

## MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Thursday, 16 December 2010

10.00am – 1.00pm

Parliament House, Room 1R5

### Present:

Ms Elisabeth Bateson	Office of the Special Minister of State
Ms Alison Byrnes	Office of Ms Sharon Bird MP
Ms Sharon Carnes	Office of the Hon Julie Collins MP
Mr Clancy Dobbyn	Office of Senator Gavin Marshall
Ms Evelyn Ek	Office of Senator Nick Xenophon
Mr David Field (substitute)	Office of Mr Ed Husic MP
Mr Ron Kelly	Office of Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion
Mr Greg McLean	Australian Services Union
Ms Clare Ozich (substitute)	Office of Senator Bob Brown
Ms Juliana Plummer	Office of Senator the Hon Christopher Evans
Ms Kim Travers	Community and Public Sector Union
Ms Lauren Barons	Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (M&PS)
Mr Jon Box	M&PS
Mr Adam Lasscock	M&PS
Mr Tony Nairn	M&PS

### Apologies:

Ms Imogen Birley	Office of Senator Christine Milne
Ms Carmel Cook	Office of Janelle Saffin MP

### Absent:

Mr Michael White	Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
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Meeting Opened: 10.00am

Meeting Chair: Mr Tony Nairn

Meeting Closed: 1.30pm

## **Agenda Item 1 – Introduction to the ECG**

### **(a) – Outline of process**

- Mr Nairn opened the meeting at 10.00am and welcomed all attendees. All attendees introduced themselves.
- Mr Nairn noted that M&PS has not yet been advised of the names of Australian Liberal Party employee representatives.
- Mr Nairn advised that a Ministerial circular will be issued shortly to inform Senators, Members and *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S) Act) employees of the members of the ECG and their contact details.
- Mr Nairn advised that employee representatives who are subject to the Electorate Staff Travel Budget (ESTB) should note on their Travelling Allowance claims and travel acquittal documents that the travel was for an ECG meeting to assist M&PS in ensuring that these travel costs are not debited from the ESTB.
- Mr Nairn advised that each member may arrange for a substitute representative to attend ECG meetings on their behalf if they are unable to attend. Mr Nairn advised that the name and contact details of the substitute representative should be provided to M&PS prior to ECG meetings to ensure that the representative is provided with relevant information or documents from M&PS (e.g. meeting agenda and draft guidelines).

### **(b) – Terms of reference**

- Mr Nairn advised that M&PS has drafted a version of the ECG Terms of reference (TOR) based on the TOR of the previous ECG with amendments reflecting the ECG provisions of the Enterprise Agreement. A copy of the draft TOR was provided to ECG members in attendance.

### **ACTION:**

- M&PS to circulate an amended final paragraph to reflect the suggested streamlining of the circulation of minutes prior to publishing them on the MOPS intranet.
- M&PS to email a copy of the draft TOR to all ECG members, including those who were not in attendance.
- ECG members to bring any comments or proposed amendments to the draft TOR to the next ECG meeting.

### **(c) – Future meeting schedule**

The ECG agreed that future ECG meetings will be held at Parliament House, Canberra, from 10.00am to 1.00pm on 11 February 2011, 4 March 2011 and 25 March 2011. These dates will be reviewed, and future dates decided, based on progress during these meetings.

## **Agenda Item 2 – Evaluation of electorate employee working hours and ESA**

- Mr Nairn advised the ECG of the following points:
  - The Enterprise Agreement commits to an evaluation of the working hours of electorate employees and the adequacy and framework of Electorate Staff Allowance (ESA) to be completed within the life of the Enterprise Agreement.

The Enterprise Agreement also provides that regular reports on the progress of the evaluation be provided to the ECG. M&PS has developed a plan for the conduct of the evaluation and has briefed the Special Minister of State (SMOS) on the plan.

