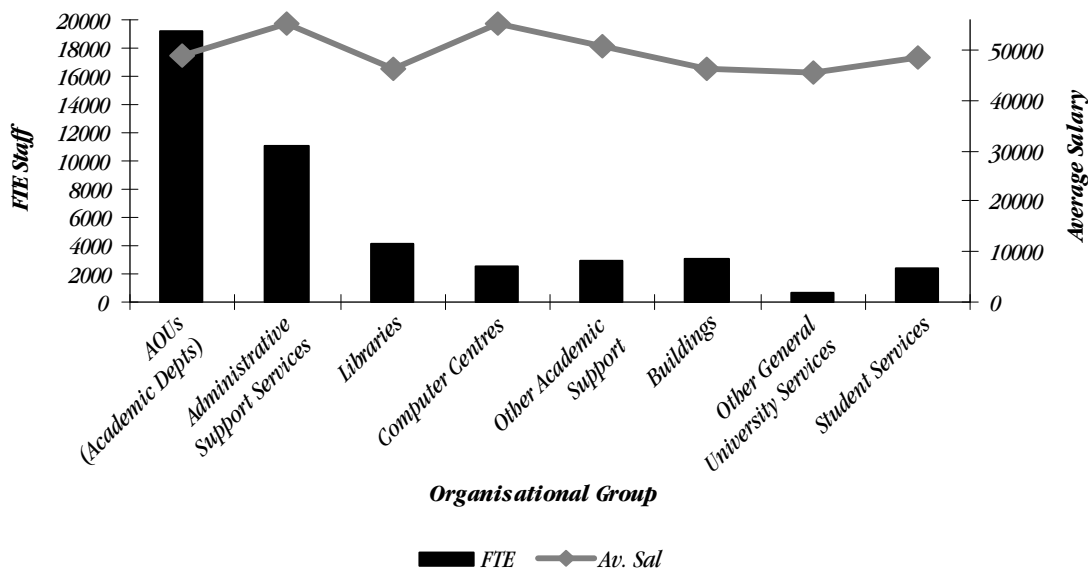


Figure 2: University General Staff, 2005: Numbers (FTE) and Average Salaries by Organisational Unit Group

Table 3: FTE and Per Cent of General Staff; Average Salaries Paid to General Staff, 2004 Source: DEST Aggregated Data Set STAG 2005

