

MINUTES – Work Health and Safety Committee Meeting

Friday, 16 February 2018
Parliament House, Room 1S4

Present:

Josh Manuatu	Liberal Party of Australia
Nathan Winn	Liberal Party of Australia
Helen Lewis	Liberal Party of Australia
Melanie Beaumont	Liberal Party of Australia
Rosemary Little *	Liberal Party of Australia
Simon Kelly	The Nationals
Alison Byrnes	Australian Labor Party
Emma Harding *	Australian Labor Party
Georgia Webster	The Australian Greens
Kristian Nelson	Independents
Daniel Wong	Office of the Special Minister of State
Amy Knox	Community and Public Sector Union
Poni Ravula	Australian Services Union
Corey Burford [♦]	Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT)
Ben Crowther [♦]	Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT)
Sharon Forester	Ministerial and Parliamentary Services, Department of Finance
Marg Emerton	Ministerial and Parliamentary Services, Department of Finance
Bek Bjarnadottir	Ministerial and Parliamentary Services, Department of Finance

* via teleconference

♦ JLT attended for part of the meeting to deliver a presentation

Apologies: Mr Joseph Wheeler

Meeting Opened: 10:05 am
Meeting Chair: Bek Bjarnadottir
Meeting Closed: 11.30 am

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- Ms Bjarnadottir welcomed the members of the committee and noted apologies.

Agenda Item 2 – New WHS Services Provider – JLT

- Ben Crowther (JLT) provided an introduction to JLT, detailing the scope of their business and the services JLT will provide to MOP(S) Act employees and Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (M&PS). Corey Burford provided a presentation showing the committee how to navigate the online WHS system, Skytrust.

Agenda Item 3 – Actions arising from the previous meeting

- M&PS to provide details of vacant HSR and Deputy HSR roles to the relevant workgroup's HSRs:
 - Completed
- M&PS to consult with the WHS Committee regarding communication to WHS Site Officers in APH:
 - In progress; communication and action plan currently being drafted.
- M&PS to provide information regarding how many office locations have reported hazards in the previous 12 months:
 - In progress; data from the previous WHS Service Provider currently being reviewed.
- M&PS to provide information regarding how many instances of duress alarm activation have been reported over the previous 12 months:
 - In progress; initial enquiries have been made.

Agenda Item 4 – WHS Report

- The WHS report for the period 1 October 2017 to 31 December 2017 was provided to HSRs prior to the meeting for review. Ms Bjarnadottir invited queries or comments regarding the latest quarterly WHS report.
- Mr Manuatu noted the number of hazards which relate to first aid kits not being properly stocked and/or first aid officer details not being displayed. He suggested the department arrange communications to Parliamentarians regarding first aid kits and to encourage advertising first aid officer details in their offices.

Agenda Item 5 – Bullying and Harassment Policy

- Ms Emerton tabled a draft revision of the current Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure.
- Ms Emerton invited general discussion regarding the new information contained in the Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure, which was drawn from documents published by the Australian Human Rights Commission with regard to sexual harassment. The Department requests that formal feedback be provided to the MOPSWHS@finance.gov.au email address within 10 working days (ie by close of business 2 March 2018).

- Ms Bjarnadottir also noted additions to the WHS library available on the M&PS website, with regard to sexual harassment.
- Mr Manuatu suggested a change to the order of the description of actions or behaviors that could be sexual harassment.
- There was discussion about behaviors outside of the workplace that has the potential to result in workplace sexual harassment – Ms Emerton offered to distribute a recent article regarding this topic.
- Ms Byrnes advised she felt it was important the policy contained a section regarding inappropriate workplace behavior. She tabled a document from the Department of Defence titled ‘Unacceptable Behavior in the Workplace’ as an example. The Department will distribute this document to the other committee members.

Agenda Item 6 – Other Business

- Ms Bjarnadottir called for any other business.
- Ms Knox mentioned the work currently being conducted in the Senate and House of Representatives carparks, which is causing WHS issues for staff. Ms Emerton offered to invite a member from the WHS team in the Department of Parliamentary Services to the next meeting of the committee.
- Ms Byrnes advised that the Employee Consultative Group (ECG) representative for the Australian Greens had raised an issue at the last meeting of the ECG regarding reception staff in the Senate not being provided with sit-to-stand workstations despite ergonomic requirements for one. The department will discuss this matter with the Department of the Senate.
- Mr Nelson raised a query regarding the number of counselling sessions staff are entitled to under the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Ms Emerton advised that the standard number of sessions is three. However if a clinician feels an employee would benefit from further sessions they will contact the department for approval. The department’s default position is to accept the advice of the clinician regarding additional sessions. The employee’s details are not divulged to the Department when additional sessions are requested.
- Mr Nelson indicated that a number of staff in Senator Hinch’s office have a hard time dealing with the subject matters their office deals with. The department will provide further information to Senator Hinch’s office regarding specific training or services that the EAP service provider can offer.
- Ms Beaumont raised the location of the Staff Assistance Officer’s details on the M&PS website as it was quite difficult to locate. Ms Emerton advised there are changes scheduled to the website which will see WHS have its own heading on the website banner which should make WHS information more accessible.

Agenda Item 8 – Next meeting

- The Committee agreed that the next meeting will be held at Parliament House at 10:00am AEST on Friday 25 May, 2018.

Action Items

M&PS to consult with the WHS Committee regarding communication to WHS Site Officers in APH.
M&PS to provide information regarding how many office locations have reported hazards in the previous 12 months.
M&PS to provide information regarding how many instances of duress alarm activation have been reported over the previous 12 months.
M&PS to arrange communications to Parliamentarians about ensuring first aid kits are stocked appropriately and first aid officer details are clearly displayed.
Members of the WHS Committee to provide M&PS with feedback regarding the revised Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure by 2 March, 2018.
M&PS to distribute a recent article regarding appropriate conduct outside of the workplace.
M&PS to distribute the document tabled by Ms Byrnes to the other committee members.
M&PS to invite a member from the WHS team in the Department of Parliamentary Services to the next meeting of the committee.
M&PS to communicate and work with the Senate to rectify the issue regarding sit-to-stand workstations for reception staff
M&PS to provide Mr Nelson further information regarding specific targeting training or counselling that the EAP service provider can offer.