

MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 5 September 2014

Parliament House, Room 1R4

Present:

Mr David Hughes	Office of the Hon Tony Abbott MP
Ms Rosemary Little	Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP
Mr Chris Browne	Office of the Hon Kevin Andrews MP
Ms Elisabeth Bateson	Office of the Hon Gary Gray AO MP
Mr Ben Maxfield (via teleconference)	Office of the Hon David Feeney MP
Ms Kris Cruden	Office of the Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Ms Cathy Heidrich	Office of Mr Mark Coulton MP
Mr Andrew Blake	Office of Senator Christine Milne
Ms Julie Allais	Office of the Special Minister of State
Ms Kim Travers (via teleconference)	Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)
Ms Joanne Knight (via teleconference)	Australian Services Union (ASU)
Mr Tony Nairn	Department of Finance (Finance)
Mr Luke Kostava	Finance
Mr Daniel Rautio	Finance

Apologies:

Mr Shaun Schmitke	Office of the Hon Tony Abbott MP
Ms Louisa Macphillamy	Office of Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Ms Fiona Ross	Office of Ms Sharon Claydon MP

Meeting Opened: 9.00am

Meeting Chair: Ms Rosemary Little

Meeting Closed: 10.25am

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

- Ms Little opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. All attendees introduced themselves for the benefit of the ECG members who were not present at the last meeting.

Agenda Item 2 – Enterprise Agreement 2012-2015 Guidelines

- Finance circulated the following three draft amended guidelines to the ECG on 15 August 2014:
 - a. Domestic Travel;
 - b. Salary Setting and Progression; and
 - c. Travelling Allowance (TA).
- Mr Nairn explained the proposed amendments to each of the guidelines; many of which were minor amendments or clarified current administrative practice.
- Mr Nairn noted that changes have been made to the Domestic Travel and Salary Setting and Progression Guidelines due to the commencement of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) on 1 June 2014.
- Mr Nairn explained the proposed amendments to the TA guideline and outlined how Finance proposes to process future claims for travelling allowance at the commercial rate. The guiding principle for the payment of the commercial rate of TA is whether the accommodation is commercial accommodation as defined by the Australian Taxation Office for GST purposes.
- Mr Hughes queried how the change impacts employees who claim the commercial rate of travelling allowance but can only provide the one receipt e.g. when several employees stay in the same apartment but the accommodation meets the ATO definition of commercial accommodation for GST purposes. Mr Nairn undertook to provide the ECG with information on how these claims are processed.
- Ms Travers raised her concerns regarding the fairness of recovering an overpayment of TA after a MOP(S) Act employee has ceased employment. Mr Nairn explained that the additional information included in the guideline reflects current practice and also noted that the Commonwealth is obliged under the PGPA Act to recover overpayments. Mr Nairn noted that the process for recovery of an overpayment of TA to a current MOP(S) Act employee is explained in clause 35 of the enterprise agreement.
- The ECG agreed to the proposed amendments in the guidelines with a minor amendment to clause 20 of the Travelling Allowance guideline.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Finance to provide the ECG with information on how a claim for the commercial rate of travelling allowance is processed if several employees stay at the same accommodation but only one tax invoice/receipt can be provided.

Agenda Item 3 – Other business

- Mr Blake queried in what circumstances Parliament House security camera footage of MOP(S) Act employees may be accessed. Ms Bateson recommended that Mr Blake refer his query to the Department of Parliamentary Services.
- Ms Bateson queried when enterprise agreement bargaining would commence. Mr Nairn advised that Finance had begun preparations for the next round of bargaining

but as the Special Minister of State had not yet been briefed, he could not provide a specific date for the commencement of bargaining.

Agenda Item 4 – Next meeting

- The next ECG meeting has been tentatively scheduled for Friday, 28 November 2014, from 9am to 12pm. However, dependent on the proposed agenda items, the meeting may be postponed or held via teleconference. Finance and the ECG will re-assess the necessity for a meeting by 7 November 2014.