

MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 20 April 2012

Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra

Present:

Ms Elisabeth Bateson	Office of the Special Minister of State
Mr Clancy Dobbyn	Office of Senator Gavin Marshall
Mr Rod Broadbent	Office of Senator John Madigan
Ms Maxine Sells	Office of the Hon Tony Abbott MP
Ms Lesa de Leau (via teleconference)	Office of Senator Lee Rhiannon
Ms Kim Travers (via teleconference)	Community and Public Sector Union
Ms Joanne Knight (via teleconference)	Australian Services Union
Mr Michael White	Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance
Ms Marg Emerton	Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (M&PS)
Ms Anna Hough	M&PS
Mr Adam Lasscock	M&PS
Ms Hilda Selim	M&PS

Apologies:

Ms Carmel Cook	Office of Ms Janelle Saffin MP
Ms Alison Byrnes	Office of Ms Sharon Bird MP
Mr Michael Keane	Office of Senator John Madigan
Mr Rosemary Little	Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP

Meeting Opened: 10.00am

Meeting Chair: Ms Elisabeth Bateson

Meeting Closed: 11.10am

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- Ms Bateson opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item 2 – Terms of Reference

- Following the last ECG meeting on 2 March 2012, a representative from the Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance) circulated an email to all ECG representatives to further discuss the proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference to remove the requirement for the ECG to be dissolved and reconstituted following the commencement of a new Enterprise Agreement.
- It was proposed to remove this requirement in the Terms of Reference as the commencement of a new Enterprise Agreement has no effect on staff numbers, therefore ECG party representative ratios remain the same. Finance representatives also noted that in the past the time taken to form an ECG following the commencement of a new Enterprise Agreement could cause significant delays in the introduction of Guidelines required to support the new Enterprise Agreement and the proposed change would assist in avoiding such delays.
- It was also noted that the proposed change to the Terms of Reference will not change the current ability for parties to change their representatives at any time during an ECG term.
- The ECG Employee and Union representatives agreed and the amendment to the Terms of Reference was adopted.

Agenda Item 3 – Enterprise Agreement 2010-2012 Guidelines

- Ms Bateson advised that the amendment to the Travelling Allowance (TA) Guideline will allow for employees who perform advancing work for the Prime Minister or Leader of the Opposition to stay up to three nights in advance of their employer.
- Currently, employees are only paid TA for one night in advance of their employer which often creates a financial burden when they are directed to be there more than one night in advance.
- The ECG supported the changes to the guideline.

Agenda Item 4 – Work Health and Safety (WHS) Committee

- Ms Emerton explained the proposal to constitute a WHS Committee with its structure modelled on that of the ECG. The Terms of Reference will be finalised following consultation with the WHS Committee once it has formed.
- There was a discussion regarding the new WHS legislation and what duties it may place on Senators and Members. Ms Emerton noted that the Department will provide information to Senators and Members on the WHS legislation.
- The ECG agreed that the WHS Committee be formed as per the proposal, noting that the WHS Committee, once formed, would have the flexibility to change its structure if the Committee finds that, once it is operational, a different structure is more appropriate.

Agenda Item 5 – Other business

- Following on from discussions during the Enterprise Agreement bargaining process, Mr Dobbyn raised the issue of hotel guarantees for employees who travel for business.
- One of the options for consideration suggested by Mr Dobbyn would be an arrangement whereby the major hotel chains around Australia would recognise MOP(S) Act employees and waive the usual security deposit.
- It was suggested that a working group separate to the ECG be set up comprising of two or three ECG members, a representative from Finance and possibly seeking input from a representative from HRG.
- Mr Broadbent raised the issue of bullying and harassment within a broader discussion of Human Resources (HR) training for Senators, Members and MOP(S) Act employees in Chief of Staff and Office Manager roles. The possibility of compulsory training for these people to better manage staff and workloads within offices was discussed.
- Ms Emerton will investigate Finance's capacity to provide more information on HR issues and explore options for including more HR-related courses in the next Professional Development Program.
- There was further discussion on bullying and harassment that included discussion of the support and mediation services available to MOP(S) Act employees through the Employee Assistance Program.
- Mr Broadbent also raised concerns with the use of OfficeMax as the stationery supplier.

ACTION

- Finance to inform the ECG if a Departmental representative will be available to take part in a hotel guarantee working group.
- Ensure that HR management training is considered by the WHS Committee if deemed appropriate to do so at the next meeting.
- Finance to provide further information on Government procurement processes.

Agenda Item 6 – Next meeting

- The next meeting has been tentatively scheduled for Friday, 1 June 2012, at Parliament House, Canberra.