- The findings of the evaluation will be used to inform any discussion in relation to the working hours of electorate employees and ESA in negotiations for the next collective employment arrangements for MOP(S) Act employees.
- The data collection approaches for the evaluation will consist of:
  - (a) electorate employees within a representative sample of electorate offices of Senators and Members completing timesheets to record hours worked during a four week period, including two parliamentary sitting weeks;
  - (b) telephone interviews with approximately 50 Senators and Members seeking their views on the working hours of their electorate employees and the adequacy of ESA; and
  - (c) an online survey for electorate employees seeking their views on their working hours and the adequacy of ESA.
- Ms Byrnes suggested that a version of the telephone interview that could be completed at a time that best suited them may be preferred by some Senators or Members.
- Mr Nairn noted that a Ministerial circular will be provided to all Senators, Members and electorate employees early in 2011 with information about the evaluation, including ways to participate.

**ACTION:**

- M&PS to provide the ECG with a copy of the draft timesheet for comment.
- M&PS to provide the ECG with a draft copy of the survey questions for comment.

**Agenda Item 3 – Enterprise Agreement 2010-2012 Guidelines**

- Mr Nairn noted that the Enterprise Agreement provides that the ECG is to be consulted on proposed changes to, or establishment of, guidelines or policies in relation to the Enterprise Agreement, where the proposed change affects employees.
- Mr Nairn noted that M&PS had circulated four draft guidelines in track changes to the ECG on 14 December 2010, including:
  - (a) Salary Setting and Progression;
  - (b) Electorate Staff Allowance;
  - (c) Corporate Responsibility Allowance (new guideline); and
  - (d) Leave and Public Holidays.
- The ECG requested that M&PS provide a written reason for each of the changes that have been proposed to the guidelines. Mr Nairn agreed to undertake the preparation of this documentation, and noted that this may delay the progress of consultation on the guidelines.

- The meeting noted that consultation on the guidelines might be conducted partly through email, sub-committees of the ECG or telepresence along with the main ECG meetings.

**ACTION:**

- M&PS to provide the ECG with a written reason for each of the changes that have been proposed to the guidelines. The documentation for one or more guidelines is expected to be provided to the ECG before the next meeting.

**Agenda Item 4 – Agenda items raised by ALP representatives**

**(a) – Signing Senators and Members to the Fair Work Australia Agreement**

- Mr Field raised concerns regarding the employment obligations of Senators and Members and training provided to Senators and Members in relation to employment obligations and practices.
- Mr Nairn advised that Senators and Members must abide by the terms and conditions of employment in the Enterprise Agreement and that information is provided by M&PS to Senators and Members in relation to employment obligations and practices.

**(c) – Staff Help Desk and processing of paperwork**

- Ms Carnes raised an issue in relation to the Cabcharge request forms of some new employees after the Federal election.
- Ms Barons spoke generally about the role of the Staff Help Desk and other avenues available for employees to have any concerns addressed, such as through Entitlements Managers.

**(d) – PDA devices for EO staff**

- Ms Byrnes raised an issue in relation to mobile phone/personal digital assistants (MPDAs) being provided to electorate employees. Ms Byrnes said that she would discuss this matter with Ms Bateson from the SMOS's office.

**(g) – Request SMOS Ministerial staff member attend each meeting**

- Ms Bateson advised that she was likely to attend each meeting as a representative of the SMOS.

**(h) – InDesign support**

- The ECG raised concerns about a lack of telephone support for inDesign through a '2020' helpline provided by the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS).

**ACTION:**

- The employee representatives are to raise the matter with DPS.

**(i) – Workplace Giving Program**

- Ms Byrnes asked whether a workplace giving program could be provided to employees.
- Mr Nairn advised that this was investigated after being raised in the negotiation of the Enterprise Agreement and it appeared to be possible. Mr Nairn requested

that the ECG decide on a limited number of national or international charities to be included in the program.

**ACTION:**

- M&PS to progress the arrangements for a workplace giving program.
- ECG to select the charities to be included in the workplace giving program.

**Agenda Item 5 – Other business**

- Mr Kelly raised a matter regarding the whole of Government travel contract that prevents Government travellers, including MOP(S) Act employees, from accruing airline loyalty points. Mr Kelly asked:
  - *What savings were realised by the government on the contract with airlines as a result of the non awarding of frequent flyer points?*
  - *What is the actual saving to date and projected annual saving on airfares for MoPS staff as a result of this change?*

**ACTION:**

- M&PS to follow up.

**Agenda Item 6 – Next meeting**

- The next ECG meeting will be held at Parliament House, Canberra, on 11 February 2011.