

## COVID-19 Forum – TAG Commercial Development 11.00, 22/05/20

Ben Pinney **(BP)** – University of Sydney Union

David Murray **(DM)** – CQ University

Chris Beattie **(CB)** – Griffith University Campus Life

Robert Patterson **(RP)** – Griffith University Gold Coast Student Guild

Chris Jones **(CJ)** – QUT Guild

Grant Hall **(GrH)** - UCX

### General

**CJ** QUT is wanting key staff to return to campus Monday. Coincidentally, this is the day that free parking on campus ceases. Rest of staff to return 20<sup>th</sup> July, corresponding week 1, S2.

**CB** Griffith Uni is taking a very cautious approach on returning to campus. Prioritising essential teaching and research. The rest remains very much online.

Anyone returning to campus must submit a COVID action plan beforehand covering protocols, how they propose to educate their staff and students regarding any implications particular to their area. This may slow down the return to campus process.

**BP** S2 pushed back to 24<sup>th</sup> August, which was initially promising, but the university has also committed to learning remaining online for the remainder of the year. This is at odds with the university strategy document outlining that 50% of students and staff were expected to be on campus from 29<sup>th</sup> June.

USU is resigned to working along an out-of-semester capacity for the rest of the year.

University has expressed interest in assisting in providing support for USU virtual Welcome Fest, August 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>.

**DM** VET sector students return next week.

COVID case in Rockhampton visited the university library three times. Drive through COVID test unit placed on campus in response.

Face to face learning nor expected until beginning of next year.

**RP** Guild is forward planning a future with reduced SSAF funding.

A growing common sense of purpose between Guild and the university is heartening.

**GH** University is looking to reopen for S2 but bringing staff back 2nd June.

**TAG** Members may find that access to previously free or reduced rent campus outlets may be threatened as universities seek to claw back lost revenue from every possible source.

### **JobKeeper and Staff**

**CJ** It is draining being at work not doing anything due to the lack of business, so full-time staff are rotating through a week's leave each for some sanity, and to provide work opportunity for JobKeeper staff.

**CB** 180 casual staff have been let go. Permanent staff have been redeployed to other duties, such as landscaping.

As a university, Griffith does not qualify for Job Keeper. Significant job losses projected.

**BP** Have managed to move most of casuals originally on JobSeeker across to JobKeeper.

Only about 10 commercial operational staff presently actively working.

Staff are very keen to return to work and to contribute. One has expressed concern regarding their mental health during isolation.

Several recent senior staff departures and voluntary redundancies have freed up much-needed capital.

**DM** 184 voluntary separations accepted by the university as stage one of their Initial Change Proposal.

**GH** Eligible for JobKeeper, with projects in place to keep staff busy.

**RP** Eligible for JobKeeper, lost some student casuals doing occasional shifts.

Bar staff volunteered to stand down.

38 projects have been identified to keep remaining staff employed.

Current legal finding that casual employees are eligible for leave accrual will be a significant issue for them.

**BP** Will be a problem for USU as they strive to give casual staff regular employment. Some are on 38hrs/week and have been with the USU for up to five years.

Adding leave accrual to for casuals who may be working long hours is likely to make them unviable and converting them to PPT or FT may be a better option.

**CB** Short-term contracts rather than staff may be a better option, providing greater flexibility.

## Operational

**CJ** O Week turnover through their commercial outlets was \$130K. Easter week turnover \$1,800. Currently \$5-6K basically with school kids on the Kelvin Grove campus, but they return to school next week.

University is providing \$5 vouchers to students who spend more than \$5 in a campus store, to generate trade on campus.

February they were serving between 500 and 1000 customers per day, depending on the day. The worst since COVID has been 17 per day. Currently, with the impetus of the voucher program, they are serving around 100 per day.

Only able to begin ordering stock last week. Prior to that they either did not have the financial capacity to do so or were still winding down existing slowly due to the lack of customers.

Great opportunity to review viability of certain stock lines.

Bars may be open 11 July, coinciding with O Week, but there will be considerable COVID conditions to be met regarding social distancing, cleaning, etc.

**CB** Most commercial outlets have been closed.

**BP** 98% reduction in revenue in March and April. \$1.6M reduction April 2020 compared April 2019.

Main library reopens Monday. If it generates genuine foot traffic, it will greatly aid USU's most profitable outlet, Coffee@Fisher, which will reopen 1<sup>st</sup> June regardless.

