

MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 30 November 2018
Parliament House, Room 1S2

Present:

Mr Nathan Winn	Ms Nola Marino MP
Mr Josh Manuatu	Senator the Hon Eric Abetz
Mr John Harris	The Hon Dan Tehan MP
Ms Alison Byrnes	The Hon Sharon Bird MP
Ms Maree Goodrick*	Senator Kimberley Kitching
Thomas Moorhead	Senator the Hon Kim Carr
Ms Mia Mussett*	Senator Janet Rice
Mr Tim Hurd	Mr Andrew Wilkie MP
Ms Amy Knox	Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU)
Mr Poni Ravula	Australian Services Union (ASU)
Ms Lisa Downs	The Hon Alex Hawke MP, Special Minister of State (SMOS)
Mr Tony Nairn	Department of Finance (Finance)
Mr Luke Kostava	Finance
Ms Belinda Henderson	Finance
Mr Will Clancy	Finance
Mr Michael Frost	Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA)
Mr Andrew House	IPEA
Mr Paul Cooper	Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS)
Mr Jon Freeman	DPS
Mr James Lawson	DPS
Ms Debra Biggs (observer)	Mr Chris Hayes MP

* via teleconference

Meeting chair: Mr Nairn
Meeting opened: 11:00 am
Meeting closed: 1:30 pm

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- Mr Nairn opened the meeting.

Agenda Item 3 – DPS security and building works

- Mr Cooper provided an update on the suite electronic access rollout. Min Wing is complete and House of Representative suites are due for completion soon. The rollout to Senate suites is subject to further decisions. Feedback has generally been good and DPS is aiming to resolve all teething problems as soon as possible once they are raised.
- ECG members raised several issues with the electronic access system that Mr Cooper noted:
 - The bounce back of doors had caught people by surprise.
 - Door handles do not rotate with the electronic access system, rather the door has to be pushed. This had caused some people to think a suite was locked.
 - Temporary access cards are currently issued by the Pass Office, which is very busy. An alternative solution would be appreciated.
- ECG members sought an update on the entrance works. Mr Cooper advised that DPS expects to have new dates for completion soon and will communicate with building users then. ECG members noted that the lack of information on the building works was a source of frustration.
- Ms Downs said she would liaise with DPS on behalf of staff to help ensure more communication on the building works is forthcoming.
- ECG members noted that trolley transport within the building for issues such as luggage continues to be difficult and that it is inappropriate to expect staff to move heavy items. Mr Cooper advised that staff could contact DPS to assist in moving items in APH and a reminder may be helpful. Mr Cooper advised that he would follow up on the trolley issue within DPS.

Agenda Item 2 – Business arising

- Mr Nairn noted:
 - information had been provided to the ECG from IPEA on defaulting travel allowance claims to parliamentary business within PEMS,
 - DPS would give a further ICT update in this meeting, and
 - the SMOS had responded to the ECG letter on the EAP and maternity leave.
- Ms Byrnes noted that the maternity leave response was disappointing. Ms Downs briefly explained the Minister's response.

Agenda Item 4 – PEMS update

PEMS

- Ms Henderson gave an update on the Parliamentary Expenses Management System (PEMS) December release.
- Mr Frost advised that discussions were occurring with the Government and Opposition on how PEMS could best support work during the election.
- Ms Mussett queried how the 60-day timeframe for claims acquittals works. Mr Nairn explained that this is in the Travelling Allowance guideline and is designed to encourage staff and employers to finalise claims in a timely fashion.

- ECG members commented that a reminder system for claims waiting to be certified by employers would be helpful. PEMS officials will consider if this could be implemented.
- Ms Downs noted her appreciation with the high-level of consultation provided by the Digital Transformation Team. Ms Goodrick supported this comment.

Parliamentary Expenditure Reports (PERs)

- Mr Manuatu raised the issue of non-discretionary office expenditure, such as necessary repairs and security upgrades, appearing on PERs.
- Mr Frost noted that the reporting of such matters has been an issue over a number of years but IPEA will consider in consultation with Finance if and how the reports could be adapted.
- Ms Byrnes asked how WHS items are reported in PERs as previously she had seen items listed separately. Mr House advised that IPEA would check and advise the ECG.

Agenda Item 5 – DPS ICT

Monitors

- Mr Freeman advised that DPS takes its advice from Finance regarding the interpretation of *Parliamentary Business Resources Regulations 2017*. In summary, anything that *can* be bought through Parliament ICT *must* be bought through Parliament ICT.
- Mr Nairn noted that M&PS Guidance provides information on purchasing additional ICT equipment. Additional ICT and services must be sourced and provided by DPS in order to be paid from the Senator or Member's office budget.
- Mr Lawson advised that DPS tries to get the best price and has reviewed its catalogue price for monitors. The lower price should be around \$190. [Note: Mr Lawson has since advised that the current price of the monitor is \$225 rather than \$190].
- Ms Downs said she will look into whether the purchase of monitors should be available through the stationery budget – from other providers.

