

**From:** Bennett, Paul  
**Sent:** Thursday, 9 June 2022 2:50 PM  
**To:** -All TRC Managers; -All TRC Supervisors  
**Cc:** -ET-All Executive Team  
**Subject:** IMPORTANT - Ray Walsh House Staff Relocation

Good afternoon Managers/Supervisors,

Following Jason's communications to staff last week regarding the work environment at Ray Walsh House and ongoing assessments of the heating/cooling system, I have an update with urgent action required impacting a large part of our workforce. **Particularly in the short term, we will be relying on the assistance of Managers and Supervisors to communicate with their teams to ensure as smooth a transition as possible in challenging circumstances.**

A version of this email will be sent to All Staff this afternoon.

### **What's happening?**

Whilst undergoing a fire assessment of Ray Walsh House, white dust particles were identified in the Plant Room which houses the heating/cooling system for Levels 1, 2 and 3, and is the control for all building heating/cooling systems. Initial testing has identified that asbestos particles are present. Currently, we are waiting on a report from occupational hygienists in line with our Asbestos Management Protocol.

As this room is rarely accessed and the potentially-impacted heating/cooling system for Levels 1, 2 and 3 has been turned off since Thursday 2 June, I'd like to stress that this incident has **not created an additional asbestos-related risk to staff**. However, this incident *does* impact the work that is currently being undertaken on the heating/cooling system and brings to the fore issues with fire safety compliance.

Unfortunately, there is no viable short term solution for this problem.

Recognising we have a duty to provide a safe work environment, as well as maintaining a workplace that is conducive to a positive and productive culture, it has been assessed that the risk currently posed to anyone working on Levels 1, 2 and 3 is no longer acceptable.

### **What do I need to do, and when?**

#### **Staff on Levels 1, 2 and 3:**

From Tuesday 14 June, no staff will be permitted to work on these levels due to the absence of air flow. The workspaces will *not* be quarantined, so staff will be able to access the floor for short periods where needed (such as accessing files or printing documents), however no staff will be allowed to work for periods of time from these areas.

In the short-term, all staff who usually work on these levels should have the opportunity to work from home. If this is not an option, we will ask them to be in touch with you to find an alternative. We are in the process of developing a plan which identifies appropriate work locations within current Council facilities. I ask that you compile a list of staff who aren't able to work from home in the short term, and we will prioritise their relocation. Please send this information to your Director in the first instance.

In the longer term, myself and a project team including representatives from Risk and IT has begun an audit of Council's buildings/venues and we will be working with you to find suitable alternative work places for impacted staff.

**Staff on Ground Floor and Level 4:**

Though heating/cooling is unavailable on these levels, air flow is still satisfactory and therefore in the short-term, staff are encouraged to continue working as per current arrangements in consultation with you.

As mentioned, in the mid-term, a transition relocation plan will be identified and implemented. We appreciate your patience as the detail and timing of this is worked through.

**Why is it happening?**

Ray Walsh House was built in the 1970s, and purchased by Council in the 1990s. The building is integral to the operations of Council, acting as a nerve centre for the organisation and an important base in the Tamworth CBD. You'll have noticed in recent years that the building's age is starting to show, accelerated by issues that have been recently identified including the presence of Asbestos Containing Material (ACM) and fire safety compliance.

A long-term plan to rectify identified issues, improve operational suitability and show leadership in the areas of sustainability and accessibility has been on the horizon for Council for a while now. However, the increased frequency of immediate issues impacting Council operations is accelerating these plans.

We are investigating options for our workforce in the long-term and will communicate these to staff as soon as possible. It is important for all staff to understand now though that these staff relocations will be in place for the duration of this project which won't be a matter of months, but rather years.

We need to do this once, and do it right.

It is important to recognise that this is not a Ray Walsh House users' problem, rather - this is a whole-of-Council problem. It affects everyone who works in our organisation in one way or another, as well as many of our external stakeholders. I acknowledge that this will be difficult for many of you, and an inconvenience for all. However, if the last two years have shown us nothing else, we are a resilient organisation with innovative and adaptable people.

From here, we will be:

- Prioritising the relocation of staff from Levels 1, 2 and 3
- Organising a meeting of all Managers/Supervisors early next week to provide further information and answer any questions
- Identifying options for the relocation of staff from the Ground Floor and Level 4
- Creating and implementing a plan for ongoing internal communications
- Creating and implementing a plan for communications with the broader community to ensure the impact to our operations are minimised
- Engaging with experts on the future of Ray Walsh House

There is a lot of information outlined in the above, and you may have questions that we don't yet have answers to. However, I thank you all for your patience and cooperation, and myself and the project team will be back with more information as soon as we can.

We will be undertaking extensive consultation as we go through this process, however in the meantime, please make a note of any questions and concerns you have as we will discuss them at the meeting of Managers and Supervisors next week.

Wishing you all a relaxing long weekend ahead, and safe travels for those squeezing in a change of scenery.

Paul

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General Manager

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