

## MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday 15 July 2011

Via teleconference

### Present:

Ms Elisabeth Bateson	Office of the Special Minister of State (SMOS)
Ms Juliana Plummer	Office of Senator the Hon Christopher Evans
Mr Clancy Dobbyn	Office of Senator Gavin Marshall
Ms Carmel Cook	Office of Ms Janelle Saffin MP
Ms Maree Duffy-Moon	Office of the Hon Justine Elliot MP
Ms Sallyann Innes	Office of the Hon Michael Keenan MP
Ms Maxine Sells	Office of the Hon Tony Abbott MP
Ms Imogen Birley	Office of Senator Christine Milne
Ms Evelyn Ek	Office of Senator Nick Xenophon
Ms Kim Travers	Community and Public Sector Union
Mr Tony Nairn	Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (M&PS)
Mr Jon Box	M&PS
Mr Adam Lasscock	M&PS
Ms Hilda Selim	M&PS
Mr Denys Batten	Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS)

### Apologies:

Ms Alison Byrnes	Office of Ms Sharon Bird MP
Mr Ron Kelly	Office of Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion
Mr James Newbury	Office of the Hon Christopher Pyne MP
Mr Greg McLean	Australian Services Union
Mr Michael White	Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance

Meeting Opened: 10.00am

Meeting Chair: Mr Clancy Dobbyn

Meeting Closed: 11.30am

## **Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies**

- Mr Dobbyn opened the meeting at 10.00am and welcomed all attendees.

## **Agenda Item 2 – Staff dining room at Parliament House, Canberra**

- Mr Batten from DPS addressed a number of concerns raised by the ECG in their letter to DPS in relation to the staff dining room. The concerns raised by the ECG included:
  - (a) the quality of food available;
  - (b) food variety and the availability of healthy options;
  - (c) the limited service and overall food options during non-sitting weeks; and
  - (d) the quality of the service, such as queue waiting times, food preparation and problems with food orders.
- Mr Batten advised the ECG that DPS is aware of the issues raised by the ECG, and that DPS is working with the service provider, IHG, to ensure that relevant issues are addressed, however, he noted that this can take time. Mr Batten acknowledged issues in relation to the layout of the dining room and advised that they are currently in the process of changing the layout to address issues such as long queuing times.
- Mr Batten advised that DPS meets with IHG formally once per month to discuss any issues, including food quality and food options. Mr Batten also advised that he meets informally with the service provider on a weekly basis.
- Mr Batten noted that the availability of food options was evaluated by an independent organisation, which advised DPS that these were appropriate, and that fewer options could suffice. Mr Batten also advised that both DPS and IHG are happy to receive any feedback and/or suggestions. The ECG advised that they would provide Mr Batten with some suggestions in relation to vegetarian and healthy food options.
- The ECG suggested that a survey be conducted of employees of Senators and Members who work at Parliament House to acquire feedback on the quality of food and food options. It was also suggested that employees be surveyed to see if they would be willing to pay more money for higher quality food, as a number of ECG members noted that they would be willing to do this.

## **ACTION**

- The ECG to provide Mr Batten with some suggestions in relation to vegetarian and healthy food options.
- Ms Birley and Ms Bateson to liaise with Mr Batten to develop questions for a survey of employees of Senators and Members who work at Parliament House to be conducted by the ECG.

## **Agenda Item 3 – Business arising from the previous meeting**

### **(a) Draft minutes from the previous ECG Meeting – 9 June 2011**

- Ms Bateson raised an issue on behalf of Ms Byrnes who was absent. Ms Bateson advised that a motion undertaken at the previous meeting was not accurately recorded within the draft minutes of the previous meeting.

- Following discussion of this matter, Ms Bateson advised that she would draft a revised paragraph, and circulate the amendment for comment by ECG members.

#### **ACTION**

- Ms Bateson to draft a revised paragraph within the draft minutes from the previous meeting, and circulate the amendment for comment by ECG members.

#### **(b) Workplace giving program**

- Mr Nairn reported that the workplace giving program is now operational and a circular was distributed to employees on 23 June 2011 to inform them of the program.
- Mr Nairn noted that one employee is currently using the program and that M&PS will continue to advertise the program on the M&PS intranet.

#### **(c) Evaluation of Electorate Employee Working Hours and Electorate Staff Allowance (the Evaluation)**

- At the previous ECG meeting, Mr Kelly requested M&PS provide the ECG with M&PS' consultation and decision-making process in relation to the decision not to include a question on the adequacy of base salaries of electorate employees in the survey of Senators and Members. Mr Nairn advised that Mr Keven Whitton, Acting Assistant Secretary, Entitlements Policy Branch, M&PS, made the decision not to include an ECG proposed question on the adequacy of base salaries of electorate employees on the basis that it was beyond the scope of the Evaluation, and is an issue that should be addressed as part of the agreement-making process for the next enterprise agreement.
- Mr Nairn advised that, as requested by Ms Byrnes at the previous ECG meeting, a re-formatted paper based telephone survey was provided to Ms Byrnes' employer.
- Mr Nairn advised that a Departmental circular was distributed to Senators and Members requesting volunteers to participate in the Evaluation via a telephone or written survey. Mr Nairn noted that, as a result of the circular, M&PS received four requests from Senators and Members for telephone interviews.
- As requested by the ECG, M&PS provided email updates on 17 June and 1 July 2011 to the ECG on the progress and response rate of the Evaluation.