University	FTE Staff					Average Salary				
	Total Staff	<1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 & >10	All Levels	<1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 & >10
Aust. Catholic Univ. (ACU)	461	12.1%	58.8%	23.3%	5.7%	47903	33830	42960	59348	92653
Adelaide	1251	16.1%	53.6%	27.4%	2.9%	47966	33990	43824	60112	97431
Aust. Defence Force Acad. (ADFA)	206	6.6%	51.7%	37.3%	4.4%	51542	34169	46105	59930	90660
Aust. Maritime College (AMC)	103	25.2%	56.3%	13.6%	4.9%	44839	30454	42419	59468	117427
Aust. National Univ. (ANU)	2129	14.7%	45.6%	31.0%	8.6%	51880	35540	45947	61281	84803
Avondale College	71	7.0%	74.6%	16.9%	1.4%	47174	32892	45354	61914	74526
Ballarat	286	22.6%	51.0%	21.3%	5.2%	44164	31221	39970	54764	97403
Batchelor (BIITE)	47	57.4%	25.5%	12.8%	4.3%	46023	43156	42381	71795	31747
Canberra	459	15.3%	51.7%	27.5%	5.6%	49742	35231	43921	60504	96230
Central Queensland (CQU)	752	13.3%	57.0%	24.0%	5.7%	48391	32900	42566	58282	103066
Charles Darwin (CDU)	165	22.9%	55.3%	17.8%	4.0%	44262	33170	41457	58288	92476
Charles Sturt (CSU)	970	23.3%	58.8%	14.3%	3.6%	45073	33557	42932	58457	101450
Curtin	1511	13.0%	56.5%	26.2%	4.3%	49208	35971	43910	60732	98378
Deakin	1381	8.7%	60.0%	25.4%	5.9%	50510	34052	43936	61422	97494
Edith Cowan (ECU)	1000	18.4%	49.8%	27.2%	4.5%	48758	34546	44669	61443	97613
Flinders	854	21.8%	50.5%	25.3%	2.5%	45202	33975	42614	57069	91030
Griffith (GU)	1736	16.5%	57.5%	21.5%	4.4%	46818	32779	42939	58602	95220
James Cook (JCU)	869	20.9%	55.1%	18.8%	5.3%	46675	32489	43302	57042	108850
La Trobe	1241	13.5%	56.6%	24.6%	5.3%	48235	33288	42927	59793	100250
Macquarie	881	6.4%	50.2%	36.1%	7.4%	55147	34799	46932	63470	95578
Melbourne	2936	9.1%	58.3%	27.6%	4.9%	51680	34558	45379	60962	108202
Monash	2629	10.9%	55.4%	27.8%	5.8%	50388	34314	44528	60140	88373
Murdoch	732	14.1%	53.0%	26.6%	6.3%	50527	35517	43460	61025	108603
New England	742	20.3%	57.4%	18.3%	4.0%	47485	33633	44253	60462	111873
New South Wales (UNSW)	2470	10.0%	51.1%	33.1%	5.8%	55308	36629	47249	64724	108972
Newcastle	1333	12.8%	57.4%	26.3%	3.6%	47502	33919	44156	60694	72094
Notre Dame	127	40.2%	42.5%	11.8%	5.5%	44068	42754	37292	51571	101172
Queensland	3012	14.5%	60.4%	22.2%	2.9%	49228	35231	45178	61630	108869
Qld Univ. of Technology (QUT)	1856	12.2%	55.1%	25.6%	7.1%	50517	34239	43909	60156	96855
RMIT	1384	3.3%	55.2%	32.4%	9.1%	57530	33770	44178	61985	129555
South Australia	1181	13.9%	57.6%	25.2%	3.3%	47888	33769	43054	59425	105247
Southern Cross	393	10.8%	64.3%	20.9%	4.0%	49542	35796	45188	62698	93576
Southern Queensland (USQ)	757	19.7%	54.4%	21.1%	4.8%	44981	33205	41040	56706	86759
Sunshine Coast	223	13.3%	56.8%	26.7%	3.1%	46689	33473	41834	59760	87895
Swinburne	477	7.0%	60.7%	29.2%	2.8%	50210	33126	44715	59472	108248
Sydney	3012	11.1%	53.4%	30.8%	4.7%	54861	36916	47907	65002	112086
Tasmania	890	20.4%	57.4%	18.9%	3.3%	46538	34503	44280	60382	95156
Univ. of Technology, Sydney (UTS)	1218	5.9%	49.7%	36.1%	8.3%	57119	37115	47517	63598	107784
Victoria	726	7.4%	56.9%	29.7%	5.9%	51434	34277	45352	61083	91013
Western Australia (UWA)	1654	17.3%	59.9%	19.0%	3.8%	50320	36091	47481	64759	100970
Western Sydney (UWS)	1135	8.3%	51.4%	34.6%	5.7%	52600	34528	44537	59804	106043
Wollongong	735	17.1%	51.1%	26.8%	5.0%	43875	27239	38465	55256	104884
Total	45995	13.2%	55.2%	26.5%	5.1%	50328	34478	44673	61183	101569

Table 4 Maximum Salaries Paid to General Staff, 2005: by Organisational Unit Group, Ranked by Highest Salary

