Dear Professor Morphy,

I am writing to express my concern over the proposed changes outlined in the “Change Management Proposal: RSHA Restructure” released on 22 July 2013.

I am currently a PhD candidate in the School of Sociology at the ANU. I also completed my undergraduate training at ANU, with a Ba Arts/BA Science (Psychology), first class honours in Philosophy, 2009. In 2011 I was awarded the Inaugural PhD Scholarship from the ANU Gender Institute to conduct my HDR studies at ANU. In 2012 I received the CASS award for Excellence in Tutoring as well as the Vice Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Tutoring or Demonstrating. I am also an academic committee member on the ANU Fenner Hall Diversity Learning Community.

My concerns regarding the change management proposal are multiple, and I have a number of questions regarding the possible impact on students, graduate and undergraduate alike, should changes go ahead. There have already been significant educational disruptions due to earlier reforms within the humanities area and this new proposal is again providing uncertain footing. There are numerous students currently studying within RSHA who are distressed by the unknown future implications of this “disestablishment” proposal. What follows are some specific examples of concerns relating to the proposed changes.

Gender, Sexuality and Culture (GSC) studies students are highly concerned – they have seen the way in which Film Studies was recently demoted from a major option to a minor one due to staffing issues – and are worried that current guarantees to maintain GSC as a major option will also be reneged upon in the future.

- Can you confirm what the practical strategies are to ensure that the proposed changes will be feasibly carried out without major deleterious impact on the subjects being moved, such as GSC, which will be subsumed under different disciplines?
- Though the proposal acknowledges that “planning” on exactly how the changes will be carried out is not included, given the promises being made within the proposal, particularly with regard to the GSC major, can you confirm when more information regarding plans will be made available?
- Can you confirm that adequate consultation with students and staff in areas that will be impacted by the changes, such as GSC, have been carried out?
  - Further to this question, page 10 of the proposal states: “Gender, Sexuality and Culture remains as a major in the BA and is convened out of the School of Sociology”. It is my understanding that GSC is not currently administered by Sociology. Can you clarify this statement? Can you confirm that staff (academic and administrative) within Sociology who will be responsible for GSC in the future have been informed and consulted with on the plan for GSC to sit within Sociology?
- Can you provide evidence that GSC will continue as a major at the ANU in the coming years?
- Can you confirm that since 2009 one staff member who taught GSC major subjects has left the ANU and has not been replaced? Are there plans to replace this position in the future to ensure the continuation of the major?
- What plans are in place that will support the continuation of GSC as a major at the ANU?
- What GSC courses will run past 2014 and which staff members will run them?
- What supports will be in place to make sure that enough GSC courses run to form a major?
• Can you confirm whether there will be adequate numbers of staff to support the continuation of enough GSC courses to constitute a major?

A further concern that I have regarding the change management proposal is the way in which consultation has been conducted thus far.

• What measures have been taken to get students who will be directly affected by the changes involved in the consultation process aside from the forum held in May prior to the release of the proposal, and the forum held the day immediately following the proposal’s release?
• Can you comment on why there was such a short turnaround between the release of the proposal and the meeting held with students?
• Can you confirm that the forum held on the 23 July had approximately 24 students were in attendance?
• Can you comment on the rationale behind the particular change management planning regarding the number and timing of student forums?
• Can you comment on the wording on the RSHA site that uses language that suggests the changes will definitely go ahead – “Proposed change finalised: 3 September”?
• Can you comment on whether the aim of the forum held with students was to provide an arena in which to discuss the proposal and possible changes to the proposal, or whether it was to simply inform students of changes that would definitely go ahead?
• Can you comment on whether you have obtained the views of the majority of undergraduate and graduate students directly affected through your current method of consultation?
• Can you comment on whether in your consultation process you employed any of these methods with regard to the most recent student forum held 23 July 2013: multiple emails; fliers; social media announcements; media announcements; announcement in Woroni? If not, can you comment on why any of these practices have not been utilised?

Related to these consultation issues is the statement made on page 12 of the document that claims “staff directly affected” will be made aware of the proposal.

• Can you confirm that this statement is correct? Can you comment on how “staff directly affected” is defined?
• Considering that many areas of the Arts and Social Sciences will be restructuring and absorbing different subjects (such as the Art School taking up Art History and Curatorship), have these Heads of Schools been informed? Have administrative staff from these areas been informed?
• Can you comment on the concern that if the people who will be administering and organising restructured disciplines in the future are not aware of these proposed plans, how can you be sure that the restructure will not have several unforeseen negative consequences in regards to courses on offer in the future?

As a student and staff member deeply involved in issues of gender and sexuality in research, consultative and teaching capacities, I would like to offer my services in helping to ensure that the GSC major remains secure into the future. Further, I would be more than willing to be involved in future change management processes in CASS to ensure that the voices of students, particularly those from the graduate cohort of which I am part, are heard and integrated into planning solutions. For these reasons I would like to offer my services into the future as a graduate representative in the following capacities:

• Graduate representation on further change management developments related to the RSHA restructure indicated in the proposal;
• Graduate representation on planning on maintenance of the GSC major for 2014 and onward, to ensure its survival and strength into the future; and/or
• Helping to promote future student forums to ensure that the majority of affected graduate student voices are taken into consideration.

Students care about these kinds of changes being made to their university. I am letting you know that I care about the changes, but have concerns as outlined in the questions I seek to be answered. These are regarding: the promotion of an uncertain context for students in the RSHA, the content of the proposal in regards to the practicalities of the promises made, and the way in which “consultation” on the proposal has been conducted. I look forward to hearing from you regarding the questions I have raised, and the possibility of my involvement as a graduate representative in future change management planning for RSHA and the GSC major.

Yours sincerely,
Hannah McCann

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