#### **(d) Domestic travel – direction to travel while on personal business away from the work base**

- At the previous ECG meeting, the ECG raised concerns in relation to travel on official business that commences from a location that is not the employee's work-base, for example, where a Hobart based employee has undertaken personal travel to Melbourne and then is to travel to Canberra on official business. Ms Bateson advised that she has discussed the issue with the SMOS, and that he had indicated that he is interested in increased flexibility for employees that need to travel, without additional cost to the Commonwealth.
- Mr Nairn noted that no examples of such travel had been provided to M&PS by the ECG.

#### **ACTION:**

- The ECG to provide M&PS with specific examples in relation to this type of travel.
- Ms Travers to contact Ms Carnes (a former ECG representative) to obtain the specific examples Ms Carnes raised at a previous ECG meeting.
- Ms Bateson advised that she will review the issue, and that ECG members should provide her with specific examples in relation to this type of travel.

**(e) Motor Vehicle Allowance (MVA) Guideline**

- Mr Nairn advised that the requirement to submit relevant documentation, such as receipts, for MVA has been removed from the draft MVA Guideline, and that the revised MVA Guideline came into effect on 12 July 2011.

**(f) Working from home approval process**

- The SMOS will shortly be briefed on proposed changes to the approval process for working from home approval arrangements.
- The revised Working From Home Guideline will not take effect until the SMOS approves the proposed arrangements.

**(g) OH&S Site Officer liability**

- Mr Nairn reported that site officers receive training on their liabilities and their requisite duty of care in their capacity as an OH&S Site Officer through mandatory OH&S training conducted for employees in that role.
- Mr Nairn advised that all Senators, Members and employees have a certain degree of responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others in the workplace. Mr Nairn also advised that an OH&S Site Officer should fulfil the requirements of the position description for OH&S Site Officers.
- Mr Nairn noted that it is difficult to determine liability on a general basis as liability issues are complex and are determined on a case by case basis by relevant entities.

**(h) Salary Packaging Guideline – Apple iPad devices**

- Mr Nairn advised that Apple iPad devices are considered portable electronic devices and can be salary packaged if they are primarily used for work purposes. This has now been clearly outlined within the revised Salary Packaging Guideline which came into effect on 12 July 2011.

**Agenda Item 4 – Enterprise Agreement 2010-2012 guidelines**

**(a) Overseas travel**

- The Overseas Travel Guideline was adopted without amendment.

**(b) Recognition of prior service**

- The Recognition of Prior Service Guideline was adopted without amendment.

**(c) Private-plated vehicles**

- The Private-plated Vehicle Guideline was adopted without amendment.

**(d) Studies assistance**

- The Studies Assistance Guideline was adopted without amendment.

**(e) Loss or damage to clothing or personal effects**

- The Loss or Damage to Clothing or Personal Effects Guideline was adopted without amendment.
- All Guidelines to the *Members of Parliament Staff Enterprise Agreement 2010-2012* have now completed consultation with the ECG and have been adopted.

**Agenda Item 5 – Other business**

**(a) Ongoing, Non-ongoing and Casual Employment Guideline**

- Mr Nairn advised that the reference to the ‘six week rule’ within the Ongoing, Non-ongoing and Casual Employment Guideline would be deleted to reflect a recent decision by the SMOS to revoke the arrangement.

**(b) New M&PS intranet**

- The ECG advised M&PS that they had received positive feedback on the new M&PS intranet site that commenced on 30 June 2011.

**(c) ALP employee representative – selection of a new representative following the departure of Ms Sharon Carnes**

- Ms Bateson agreed to arrange a new ALP staff representative to replace Ms Carnes and advise M&PS of the representative once they are selected.

**(d) Domestic travel – baggage policy – changes by Qantas**

- Mr Dobbyn advised that Qantas has recently changed their baggage policy that results in passengers being required to pay \$30 for each additional piece of luggage above one piece of luggage. Mr Dobbyn noted that passengers were previously entitled to two pieces of luggage without additional charges.
- It was suggested that this change would increase the number of claims for reimbursement of excess baggage costs, and that simplification of the reimbursement process should be investigated. Mr Nairn agreed to investigate the recent changes by Qantas and possible simplification of claims for reimbursement of minor travel expenses.
- It was also suggested that the recent changes by Qantas could be notified to employees with information on the entitlement to have additional baggage costs reimbursed (as provided under the Domestic Travel Guideline).

**ACTION:**

- M&PS to investigate the recent changes by Qantas and the possible simplification of claims for reimbursement.
- M&PS to notify employees of the recent changes by Qantas and the entitlement to have additional baggage costs reimbursed.

**(e) Enterprise bargaining for the next enterprise agreement**

- Ms Travers enquired about the commencement of bargaining for the next enterprise agreement, including the distribution of the Notice of Employee Representational Rights to employees.
- Mr Nairn advised that M&PS will soon brief the SMOS on preparations for negotiation of the next enterprise agreement and that Senators, Members and employees will be updated on bargaining shortly.

**Agenda Item 6 – Next meeting**

- The next meeting will be held on Friday, 4 November 2011, at Parliament House, Canberra.