

MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 19 June 2015
Parliament House, Room 1R4

Present:

Ms Louisa Macphillamy	Office of Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Mr Chris Browne	Office of the Hon Kevin Andrews MP
Ms Cathy Heidrich	Office of Mr Mark Coulton MP
Ms Fiona Ross	Office of Ms Sharon Claydon MP
Mr Ben Maxfield	Office of the Hon David Feeney MP
Mr Andrew Blake	Office of Senator Richard Di Natale
Mr Brendan Gullifer	Office of Senator John Madigan
Ms Elisabeth Bateson	Office of the Hon Gary Gray AO MP
Mr David Hughes (via teleconference)	Office of the Hon Tony Abbott MP
Ms Rosemary Little (via teleconference)	Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP
Ms Kim Travers	Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)
Ms Joanne Knight (via teleconference)	Australian Services Union
Ms Kathy Casey	Office of the Special Minister of State
Mr Tony Nairn	Department of Finance (Finance)
Mr Luke Kostava	Finance

Apologies:

Ms Kris Cruden	Office of the Hon Anthony Albanese MP
----------------	---------------------------------------

Meeting Opened: 9:05am
Meeting Chair: Ms Elisabeth Bateson
Meeting Closed: 10:30am

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

- Ms Bateson opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item 2 – Business Arising - Car parking at Parliament House

- Mr Nairn gave an overview of his discussion with the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS). DPS has received funding to cover the Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) liability to maintain free parking for the 'razor blade' car parks near the Ministerial Wings. It is anticipated that the House of Representatives and the Senate car parks will also remain free.
- DPS is developing a parking policy, primarily about access to carparks, which will be communicated to all Parliament House occupants once approved by the Presiding Officers.

Agenda Item 3 – Enterprise Agreement Guidelines

- Finance circulated draft amendments to the following guidelines to ECG members prior to the meeting:
 - Travelling Allowance; and
 - Relocation Expenses.

Travelling Allowance

- Mr Nairn explained the proposed amendments to the guideline, which were minor and designed to clarify existing administrative arrangements.
- The ECG agreed to the updated guideline.

Relocation Expenses

- Mr Nairn explained the proposed amendments, which were generally in response to an increasing number of unusual claims for relocation expenses being sent to Finance for payment.
- Ms Bateson raised concerns with the wording of in-principle approval of relocation expenses by Finance. Mr Browne proposed an alternative form of words that was accepted by the ECG.
- Finance agreed to a suggestion to include Finance contact details at the end of the guideline.
- Ms Travers and Ms Bateson queried proposed text stating that Finance does not pay the travel costs to and from the depot when a car is being freighted. Mr Nairn explained that this had been long standing practice and the proposed amendment ensured that this was clear to employees. It was agreed to remove this paragraph at present, subject to further information to be provided by Finance.
- The ECG agreed to the updated Guideline, subject to the above changes.

Action Item:

- Finance will seek to provide the ECG with further information about the payment of travel costs to and from car freight depots.

Agenda Item 4 – Other Business

Salary packaging

- On behalf of another employee, Mr Gullifer asked why there are limits on what can be salary packaged. In particular, why are mortgage payments for investment properties not able to be salary packaged?
- Mr Nairn explained that under the Enterprise Agreement, only items that attract no FBT or a concessional rate of FBT may be packaged. Mortgage payments generally attract the full rate of FBT, except in limited circumstances not applicable to MOP(S) Act employees, and therefore cannot be salary packaged.

Enterprise Agreement

- Ms Macphillamy asked what happens with the current Enterprise Agreement, given it has reached its nominal expiry date.
- Ms Casey outlined that the current enterprise agreement continues in place, with employees continuing to receive retention bonuses and salary point increases (if eligible). She also advised that bargaining is expected to commence on the next enterprise agreement after the winter recess. Finance will soon issue a circular to all employees explaining these arrangements.
- Ms Travers and others suggested that as preparation for bargaining meetings can be lengthy, an early issue of the Notice of Employee Representational Rights (NERR) would enable bargaining representatives to be appointed in time for bargaining to commence.

Agenda Item 5 – Next meeting

- The ECG agreed to hold its next meeting on 18 September 2015.
Mr Browne agreed to chair the meeting.