

MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 7 June 2013

Room 1R5, Parliament House, Canberra

Present:

Ms Elisabeth Bateson	Office of the Special Minister of State
Mr Clancy Dobbyn	Office of Senator Gavin Marshall
Ms Carmel Cook	Office of Ms Janelle Saffin MP
Mr Jay Tilley	Office of Senator Christine Milne
Mr Rod Broadbent	Office of Senator John Madigan
Ms Rosemary Little	Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP
Mr Doug Stewart	Office of Senator Claire Moore
Ms Kim Travers	Community and Public Sector Union
Ms Joanne Knight	Australian Services Union
Mr Jon Box	Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance)
Mr Adam Lasscock	Finance

Apologies:

Ms Alison Byrnes	Office of the Hon Sharon Bird MP
Mr Michael White	Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance
Ms Robyn Mills	Office of Senator Barnaby Joyce

Meeting Opened: 10.00am

Meeting Chair: Mr Jon Box

Meeting Closed: 10.50am

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- Mr Box opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item 2 – Business arising

- At the previous meeting, an issue was raised in relation to accessing travel itineraries in PDF format on some Blackberry devices. Mr Box advised that PDF documents should be accessible on all Blackberry devices provided to Senators, Members and employees. If an individual is unable to access PDF documents, they should contact the Department of Parliamentary Services IT support helpdesk on (02) 6277 2020. Mr Box also advised that the travel service provided, FCM Travel Solutions, are currently in the testing phase of a travel itinerary application for Apple, Android and Blackberry devices.
- At the previous meeting, there was a discussion in relation to the administration of personal leave, particularly with regard to giving detailed reasons on the form. Mr Box advised that recent amendments to the *Leave and Public Holiday Guideline* simplified the application process and, as a result, employees are now required to select one of three generic reasons when applying for personal leave. The reasons are:
 - (a) Personal leave (illness or injury);
 - (b) Carer's leave (illness or injury); and
 - (c) Carer's leave (emergency).

The *Application for Leave* form and Online HR are currently being updated to reflect the simplified process.

- At the previous meeting, the ECG requested that Finance provide information to Senators and Members in relation to amendments to the *Leave and Public Holiday Guideline* that pertain to leave for domestic and/or family violence purposes. Mr Box advised that an email was sent to all Senators and Members on 25 February 2013, advertising of the amendments to the guideline. The *Senators and Members' Entitlements Handbook* has also been updated to include a reference to leave for domestic and/or family violence.
- Mr Box advised that the International Women's Development Agency replaced CanTeen on the workplace giving charities list, as requested by the ECG.
- At the previous meeting, Mr Broadbent requested that Finance investigate the entitlement for electorate employees to travel to Canberra to attend advanced Professional Development Program courses. Mr Box advised that Finance had briefed the former Special Minister of State in relation to this issue, and that he did not agree to amend the travel entitlement. Mr Box noted that advanced courses are scheduled at the end of Parliamentary sitting weeks to enable electorate employees to attend a course in a week in which they may be travelling to Canberra to assist their employing Senator or Member. Senators and Members may also utilise their Electorate Staff Travel Budget (ESTB) to allow their electorate employees to attend training.

Agenda Item 3 – FCm reporting issues

- Ms Little advised that the recent FCm reporting issues have created difficulties for employees who are responsible for managing the ESTB of their employing Senator or Member. Mr Box advised that Finance and FCm have worked through the issues and that, as advised in Departmental circular 2013/19, Finance will provide Senators and Members with up-to-date travel and expenditure reports as soon as possible. This report will be separate from, and in addition to, the May Monthly Management Report (MMR). MMRs provided after May are expected to include travel information as per normal arrangements.

Agenda Item 4 – Workplace giving

- Prior to the meeting, Ms Byrnes asked whether The Yellow Van could be included on the workplace giving charities list. In the absence of Ms Byrnes, ECG members agreed to consider this issue via correspondence external to a formal ECG meeting.

Agenda Item 5 – Ministerial circular 2013/07 - Deferral of termination of employment for personal employees as a result of a Federal Election

- Ms Travers advised that she had discussed the Ministerial circular with Ms Bateson prior to the meeting and that her concerns had been addressed. Ms Bateson advised that the amended direction provides sufficient time for the allocation of personal employee positions and relevant recruitment processes to occur following a Federal election.

Agenda Item 6 – Professional Development Program

- Mr Broadbent enquired as to the prospect of employees receiving a certificate upon completion of each PDP course, and Finance providing to employees summaries of PDP courses attended each year. Mr Box advised that there were currently no arrangements in place with the current service providers to provide certificates, however, Finance would consider this issue when conducting future procurement. Mr Box noted that individual employees may request a summary of PDP courses attended through the Staff Help Desk.

Agenda Item 7 – Other business

- Ms Little raised an issue with the service in the Staff Dining Room in Parliament House. Ms Bateson advised that there is an email address which allows employees to provide feedback on the Staff Dining Room (catering.feedback@aph.gov.au). Ms Bateson encouraged ECG representatives to forward the email address to their colleagues.
- Ms Travers asked whether the payment of unused annual leave when a person's employment is terminated under the MOP(S) Act includes a superannuation component. Mr Box advised that he would investigate the matter and respond to Ms Travers via email.
- Ms Travers raised an issue in relation to the processing of the salary common increment under the Enterprise Agreement. Ms Bateson advised that a number of administrative pressures are placed on Finance at this time of year, including processing the general salary increase, Electorate Staff Allowance re-allocations,

the annual retention payment, and the common salary increment, in addition to end of financial year reporting. Ms Bateson advised that the timeline outlined by the Department in Departmental circular 2013/17 is the earliest that the Department can process these entitlements.

- Several ECG members raised questions on Senators and Members entitlements in relation to the Federal election. Ms Bateson advised that Finance will be providing detailed election information on the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services website. All MOP(S) Act employees are encouraged to review the information provided.
- Ms Travers thanked Andrew House (Entitlements Manager for Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory) from Finance for his assistance on several employment issues recently.

ACTION

- Mr Box to advise as to whether the payment of unused annual leave when a person's employment is terminated under the MOP(S) Act includes a superannuation component.

Agenda Item 8 – Next meeting

- The ECG agreed that this meeting would be the final meeting prior to the Federal election.
- Several ECG members thanked Finance and Ms Bateson for the level of engagement with MOP(S) Act employees and the ECG.
- The ECG noted the significant improvements that have been made to the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services website.