Two retail outlets remain open. One (Footbridge Station) has significantly jumped week on week, with last week improving 50% on prior week. Helped by research staff coming back to campus.

Their Abercrombie Terrace outlet will be significantly impacted by the Business Schools decision to remain online for the rest of the year. This will remove a few million dollars from USU's revenues this year.

**Looking at Typsy hospitality training platform for F&B managers and FT staff at USU. May be of interest to other members as well <https://www.typsy.com/business> The platform enables the business to upload their own training modules/content with hundreds of videos already available to use. They are offering FREE SUBSCRIPTION to the service till October 1, and USU is considering trialling it. It may be a way to keep our JobKeeper staff engaged plus some useful training on pre/post Covid 19 processes. <https://www.typsy.com/covid>**

**DM** Cafes reopen 12<sup>th</sup> June. Bar will not reopen until July.

85% of bookshop sales are online, so other than students that have deferred or dropped out, there has been minimal impact by the disruption.

Post Office in the bookshop remained open as an essential service.

- GH** Campus shop and post office still operating. Post office doing quite well with faculties posting out to students. Store however is quiet.
- School Locker outlet situated in the campus shop is very busy, as all Apple shops in town are closed. With the greater population working from home, technology items are in heavy demand for home offices. This has increased public awareness of the store's presence which may improve trade in the future.
- Refectory will begin to ramp back up when staff return to campus at the beginning of June, using JobKeeper hours to cover reduced shifts.
- Hampers for students in need being distributed twice/week. Online ordering for ready-made meals available for students and staff. Delivering to student residences.
- Will trial bar opening for lunches from 2<sup>nd</sup> June as well.
- TAG** **New 5-year contract with Lion Beer has been finalised, with improved rebates and promotional support accruals. These have been backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020. Details will be available shortly.**

## **Events and Functions**

- GrH** May be a rush for rebooking of cancelled/postponed functions events for the end of the year. However, calendar is tight later the year which makes rescheduling difficult. Likely to schedule smaller bookings first in available slots.
- BP** Enquiries beginning to come in for bookings. May start small, utilising the Courtyard venue for small functions.
- Concerns that university consideration of late November exams may impact on scheduling capacity for event and function bookings.
- USU's function HostCo services many wedding bookings, which are being significantly impacted by gathering restrictions.

## **Tenants**

- CB** STA have closed their agencies on the Gold Coast and Nathan campuses.
- BP** All USU tenants have closed, except for the kebab outlet which is on a rent-freeze. However, there is no foot traffic.
- Social sustainability regarding food security and the vulnerable is an area where they can still make a difference.
- DM** Tenancies have closed, with rent freeze until reopening.

**RP** Three Guild commercial outlets remain open (general store, post office and café), advantaged by their proximity to the health campus. Currently proving \$12K-\$15K cash flow/month, which represents around 20% of usual trade.

Numbers are slowly improving, for no logical reason.

Gym and Bar managers eager to reactivate their businesses, but university return to campus policy will dictate when that might happen.

2,000 frozen meals have been sourced from Second Bite for needy students.

## **Sustainability**

**TAG** COVID compliance has meant that much of the momentum made in advancing sustainability on campuses has been lost, with single-use take-away cups, disposable cutlery and plates, portion control condiments, etc all making a return.

**BP** University was due to announce their new campus sustainability strategy plan in April, but has since gone quiet, and funding diverted.

Green Caffeen program has been parked, and questions remain as to whether there is still a role for it.

Keen to strategise a return to sustainability later in the year.

**CB** Sustainability is no longer a priority at Griffith not only because of COVID compliance, but also costs.

**DM** All sustainability programs on hold, despite VC having an environmental science background and a passion for all things sustainable.

**RP** Four of their six F&B tenants are still trading as Guild is offering significant rent relief. Hopes that the tenants are appreciative of how well they are being treated relative to others in the wider business community.

### **TAG Mentor Program:**

Want to share your expertise to assist your colleagues and strengthen the sector, or want to benefit from the experience of colleagues who have been in the sector for many years?

<https://www.tertiaryaccessgroup.com.au/for-members/tag-mentor-program/>

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