

MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 1 June 2012

Room 1R6, Parliament House, Canberra

Present:

Ms Elisabeth Bateson	Office of the Special Minister of State
Mr Clancy Dobbyn	Office of Senator Gavin Marshall
Mr Michael Keane	Office of Senator John Madigan
Ms Maxine Sells	Office of the Hon Tony Abbott MP
Ms Lesa de Leau	Office of Senator Lee Rhiannon
Ms Rosemary Little	Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP
Ms Juliana Plummer (via teleconference)	Office of Senator the Hon Chris Evans
Ms Kim Travers	Community and Public Sector Union
Ms Joanne Knight	Australian Services Union
Mr Michael White	Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance
Ms Marg Emerton	Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (M&PS)
Ms Kerren Crosthwaite	M&PS
Mr Adam Lasscock	M&PS
Ms Hilda Selim	M&PS

Apologies:

Mr Ron Kelly	Office of Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion
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Meeting Opened: 10.00am

Meeting Chair: Ms Elisabeth Bateson

Meeting Closed: 11.45am

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- Ms Bateson opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item 2 – Business arising

- Ms Emerton noted that the ECG Terms of Reference have been amended to reflect the new terms of office agreed upon in the previous meeting. These changes have been made and are available on the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (M&PS) Intranet.
- At the previous ECG meeting, representatives requested information on Government procurement processes. Ms Emerton advised that comprehensive information on Government procurement can be found on the Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance) website at:
<http://www.finance.gov.au/procurement/index.html>.

Agenda Item 3 – Work Health Safety (WHS) Committee

- Ms Emerton informed the ECG that work continues on establishing a WHS Committee. It is expected to be operational, pending timely nominations of committee members, within the three months provided for in the next Enterprise Agreement.

Agenda Item 4 – Professional Development Program (PDP) 2013

- Ms Emerton informed the ECG that planning for the 2013 PDP calendar will commence shortly and welcomed suggestions from ECG members on possible courses to be offered.
- Management training for MOP(S) Act employees who supervise other staff, and assisting people with mental illnesses were suggested courses. ECG members noted that specific information on how to manage situations involving suicide threats would be useful. Other suggestions may be emailed to ecg@finance.gov.au.

ACTION

- Finance to explore available resources that could be hosted on the M&PS intranet regarding how to manage situations involving suicide threats.

Agenda Item 5 – Ad hoc training

- Mr Keane raised the issue of payment for ad hoc training, whereby employees are required to pay course costs upfront and seek reimbursement.
- Ms Emerton mentioned that it is possible, by prior arrangement with the Department, to arrange for an invoice to be sent to Finance instead of the employee paying upfront; however this depends on the training provider and their ability to provide Finance with a correctly rendered invoice.

ACTION

- Mr Keane requested a statement of Finance's requirements for a correctly rendered invoice.
- Finance to review the information provided on ad hoc training arrangements.

Agenda Item 6 – Bullying and harassment procedures

- Mr Keane raised concerns regarding the current bullying and harassment procedure. Mr Keane suggested that the policy should be revised to better assist employees where the person accused of bullying is the Senator or Member or a senior employee. Ms Emerton noted that the policy is drafted to be consistent with the draft Code of Practice *Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying* published by Safe Work Australia.
- In addition to the bullying and harassment policy, Ms Emerton mentioned various avenues for MOP(S) Act employees to seek help, including the Employee Assistance Program, or by reporting incidents or risks of bullying and harassment to Konekt. Ms Emerton explained the levels of service available through these avenues.
- ECG members mentioned it would be beneficial to have more information available on bullying and harassment, perhaps in the form of six monthly Departmental circulars.
- Ms Emerton mentioned that online bullying and harassment training has been available to all MOP(S) Act staff since February this year. The ECG requested that the link be emailed to WHS site officers for dissemination throughout their offices.

ACTION

- Finance to follow up on including bullying and harassment information in new starter kits/welcome packs.
- Finance to arrange an email to WHS site officers with the link to the online bullying and harassment training, asking that they encourage employees in their offices to undertake the training.
- ECG members to suggest further mechanisms for managing situations where the person accused of bullying is a Senator or Member (noting that it may be appropriate to have several options available to employees, depending on the circumstances of the complaint).

Agenda Item 7 – Management and human resources training

- Mr Keane raised the possibility of offering training in people management to Senators and Members and Office Managers.
- Ms Bateson and Ms Emerton explained that Senators and Members cannot be required to attend training. Entitlements Managers are available to provide advice on employment and management issues as required. Incoming Senators and Members are given briefings and support from Entitlements Managers. There is training available to employees in relation to managing employees, such as *Lead an Effective Workplace* and *Office Management*.
- ECG members discussed an outreach or mentoring program for offices that need additional assistance and noted that some political parties have internal arrangements whereby an experienced office administrator may visit other offices to share their knowledge. Ms Bateson mentioned that Entitlements Managers are available to discuss office HR issues.

Agenda Item 8 – Work health safety roles

- Ms Little enquired as to when employees will be informed about the new WHS roles under the proposed agreement. Ms Emerton advised that detailed information will be provided in the context of informing staff about arrangements for the next Enterprise Agreement.

Agenda Item 9 – Casual and relief staff payroll

- Ms Little raised concern that payment of salary for some casual employees is delayed, particularly around the Christmas period, due to the timing of payroll cut-offs. Ms Emerton explained how cut off dates affect payment dates and noted that timely submission of casual employment forms to the Department can reduce delays in payment.
- Ms Emerton also noted that under the next Enterprise Agreement there will be a new arrangement for administering casual employment. There will be a new single form for casual engagements, and the separate *Statement of Casual Hours Worked* form will no longer be required. The new arrangements will clarify that the Department can be advised of the proposed casual hours to be worked prior to the work being performed. This should reduce payment delays for casual employees.

Agenda Item 10 – Staff dining room

- Ms Little mentioned that she has had discussions with the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) and the manager of the staff dining room regarding the quality of the food served in the staff dining room at Parliament House.
- Ms Little also mentioned that DPS and the staff dining room are always keen for feedback. There are mechanisms to do this in the dining room.
- Ms Bateson advised that she is an employee representative on the DPS catering committee.

Agenda Item 11 – New employee documentation checklist

- Ms Little requested access to a new employee documentation checklist. Ms Emerton informed the ECG that there is a button on the M&PS Intranet labelled *Employment Agreement Bundle* which generates all the necessary documentation for a new employee. It was noted that this does not include forms for a Parliament House security pass or an email address, as these are arranged through DPS.

ACTION

- Ms de Leau to contact DPS to discuss the possibility of a DPS new employee documentation checklist for *Members of Parliament (Staff) 1984 Act* employees.

Agenda Item 12 – Implementation of next Enterprise Agreement

- Ms Travers encouraged all employees to vote on the proposed Enterprise Agreement and offered her assistance in explaining the proposed provisions to employees.
- Ms Bateson explained the sequence of events and likely timeline for the proposed Enterprise Agreement to come into effect.

- Ms Travers sought clarification on the eligibility requirements for the retention payment under the proposed agreement.

Agenda Item 13 – Next Enterprise Agreement Guidelines timeline

- Ms Travers enquired about the timeline in implementing the new Guidelines to the next Enterprise Agreement.
- ECG members indicated they are prepared to meet regularly over the coming months to ensure all Guidelines are updated in a timely manner.

Agenda Item 14 – Other business

- No other business was raised.

Agenda Item 15 – Next meeting

- The next meeting has been scheduled for Friday, 13 July 2012, at Parliament House, Canberra.