

# MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 20 June 2014

10.00am – 12.00pm

Parliament House, Room 1R3

## Present:

Name	Representing
Mr Shaun Schmitke	Office of the Hon Tony Abbott MP
Ms Paris Dounoukos	Office of the Hon Phillip Ruddock MP
Ms Louisa Macphillamy (via teleconference)	Office of Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Ms Rosemary Little	Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP
Mr Chris Browne	Office of the Hon Kevin Andrews MP
Ms Fiona Ross	Office of Ms Sharon Claydon MP
Mr Ben Maxfield	Office of the Hon David Feeney MP
Ms Kris Cruden	Office of the Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Ms Cathy Heidrich	Office of Mr Mark Coulton MP
Mr Andrew Blake	Office of Senator Christine Milne
Ms Deb Lewis	Office of the Special Minister of State
Ms Kim Travers	Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)
Ms Joanne Knight	Australian Services Union (ASU)
Mr Michael White	Media, Entertainments and Arts Alliance (MEAA)
Mr Tony Nairn	Department of Finance (Finance)
Mr Jon Box	Finance
Mr Daniel Rautio	Finance

Meeting Opened: 10.00am

Meeting Chair: Mr Nairn

Meeting Closed: 12.05pm

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

- Mr Nairn opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. All attendees introduced themselves.
- Mr Nairn provided an overview of the purpose and operation of the ECG, its role as a consultative forum for employees and the general frequency of ECG meetings.
- A number of ECG members noted that a representative for employees of Independent Senators and Members was not present. Mr Nairn advised that the representative had ceased employment prior to the meeting, and that Finance had conducted a subsequent call for nominations, however, nominations were not received. As a number of Independent Senators will commence on 1 July, Finance intends to issue another call for nominations in late July.

## **Agenda Item 2 – Terms of Reference**

- Finance circulated a proposed version of the ECG Terms of Reference (ToR) to ECG members for consideration on 13 June 2014.
- Mr Nairn advised that the proposed ToR was based on the ToR of the previous ECG, and that most of the proposed amendments were to improve the clarity of the document, while others reflect the result of the 2013 federal election.
- Ms Ross noted that the tabling of documents by Finance at least five days prior to a meeting may not allow for sufficient consultation with employees and suggested that it be amended to three weeks. The ECG agreed to Ms Ross' suggestion. Mr Nairn also suggested that future draft agendas be issued three weeks before a meeting. The ECG agreed to Mr Nairn's suggestion. Mr Nairn undertook to issue the agreed version of the ToR to ECG members. The ToR will also be made available on the ECG page located on the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services website.
- Mr Nairn noted that ECG members can suggest changes to the ToR at any time.

## **Agenda Item 3 – Enterprise Agreement 2012-2015 Guidelines**

- Finance circulated the following five draft guidelines to the ECG on 13 June 2014:
  - a. Leave and Public Holidays;
  - b. Relocation Expenses;
  - c. Salary Setting and Progression;
  - d. Studies Assistance; and
  - e. Travelling Allowance (TA).
- Mr Nairn explained the proposed amendments to each of the guidelines; the majority of which clarified current administrative practice.
- The ECG agreed to the proposed amendments in the first three guidelines with some minor changes. The amendments to the Studies Assistance guideline were agreed subject to no current employee with approved studies assistance being disqualified by a course of study being defined as leading to a qualification under the Australian Qualifications Framework. The ECG agreed to consider the TA guideline in more detail at the next meeting.
- Mr Nairn noted that there were substantive changes to the TA guideline, in particular, the requirement for an employee making a TA claim for the commercial rate to provide a tax invoice (inclusive of an Australian Business Number and Goods and Services Tax) to Finance or to certify that one could be produced upon request.

- Ms Knight raised the issue of third party accommodation booking agents (such as Agoda) not being able to provide a tax invoice with an ABN as they are not a registered Australian business. Mr Nairn noted that in such situations, Finance would typically accept documentation that demonstrates that commercial accommodation was used, and agreed to look into this issue further.

#### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Finance to ensure all MOP(S) Act employees currently receiving payments under the Australian Government's Paid Parental Leave Scheme are aware of the need to inform Finance if they return to work early.
- Finance to advise ECG members whether any MOP(S) Act employees currently in receipt of studies assistance are undertaking a course of study that will not lead to a qualification as defined under the Australian Qualifications Framework.
- Finance to investigate booking documentation provided to clients from third party accommodation booking agents, such as Agoda.

#### **Agenda Item 4 – Other business**

- Mr Blake noted that he had some specific questions on certain issues and that he would either raise these questions via email or at the next meeting.
- Ms Travers noted that Mr White would no longer be involved in the ECG due to his pending retirement from the MEAA. Mr White was thanked for his work with the ECG and with MOP(S) Act employees more generally.

#### **Agenda Item 5 – Next meeting**

- Mr Schmitke suggested that ECG meetings should have an earlier start time. Members of the ECG agreed for future meetings to commence at 9am.
- The next ECG meeting will be held at Parliament House, Canberra, on Friday 5 September 2014, from 9am to 12pm.