

MINUTES – Work Health and Safety Committee Meeting
Friday, 7th August 2020
GovTeams

Meeting Opened: 9.30 am
 Meeting Closed: 10.30 am
 Meeting Facilitator: Nikki Baccon - Ministerial and Parliamentary Services
 Department of Finance (Finance)

Present:

Name	Representative
Kate Sutherland Office of Ms Lisa Chesters MP	Australian Labor Party
Stella Weston-Smith Office of Mr Andrew Wilkie MP	Independents
Loretta Sist Office of Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham	Liberal Party of Australia
Simon Kelly Office of Mr Llew O'Brien MP	The Nationals
Georgia Webster (Deputy HSR) Office of Senator Janet Rice	Australian Greens
Kate Boyd (Deputy HSR) Office of the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon MP	Australian Labor Party
Nathan Winn Office of Mr Bert van Manen MP	Liberal Party of Australia
Gai Coghlan Office of Mr Chris Hayes MP	Australian Labor Party
Steven Mammarella Office of Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann, Minister for Finance	Management Representation
Eleanor Kennedy	Community and Public Sector Union
Suzanne Hopkins	Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT)
Dana Sutton (Finance)	Management Representation
Sharon Forester (Finance)	Management Representation
Nikki Baccon (Finance)	Management Representation
Cade Williamson (Finance)	Management Representation

* some members advised during the meeting that they had difficulties accessing the GovTEAMS platform

Apologies: Bryden Toner (ALP representative, Office of Dr Mike Freelander MP), Luke Barnes, (Liberal Party representative, Office of Mr Dave Sharma MP), Helen Lewis (Liberal Party representative, Office of the Hon Stuart Robert MP), Rosemary Little (Liberal Party representative, Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP).

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- Ms Forester welcomed the members of the committee and thanked everyone for their attendance. Ms Forester thanked the previous WHS Committee meeting facilitator Bek Bjarnadottir, for her work in organising and facilitating previous meetings.
- Ms Forester welcomed the new WHS Committee facilitator Nikki Baccon, and new committee members Gai Coghlan (ALP) and Bryden Toner (ALP).
- Apologies were made for Luke Barnes, Helen Lewis, Bryden Toner and Rosemary Little.

Agenda Item 2 – WHSC Membership

- Ms Forester noted that all HSR positions were full for all parties except for the Australian Greens, noting Ms Webster attended as the Deputy HSR. The Greens confirmed they are finalising their nomination.

Agenda Item 3 – Actions arising from previous meeting

- Action items of the previous meeting held on the 15th May 2020 were considered:
 - Action 1: MaPS to publish updated link to ATO working from home deductions information.
 - The link is included on the MaPS website COVID page under “Working from Home”.
 - Action 2: MaPS to send communication to all MOP(S) Act employees providing information outlining arrangements for claiming these costs, as well as transporting current ergonomic equipment provided following assessments.
 - Information is available on the MAPs website COVID-19 page.
 - Action 3: MaPS to send emails to employees in WHS roles advising them of their training requirements and providing flexibility for individuals unable to undertake training due to COVID-19.
 - Emails were sent out in July advising WHS officers, emergency and deputy emergency officers, of their online training requirements.
 - Advice was given to first aid officers acknowledging face to face training has been put on hold in several states due to COVID-19. Those unable to complete the training were asked to contact MaPS.
 - No first aid emails were sent to Victorian employees due to the current lockdown requirements within their state.
 - Action 4: MaPS to send email to Emergency Officers, Deputy Emergency Officers and parliamentarians regarding site visits.
 - Following feedback from the service provider, emails were sent reminding offices of legislative obligations and ensuring safe working environments. Most offices have continued their site visits including remotely, however, rescheduling arrangements have been made for some offices, as appropriate.

- Action 5: MaPS to send link of PDP courses.
 - MaPS confirms all staff receive an email advising them when a new or upcoming course is available on the PDP program and contains a link to the PDP calendar. The most recent email was sent in July 2020.
 - A training calendar is also available on the website for employees.
 - During COVID-19 MaPS has provided online training for employees.
- Action 6: MaPS to distribute draft policies for consultation
 - MaPS continues to work on reviewing policies, noting that policy updates have been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Action 7: MaPS to send communications regarding transitions back to the workplace to all staff.
 - An all staff email was sent out in May advising the importance of having a COVID safe plan in the workplace.
- Action 8: MaPS to publish leave tree tool.
 - A comprehensive table in relation to the leave provisions for COVID-19 is available on the MAPs website.
- Action 9: MaPS to redistribute advice regarding reporting customer aggression to all staff.
 - This advice was included in both the monthly EAP reminder and the Quarterly Safeguard newsletter. Advice on reporting was also included in a webinar on emergency response to workplace violence.

Ms Forester confirmed that all action items arising from previous meeting were complete.

