

MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 28 November 2014

Parliament House, Room 1R5

Present:

Ms Rosemary Little	Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP
Ms Louisa Macphillamy (via teleconference)	Office of Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Ms Cathy Heidrich	Office of Mr Mark Coulton MP
Mr Andrew Blake	Office of Senator Christine Milne
Ms Fiona Ross (via teleconference)	Office of Ms Sharon Claydon MP
Mr Brendan Gullifer	Office of Senator John Madigan
Ms Julie Allais	Office of the Special Minister of State
Ms Kim Travers (via teleconference)	Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)
Mrs Kim Baker	Department of Finance (Finance)
Mr Tony Nairn	Finance
Mr Daniel Rautio	Finance

Apologies:

Mr Chris Browne	Office of the Hon Kevin Andrews MP
Ms Elisabeth Bateson	Office of the Hon Gary Gray AO MP
Ms Joanne Knight	Australian Services Union (ASU)

Meeting Opened: 9.08am

Meeting Chair: Mr Tony Nairn

Meeting Closed: 10.24am

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Apologies

- Mr Nairn opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

Agenda Item 2 – Business Arising

- Mr Nairn clarified how Finance processes a commercial travelling allowance claim if several employees stay at the same accommodation and provide a tax invoice/receipt in only one employee's name. In such situations Finance may seek information from the employees about the circumstances of the claim.

Agenda Item 3 – Discussion of salary setting matters

- Ms Little sought clarification regarding salary setting for an electorate employee who transfers to a personal employee position.
- Mr Nairn referred Ms Little to the salary setting guideline and described how the salary setting on transfer provision operates. Mr Nairn noted that while the guideline applies to both electorate officers and personal staff, the table only depicts its application to electorate employee classifications.
- Mr Nairn noted that the salary-setting provisions sought to protect the base salary of employees who change classifications and that ESA and PSA are not included in base salary as they are payments for additional hours of work.

Agenda Item 4 – Payslips and HR Online functionality

- Ms Macphillamy raised a number of concerns relating to payslips, including the lack of consultation involved in the transition to online payslips, the format of the current payslips, and the method of delivery.
- Mr Nairn noted that Finance is working on further enhancements, including the format and the provision of year to date salary information. Mr Nairn advised that Finance intend to implement these modifications over the next few weeks, however this timeframe is subject to testing.
- Mr Nairn noted that due to the administrative cost, the HR system is unable to be modified to directly email payslips to employees. However, certain employees who do not have access to the Online HR system, such as most casual employees, will continue to have payslips emailed to their personal email addresses.
- Mr Nairn also noted that some issues with printing payslips were a result of computer or printing settings and these could be adjusted by employees.
- Several members of the ECG noted improvements to the payslip format since the new version of the payslip was originally implemented.

Agenda Item 5 – Other Business

- Mr Gullifer raised concerns regarding the access that offices of Independent Members and Senators have to information regarding *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S) Act) employment, particularly in setting up a new office. He noted that many of these employees consider that there is a lack of strategic support and guidance regarding MOP(S) Act employment processes and resources provided by the Department of Finance. Some of the suggested areas of improvement that Mr Gullifer outlined included better direction on, and induction of, the M&PS system, provision of job descriptions and improved human resources support, particularly when dealing with sensitive staffing matters. Ms Little noted that extensive information is available from several websites, including the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (M&PS) website.

- Mrs Baker advised that the Staff Help Desk can also provide support if employees have difficulty locating information or require specific assistance. She also advised that employees can ask to speak to a more senior staff member about a particular matter, if required.
- Mrs Baker noted that, ultimately, an employing Senator or Member is responsible for the management of their office. Finance can provide information and a degree of assistance but there is a limit to Finance's role and significant variability in how offices are structured and operate. She offered to meet with Mr Gullifer separately to address some of the concerns he had raised.
- Ms Heidrich requested an update on the progress of enterprise agreement bargaining. Mr Nairn explained that Finance is in the process of briefing the Special Minister of State (SMOS) regarding an initial bargaining position and commencing the bargaining process.
- Ms Travers queried whether the Australian Government Public Sector Workplace Bargaining Policy (the Policy) will be applied throughout enterprise bargaining. Mr Nairn advised that Finance, on behalf of the SMOS, will negotiate the new agreement in accordance with the requirements set out in the Policy. Mr Nairn also advised that Finance will provide a minimum of 2 weeks notice before bargaining commences, to allow bargaining representatives to be appointed.

Agenda Item 6 – Next meeting

- Members of the ECG agreed that the next ECG meeting will be held in February 2015. Finance will consult with ECG members on the date of the meeting.