University	AOUs	Admin Services	Other Ac Serv	Libraries	Bldgs-Related	Comp	Other GUS	Student services	Overall	Highest Salary Paid (0 £10+)	FTE Salary >150k
Melbourne	412844	200000	136952	113039	190020	0	0	140960	51680	412844	13
Adelaide	350000	208172	84643	101551	95049	101551	0	71448	47966	350000	3
RMIT	209050	318648	160000	155015	165000	203528	0	137917	57530	318648	39
Sydney	250000	300000	147847	140377	138065	78000	106347	121537	54861	300000	12
UNSW	175000	237132	115194	283028	132303	144393	71313	97539	55308	283028	10
USQ	76603	136676	118915	113681	68358	102815	57862	267022	44981	267022	0
Queensland	245000	260000	128872	129333	152774	152774	111360	128873	49228	260000	9
Griffith	93656	258739	128399	202293	165810	165810	128399	95886	46818	258739	8
South Australia	114174	251462	0	135978	146987	120792	0	0	47888	251462	2
Deakin	240000	238977	93449	82517	200000	146815	48547	117881	50510	240000	8
La Trobe	102459	238320	71555	116712	109646	162897	0	111344	48235	238320	4
UWS	70341	233410	167641	143737	141737	144802	0	133683	52600	233410	5
UWA	100000	224910	126580	129031	123984	85845	53762	96726	50320	224910	2
Wollongong	79260	215994	78948	128558	121812	126078	0	117590	43875	215994	3
Edith Cowan	88303	212010	124704	88303	148912	68347	72368	110688	48758	212010	2
Victoria	76560	211342	76560	100853	74847	130277	0	111366	51434	211342	4
Murdoch	162222	210092	69531	85429	135780	137688	69531	62477	50527	210092	8
UTS	142233	203573	143614	165000	138090	0	0	114811	57119	203573	8
James Cook	144966	197880	165478	134809	134809	157276	157276	134809	46675	197880	9
Canberra	95000	155763	75695	95710	71258	99105	189350	110310	49742	189350	2
QUT	189147	166530	166530	143917	143917	94827	104933	143917	50517	189147	4
New England	148793	183901	66251	129812	105171	100580	66251	100580	47485	183901	4
Tasmania	71904	176853	95096	108436	108436	0	111878	95096	46538	176853	1
Monash	118736	174081	92631	127405	64579	112938	81254	145656	50388	174081	3
ACU	61133	172499	143998	115768	63366	143998	0	63366	47903	172499	1
AMC	50562	168730	60320	47880	50136	75000	49007	67600	44839	168730	2
ANU	119387	166163	110775	117416	110718	116314	107742	95147	51880	166163	2
CQU	135692	165495	107231	149596	151318	145596	0	99829	48391	165495	2
CSU	111780	162908	65729	119009	122622	71530	0	109199	45073	162908	2
Swinburne	85000	154446	82335	107989	115000	160140	0	111228	50210	160140	2
Curtin	112799	145000	107490	116725	125000	103508	0	94220	49208	145000	0
Flinders	85383	144717	0	108538	101302	74529	61424	72359	45202	144717	0
Ballarat	85000	141000	66086	68055	66086	80215	64789	95000	44164	141000	0
ADEFA	71390	137437	85744	102202	69780	71390	65270	0	51542	137437	0
CDU	108801	135089	53122	88933	99603	0	90598	97385	44262	135089	0
Notre Dame	0	130016	391250	61253	85986	0	127402	72868	44068	130016	2
Southern Cross	90000	130000	41478	87425	90263	98751	0	100342	49542	130000	0
Macquarie	100409	126548	118326	126548	126548	126548	74563	100409	55147	126548	0
Sunshine Coast	64610	110338	80236	69677	101351	110250	55428	64611	46689	110338	0
Avondale	54563	76289	57837	69654	61752	69654	0	63564	47174	74526	0
Newcastle	72094	72094	72094	72094	72094	72094	46462	72094	47502	72094	0
Batchelor	0	87094	36992	68780	57930	0	33143	0	46023	31747	0
Total	412844	318648	391250	283028	200000	203528	189350	267022	50328	412844	175

ingly, staff in HEW Levels 10 and Above HEW Level 10 earned the highest average salaries. The best paying institution (on average) was RMIT, which rewarded its most senior general staff to the tune of \$129,555. A further 18 universities also paid Hew 10 and Above HEW 10 staff an average of between \$100,250 and \$117,427 in 2005.

RMIT also had the highest proportion of general staff employed at HEW Level 10 and Above Level 10 (9.8 per cent). Other universities also had at least 7 per cent of their general staff classified at the most senior two HEW levels: ANU (8.6 per cent), UTS (8.1 per cent), Canberra (8.3 per cent), Macquarie (7.4 per cent) and QUT (7.1 per cent), against the system-wide average of 5.1 per cent.

Which departments do the highest paid general staff work in?

Table 4 presents a distribution of the highest salary paid at each university, according to the type of department the general staff member works in. The table reveals remarkable variation between universities. For instance, within academic departments, the maximum salary reported varies from about \$50,500 at the lower end (AMC), up to \$412,844 at the University of Melbourne. Within libraries, the highest salary paid at was \$283,028 at UNSW, with a considerable gap to the next best salary of \$202,293 at Griffith and a long step down to the \$47,880 at the bottom (AMC again). One wonders if these wide variations generate envy in the library world. There is also considerable variation in the top salaries paid to general staff in (central) administration. The range would seem to be from \$318,648 to \$72,094. The latter figure, and perhaps a few others, are probably not correct. A section below considers data quality.

Column 12 of the table also shows the number of general staff reported as receiving a salary of \$150,000 or higher. Few general staff earn in these lofty areas, but RMIT is on top, by a considerable margin. According to the files submitted by RMIT to DEST, 39 FTE general staff earned more than \$150,000 per annum. Perhaps career-minded general staff ought to set their sights on RMIT. It pays the highest average salary to general staff, has the most staff earning salaries in excess of \$150,000, and has the highest paid staff member in 'Admin Services' (\$318,648). In most instances such lofty remuneration levels are restricted to Vice-Chancellors and their deputies, although there are other senior academics on salaries above \$200,000, such as the holders of federation fellowships.