Agenda Item 4 – WHS Report

- The committee was provided with the quarterly WHS report for the period 1 April to 30 June 2020. Ms Hopkins highlighted the key statistics for the quarterly report and welcomed any queries related to the data provided.
- Ms Webster (Deputy HSR Greens) asked if there were any statistics relating to employees working from home (WFH) and if employees knew they could report any Incidents or hazards related to WFH.
- Ms Hopkins indicated that ergonomic hazards had been reported by employees including those WFH. Ms Baccon informed Ms Webster that there is an FAQ on the MAPs website COVID page in relation to workers compensation and what happens in the case of an injury when working from home. This information also covers the importance of reporting all incidents. Ms Baccon suggested employees should contact the MaPS WHS team if they need further assistance.
- Ms Kennedy (CPSU) suggested that all MOPS employees could be sent an email reminding them they can still report hazards when WFH.

Action 1: MaPS to consider sending a reminder about reporting incidents and hazards while WFH.

Agenda Item 5 – SAO Roles

- Ms Baccon briefly explained the SAO position to the new committee members.
- Ms Baccon noted that the SAO position was originally set up to assist and support staff, including, as a bullying and harassment contact position, however MaPS would like to look into expanding the role to include further training and support, including in relation to mental health supports. In the Department for example, we have rebadged SAOs as Mental Health Advisers (MHA) and provided training and support.
- Ms Baccon invited the committee to consider and asked what training may be useful to expand the SAO role.
- Ms Baccon also suggested that SAOs should capture how many employees are contacting them by having an anonymous reporting system for SAOs to report number of contacts and categories of issues reported. This information will inform training requirements and other support.

Action 2: MaPS to distribute a template for SAOs to use as an anonymous contact register.
- Ms Kennedy (CPSU) offered the union's assistance in establishing training and reporting of issues.
- Ms Baccon indicated alternatively, we could contact all SAOs to consider what type of training would be best to support them in their role.

Action 3: MaPS to consider sending an email/survey to SAOs regarding training requirements.
- Ms Forester indicated that a session provided to the MHAs at the Department of Finance by a psychologist was beneficial and could be a good option for the SAO's.
- Ms Weston-Smith suggested an all staff email be sent advising the names of SAO's. Ms Baccon advised SAO contacts can be found on the SAO page of the MaPS website.

Agenda Item 6 – New Access Workplaces

- Ms Baccon advised that MaPS has recently joined Comcare's program called NewAccess Workplaces developed by Beyond Blue. The program is confidential and free to MOPS Act employees and consists of 6 mental health coaching sessions.
- Ms Baccon indicated that the program is evidence based and has been successful in other workplaces.

Agenda Item 7 – WHS and Covid-19 webpage

- Ms Forester advised each office and/or staff members should keep updated and follow individual state authority health advice in relation to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Ms Forester indicated that MOPs staff have been sent regular COVID-19 updates and information relating to relevant WHS issues.
- Several enquires have recently been made in relation to masks. More information will be published on the MAPs website.
- There have been reports of increases in constituent enquires across many electorate offices.
- All offices should have a COVID Safe Plan in place to ensure the safety of staff and visitors.
- The COVID-19 webpage is being updated regularly and members should encourage people to check the webpage for the latest information.
- In response to a query regarding additional support to Victoria, Ms Sutton advised that information would go out to all staff in the near future in relation to COVID-19 restrictions and

permitted industries and worker permits for Victoria. Ms Sutton also referred to the recent advice from the chamber departments regarding travel and quarantine restrictions imposed by the ACT CMO for employees accompanying their parliamentarians for parliamentary sittings scheduled 24 August 2020. Ms Coghlan queried whether that applied to identified hot spots in NSW. Ms Sutton indicated that we would contact Ms Coghlan and provide further advice.

- MaPS has created a separate COVID-19 WHS webpage providing relevant WHS content including: mental health resources, information on working from home and ergonomics, workers compensation, flu vaccinations, practical tips on preventing COVID-19 in the workplace and general resources.

Agenda Item 8 – Policy Update

- Ms Forester advised work on policies remains a high priority however she acknowledged there has not been a lot of progression due to competing work priorities.
- Several policies are in draft and will be ready for consultation in the coming months.

Agenda Item 9 – Other Business

- Ms Baccon indicated that a half day course called Dealing with people in Difficult Situations will be run by Lifeline Australia on 20 August. The course is listed on the PDP training calendar of the MaPS website.
- The next WHS committee meeting will tentatively be held on Friday 13 November.

7 August 2020 WHS Committee Action Items

Action 1: MaPS to consider sending a reminder about reporting incidents and hazards while WFH.

Action 2: MaPS to distribute a template for SAOs to use as an anonymous contact register.

Action 3: MaPS to consider sending an email/survey to SAOs regarding training requirements.