SIMs

- Mr Lawson advised that DPS is currently reviewing the prices of SIM cards with savings expected in the new year. The key issue is that DPS runs a pooled account for data usage across all Senator and Member offices, which makes it difficult to provide individual plans for individual devices.
- DPS will look at whether their proposal would support the inclusion of a selection of tiered plans to recognise difference usage arrangements among offices.

Mobile coverage

- ECG members noted the ongoing poor mobile coverage within APH.
- Mr Lawson explained that the coverage system was not designed for modern mobile usage. The asset is owned by Telstra, which has put forward a proposal to upgrade the system. The proposal is being considered by the Presiding Officers and DPS.
- DPS will provide a written update on the status of the Telstra proposal before the next ECG meeting.

Lynda

- Mr Lawson advised that the Lynda pilot ended on 30 November and there had been around a 50 per cent utilisation rate with offices. Feedback had been positive with the curation of content undertaken in consultation with Lynda.

- DPS advised it would liaise with Finance, IPEA, the Department of the Senate and the Department of the House of Representatives as Lynda is rolled out.

System outages

- ECG members raised concerns with recent APH IT system outages and in particular, how these would be managed during the election. Mr Lawson advised that during the election, there will be an ICT Change freeze implemented, which would help ensure its stability.
- Ms Byrnes noted that communication with staff on faults should be clearer and more concise. In particular, regional offices have trouble in getting the service provider out to the office and difficulty getting clear information on when to expect a technician on site. Mr Lawson mentioned that there are protocols in place within his section to ensure that regular client contact occurs with the vendor and the affected office and would address any issues where this may not have occurred.
- ECG members noted that during major outages, the whips offices provide another channel to advise parliamentarians and staff that DPS could utilise.

Office 365 and Windows 10 pilot / OneDrive

- Mr Lawson advised that the Office 365 and Windows 10 pilot continues with feedback largely positive. A key challenge is how to provide training to offices on how to utilise the tools for maximum effectiveness.
- The availability of native (MS Office) applications on mobile devices aspect of the project is expected to commence shortly. A key challenge is the balance between security and flexibility.
- In response to a question about how DPS is planning to provide future technology to users more quickly, Mr Lawson noted that this will form a key aspect of the new digital strategy, there are DPS officials responsible for considering the potential for new technologies and DPS is adopting Agile development methodologies to get products to users earlier.

Other matters

- Ms Goodrick asked if it was a standard process for the service provider to undertake an equipment audit without notice when it is at an electorate office to address faults. Mr Lawson said that offices should be notified prior to an audit and he will check what the protocol is.

Agenda Item 6 – Other business

Bulk transfer process

- Mr Moorhead sought information on the changes to the process for bulk transfer of papers between electorate offices and APH. Responsibility has moved from chamber departments to Finance and offices must now use Australia Post, which does not have door-to-door service.
- Mr Nairn will look into this matter.

Catering

- ECG members requested DPS catering be invited to the next ECG meeting to discuss food safety and vegetarian menu options.

Mental health first aid training for staff

- Ms Mussett enquired about how staff could get training on mental health first aid.

- Mr Nairn will liaise with the relevant team responsible for training arrangements under the Professional Development Program and advise the ECG. Mr Nairn noted that the EAP may be able to provide assistance to offices.

Reminder dates for non-ongoing contracts and probation

- Ms Goodrick asked whether the HR system could send reminders to offices when non-ongoing contracts or probation are about to end.
- Mr Nairn explained that the current HR system does not have this functionality. PEMS may be able to provide a solution. At this stage Finance's proposed option would be to enable offices to obtain their own staffing reports with the relevant information. The request for such functionality has been raised with the PEMS developers.

Agenda Item 7 – Next meeting date

- Friday, 15 February 2019 – to follow the WHS Committee Meeting.

Action Items

Ms Downs (SMOS office) to work with DPS on helping to ensure effective communications on building works to staff
Mr Cooper (DPS) to follow up with the relevant DPS area on the availability of alternative trolleys
Mr Frost (IPEA) and Ms Henderson (Finance) to consider if reminders to certify travel claims can be added to PEMS
IPEA, in consultation with Finance, to consider whether 'non-discretionary' expenditure on offices could be removed or otherwise noted in Parliamentary Expenditure Reports (PERs)
IPEA to advise how WHS items are reported in PERs
Ms Downs (SMOS office) to look into whether the purchase of monitors should be available through the stationary budget
DPS to provide written update before the next ECG meeting on the proposal to upgrade mobile coverage in APH
DPS to advise how equipment audits are managed by their service provider
Mr Nairn to advise on the arrangements for the bulk transfer process between electorate offices and APH
Mr Nairn to advise on training for mental health first aid