Table 4 also shows the highest salary paid to a member of the general staff at each university. The University of Melbourne has the highest paid member of general staff in the country (\$412,844), and by a considerable margin. Melbourne was followed by the Universities of Adelaide (highest paid \$350,000), RMIT (\$318,648), Sydney (\$300,000) and NSW (\$283,028). In

fact, 18 universities reported that they paid their most senior general staff member over \$200,000. Of the 54 FTE general staff earning \$200,000 or more, 14 were women, including RMIT's high flyer, who is the best paid female general staff member in the country. Of the 175 general staff earning more than \$150,000, 44 were women (25 per cent) and 14 of these were at RMIT.

Data quality

Questions must always be asked about the quality of data submitted by universities. In the case of the student collection, accuracy and veracity were forced on universities because student files are linked fairly directly to the student fees system and the income tax collection scheme. This has been the case since the introduction of HECS in 1989. This is not the case with staff statistics, and there are a few examples of what would seem to be incomplete or out-of-date material reported by universities, as well as examples of a failure to follow DEST's instructions and to comply with their definitions. Despite the all-pervasive 'quality' rhetoric, some universities' demonstrations of 'quality' in aspects of their statutory reporting leave a lot to be desired.

In the context of this paper, one major set of data errors relates to universities failing to provide equivalent full time salaries. The DEST instructions state that universities should report "[a] member of staff's salary level at a particular time, expressed in terms of the amount which would be paid to them were they to have a full-time work contract for a full year" (DEST, 2004-Staff Help File). In fact, there are many instances where the salaries reported as being paid to fractional full time staff appear to be the actual (fractional) salary paid for the year, rather than the equivalent full time salary which should have been reported (DEST, 2003-Staff Help File).

A second set of oversights relates to failure to report a salary at all. In 2005, there were 268 FTE general staff in the sector reported by their university as having a salary of \$0, at a total of 18 universities. Twenty-eight of these staff were engaged in positions at HEW Level 10 or Above HEW Level 10. In the main, the failure to report a salary by most universities is likely to be an oversight. However, this is not likely to be the explanation of either the 143 \$0 salaries reported by Central Queensland University or the 66 by the University of Melbourne. Perhaps La Trobe (17 FTE) and Notre Dame (12 FTE) could also pull up their socks. Of course, it is possible that these zero-salaried staff are honorary. The definition of 'member of staff' includes 'a person who works for the institution or one of its controlled entities on a regular basis but who receives no remuneration (eg members of religious denominations, unpaid visiting fellows)' (DEST, 2003-Staff Help File). The 'honorary' explanation seems unlikely, however. General staff would not usually be appointed to honorary positions.

There are other instances where the salaries reported seem implausibly low. According to what has been reported by the University of Newcastle, the maximum salary earned by any member of the general staff was only \$72,094. Is it the result of sloppy reporting, or are they just being coy?

Although poor data quality is a likely reason for much of the variability shown in these results, in some instances there could be perfectly good reasons why some universities appear to pay relatively low maximum salaries to general staff. Perhaps the major reason is that some universities could be organised in such a way that the most senior person in charge of some areas (say, the academic service areas, such as libraries and computer centres) might be a Pro- or Deputy Vice-Chancellor. In such cases, that staff member will not be recorded as a 'non-academic' member of staff, and universities are not required to report full time equivalent salaries. Universities which appear to pay 'too little' for the most senior person in libraries and computer centres are the ones for which this interpretation is possible.

As a final note on data quality, according to its staff statistics, which Victorian university has had a Vice-Chancellor only once (2004) in the decade from 1996 to 2005? Perhaps it just felt as though there was no VC!

Conclusion

The particular aim of this paper was descriptive, to report on general salaries and salary variations within the system, and to show that some among us earn quite well. The paper also suggested that some universities appear to be more diligent than others in their quality assurance processes with respect to DEST's statistical collections.

Whilst universities remain partially publicly-funded institutions, perhaps the reporting of salaries is necessary to meet the stringent accountability requirements of successive Ministers of Education, yet the author has yet to see any analysis by DEST or other government departments on salary distributions. However, if universities are required to report general staff salaries, one wonders why they are not also required to report the salaries of academic staff as well.

And what of those large universities which appear to be paying well below the odds for their top people? If RMIT needs to pay 39 general staff more than \$150,000, how do large universities such as Monash and the University of South Australia manage to get away with only three staff on fat cat salaries? Perhaps senior staff members at some universities are paid through the accounts payable system as 'consultants', or perhaps some administrative roles have been redefined as 'academic'. Certainly the title 'professor' has been diluted by being bestowed on senior administrators at some universities.

Some might see a privacy issue here. Looking at these 'statistics' has made it possible to speculate on the identity of some of the likely recipients of the top salaries. Although (unfortunately) not quite in the \$150,000-plus category, the author was able to identify himself from this publicly available source, and to make educated guesses about who some of the top earners are at a range of universities.

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Reference

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