

MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 15 February 2013

Room MG.63, 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
Ms Maxine Sells	Office of the Hon Tony Abbott MP
Mr James Newbury	Office of the Hon Christopher Pyne MP
Ms Robyn Mills	Office of Senator Barnaby Joyce
Mr John Hawkins	Office of Senator Christine Milne
Mr Rod Broadbent	Office of Senator John Madigan
Ms Kim Travers	Community and Public Sector Union
Mr Michael White	Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance
Mr Tony Nairn	Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance)
Mrs Kim Baker	Finance
Ms Annette Martin	Finance
Mr Adam Lasscock	Finance
Ms Hilda Selim	Finance
Ms Kelly Kick	FCm Travel Solutions
Mr Andrew Dore	FCm Travel Solutions

Apologies:

Ms Alison Byrnes	Office of the Hon Sharon Bird MP
Ms Rosemary Little	Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP
Mr Jay Tilley	Office of Senator Christine Milne

Meeting Opened: 10.15am

Meeting Chair: Mr Clancy Dobbyn

Meeting Closed: 11.40am

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- Mr Dobbyn opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item 2 – FCm Travel Solutions Presentation

- Ms Kick and Mr Dore from FCm Travel Solutions were in attendance to introduce themselves to the ECG and give an overview of their provision of travel services to MOP(S) Act employees.
- Mr Newbury enquired as to when a corporate email address would be available for MOP(S) Act employees. Mrs Baker reported that it should be happening shortly.
- Mr Newbury also mentioned issues with reading travel itineraries in PDF form on Blackberry devices. Mrs Baker informed the ECG that itineraries are available in text or PDF format only and both these formats should be readable on Blackberry devices. Mrs Baker informed the ECG that a FCm Blackberry application is being developed. Several ECG members noted that older model Blackberries had difficulty reading PDF documents.
- Mr Broadbent enquired about the possibility of FCm Travel Solutions providing a service to manage or replace hotel security deposits. Mrs Baker informed the ECG that this function was not tendered for when procuring the travel services provider, therefore it is not within the scope of the contract.
- Ms Kick, Mr Dore, Mrs Baker and Ms Martin left the meeting at 10.30am.

ACTION

- Mrs Baker to raise the Blackberry PDF reading issue with the Department of Parliamentary Services.

Agenda Item 3 – Business arising

- At the previous meeting, the ECG requested that Finance email the link to the workplace giving page on the Ministerial and Parliamentary website. Mr Nairn emailed this information to ECG members on 23 October 2012.
- At the previous meeting Ms Travers advised that she would liaise with Mr Nairn regarding the debt recovery process for a particular MOP(S) Act employee. Ms Travers advised that this issue was resolved separately with Finance.
- At the previous meeting Ms Travers advised that she would conduct research into State/Territory recognition of prior service for severance purposes. Ms Travers informed the ECG that she has not found any written policies or other documentation on this. Ms Travers reported that she is aware of ad hoc arrangements determined on a case by case basis. Mr Nairn noted that Finance's research had not found any evidence of States or Territories recognising prior service for severance purposes.

Agenda Item 4 – Enterprise Agreement Guidelines

- The following revised guidelines were discussed at the ECG meeting:
 - Leave and Public Holidays; and
 - Recognition of Prior Service.

- Mr Nairn explained that there were two additions to the Leave and Public Holidays Guideline. It now includes information on Dad and Partner Pay, which is administered by the Department of Human Services, and provides for personal leave, or in some circumstances miscellaneous leave, to be used by employees affected by domestic and/or family violence.
- The ECG noted that they were pleased with the changes to the Leave and Public Holidays Guideline, particularly the inclusion of domestic and/or family violence leave provisions.
- Changes to the Recognition of Prior Service Guideline were described and discussed by the ECG. The changes reflect the operation of clause 58.4 of the Enterprise Agreement, which recognises prior State or Territory MOP(S) Act equivalent service for the purposes of any potential future severance payment. Ms Bateson and Mr Nairn explained that the revised guideline would allow earlier continuous service with a State or Territory parliamentarian to be recognised for MOP(S) Act severance purposes if the service was also recognised for severance purposes by subsequent State or Territory parliamentarian employers.
- The guidelines were adopted without further amendment.
- Mr Newbury raised an issue with the administration of personal leave, particularly with regard to giving reasons on the form. Mr Nairn explained that the reasons section is to obtain information necessary to ensure the employee is entitled to the type of leave being accessed.

ACTION

- Mr Nairn to liaise with the appropriate area within Finance to discuss the administration of personal leave, particularly where further information on reasons for leave are sought, and possible revision of the form.

Agenda Item 5 – Domestic violence and workplace rights

- Ms Cook circulated fact sheets and summary reports on domestic violence leave. She also requested that information regarding the availability of domestic and/or family violence leave be provided to all Senators and Members.
- Mr Nairn noted that information on the revised leave guideline describing the new arrangements for employees affected by domestic and/or family violence would be provided to all Senators, Members and MOP(S) Act employees.

Agenda Item 6 – Workplace giving

- Ms Cook requested that the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) be included on the workplace giving list of charities for MOP(S) Act employees.
- Mr Nairn explained that the workplace giving program is limited to 20 charities and proposed that IWDA replace one of the existing charities. Mr Nairn suggested that Canteen be replaced as they require funds to be forwarded through a clearing house, which is unable to be done through the payroll system.
- The ECG agreed that IWDA will replace Canteen on the list of workplace giving charities.

ACTION

- Finance to add IWDA to the workplace giving charities list.

Agenda Item 7 – Travel to Canberra for advanced courses offered through the Professional Development Program (PDP)

- Mr Broadbent raised the issue of travel to Canberra by electorate employees for advanced PDP courses that are only held in Canberra and the cost of this travel being debited from the Electorate Staff Travel Budget (ESTB). Ms Bateson advised that it is not likely that this can change, but it will be looked into.

ACTION

- Finance to research travel for electorate employees to attend advanced PDP courses that are only held in Canberra.

Agenda Item 8 – Travel for part-time employees

- Mr Broadbent explained a situation he is aware of, where a part-time personal employee has been advised that they are not entitled to travel on a day on which they do not work. The employee shares a position with another employee. Mr Nairn noted that there were many circumstances where employees travelled on non-work days in order to be in a location to commence duty on the following day or to return from a official travel. Mr Broadbent was advised to speak to the relevant Entitlements Manager.
- There was a general discussion about work bases. The ECG was reminded about short-term employment and how this relates to travel and to review previous advice from Finance regarding this issue (Departmental Circulars 2012/18 and 2012/61).
- Mr White enquired as to whether employees are covered by worker's compensation whilst travelling. Mr Nairn stated that the general expectation is that employees would be covered while on duty, including while travelling, however, each worker's compensation claim would be decided on its particular circumstances.

Agenda Item 9 – Hotel security guarantee cards

- Mr Broadbent advised that he has been communicating with FCm Travel Solutions to seek information regarding their ability to provide hotel guarantees for MOP(S) Act employees.
- Mr Dobbyn is also developing a proposal whereby major hotel chains, as a gesture of good will, would waive hotel guarantees for MOP(S) Act employees due to the amount of business they provide.

Agenda Item 10 – Other business

- Ms Bateson advised that she is on the Parliament House Catering Focus Group. ECG members who have any catering issues they want raised, should speak to Ms Bateson.

Agenda Item 11 – Next Meeting

- The next meeting is scheduled for Friday 17 May 2013, at Parliament House, Canberra.