

MINUTES – Work Health and Safety Committee Meeting

Friday, 15 May 2020

GovTeams

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

Present:

Kate Sutherland	Office of Ms Lisa Chesters MP Australian Labor Party
Thomas Moorhead	Office of Senator the Hon Kim Carr Australian Labor Party
Stella Weston-Smith	Office of Mr Andrew Wilkie MP Independents
Steven Mammarella	Office of the Minister for Finance
Eleanor Kennedy	Community and Public Sector Union
Poni Ravula	Australian Services Union
Suzanne Hopkins	Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT)
Dana Sutton	Finance
Sharon Forester	Finance
Ellen Laenen	Finance
Bek Bjarnadottir	Finance

Apologies: Simon Kelly - The Nationals (Office of Senator Llew O'Brien), Georgia Webster - The Australian Greens (Office of Senator Janet Rice), Rosemary Little (Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP).

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- Ms Sutton welcomed the members of the committee and thanked them for their attendance. Ms Sutton noted an apology from Georgia Webster due to technical issues.
- A further apology was received after the meeting from Mr Kelly and Ms Little.

Agenda Item 2 – WHSC Membership

- Ms Bjarnadottir noted that there was a vacant HSR position representing the relevant workgroup for the Greens and the ALP. MaPS has written to both party leaders regarding the process to elect replacement HSRs. Deputy HSRs were invited to attend the meeting in the vacant positions.

Agenda Item 3 – Actions arising from previous meeting

Action items of the previous meeting held on 20 March 2020 were considered:

1. MaPS to provide further communications on mental health and anxiety.
 - The dedicated COVID-19 webpage on the MaPS website includes resources from the EAP provider relating to anxiety, depression, and health and wellbeing topics.
2. MaPS to provide posters for electorate offices.
 - Posters reminding constituents and individuals of social distancing requirements are available on the COVID-19 webpage.
3. MaPS to provide existing risk assessment information.
 - A link to the risk assessment tool is accessible to all WHS Site Officers available on the dedicated WHS webpage.
4. MaPS to include a segment regarding customer aggression and reporting processes in the WHS newsletter.
 - Information was included in the JLT WHS Newsletter sent 1 April 2020.
5. MaPS to include a FAQ regarding out-of-pocket expenses for working from home.
 - The FAQ section on the COVID-19 webpage includes information relating to claiming costs for ICT equipment and tax deductions. The ATO has also provided information on claiming working from home costs as deductions. This information has recently been updated and will be included on the COVID-19 webpage shortly.
 - **Action 1: MaPS to publish updated link to ATO working from home deductions information.**
6. MaPS to provide Communicable Disease Policy for consultation.
 - The draft communicable diseases policy will be distributed to the committee for consultation shortly.

7. MaPS to investigate COS order cancellation.

- The issue has now been resolved and was a result of a worldwide shortage of the item being ordered.
- Ms Kennedy provided feedback on behalf of Ms Webster relating to the clarity of information relating to claiming working from home costs arising from ergonomic equipment and home office set ups.
 - **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.**
- Ms Sutton advised that staff are encouraged to contact MaPS if there are specific ergonomic requirements and they will be resolved on a case by case basis.

Agenda Item 4 – WHS Report

- The committee was provided with the quarterly WHS report for the period 1 January to 31 March 2020. Ms Forester provided an overview of key findings, and welcomed queries and discussion related to the data provided.
- Ms Hopkins provided additional information relating to training and discussed trends noting that manual handling and workstation assessments were the most common training modules completed during the reporting period.
- Ms Kennedy queried the reduction in number of hazards reported in this quarter with the figures from the same quarter last year. It was noted the decrease was likely due to more employees working from home due to COVID-19.

Agenda Item 5 – WHS Roles

- Ms Forester advised that face to face training for the various roles had been paused. When current restrictions are lifted, emails will be sent regarding the recommencement of training.
- All CRA has and will continue where access to training has been restricted through no fault of the person performing the role.
- **Action 3: MaPS to send emails to employees in WHS roles and contact each individual advising them of their training requirements and provide flexibility for individuals unable to undertake training due to COVID-19.**

Agenda Item 6 – EAP, Ergonomic Assessments, Emergency Management Services, Flu Vaccination Program, Training and Development

- Ms Forester noted an increase in use of the EAP, commenting that it is positive that people are being supported.
- Ms Forester advised that an email would be sent shortly to all Emergency Officers, Deputy Emergency Officers, and parliamentarians reminding individuals of their obligations relating to facilitating site visits for emergency response planning,

- **Action 4: MaPS to send email to Emergency Officers, Deputy Emergency Officers and parliamentarians regarding site visits.**

- Discussion was held around the possibility of providing site visits as a combination of face to face and online.
- Ms Forester advised that a webinar on aggressive constituents was recently offered. Ms Kennedy advised they were pleased that constituent aggression was now being reported on and that MaPS was committed to increasing awareness in the workforce about reporting instances as it is currently under reported. Ms Forester advised that reporting had increased.
- Ms Sutton noted that Ms Little raised the potential of a voucher system for payment of flu vaccinations. MaPS investigated the use of vouchers, however it posed challenges this year due to limited supply. MaPS will look at whether vouchers are a viable option for the 2021 flu vaccination program noting initial queries indicated there may be limitations due to the geographical location of some electorates.
- Mr Moorhead provided feedback on the use of vouchers and noted there were some issues, including short notice cancellations. Ms Sutton indicated this may have just been an issue this year due to supply and the two different vaccines, as well as priority given to essential workers.
- Ms Forester noted that DPS was offering a voucher system at APH, however reimbursement seemed to be simpler noting MaPS had already processed the same amount of reimbursements that were received over the entire flu-season in 2019.
- Mr Moorhead advised he would direct people to reimbursement of flu vaccinations over vouchers as a priority.
- Ms Sutton advised information on courses available through the Professional Development Program (PDP) would be sent shortly. She noted that a webinar had been provided on working from home and that Comcare were running a webinar on bullying and harassment rather than through face to face delivery.

- **Action 5: MaPS to send link of PDP courses.**

Agenda Item 7 – WHS and Covid-19 webpage

- 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 that there are several draft policies that will be distributed to the committee shortly for consultation, including an Infection Control Policy, Preventing and Managing Workplace Violence Policy and the Bullying and Harassment Policy is also being reviewed.

- **Action 6: MaPS to distribute draft policies for consultation.**

Agenda Item 9 – Other Business

- Ms Sutton invited other business for discussion.
- Ms Forester advised that the SAO training will also be redeveloped to include more practical training options once the HSR positions are filled. SAOs were reminded to complete their online training.
- The committee thanked Ms Bjarnadottir for resolving the trolley issue at APH.
- Ms Sutherland requested communication regarding transitions back to the workplace be provided to staff to address the likely increase in anxiety and uncertainty that will be experienced during this time. It was noted that many offices may choose to continue working from home arrangements to facilitate a smooth transition.
- Ms Sutton advised that MaPS is already in the process of drafting several documents to provide support which will reference the latest advice published by the Department of Health.
 - **Action 7: MaPS to send communications regarding transitions back to the workplace to all staff.**
- Ms Kennedy requested information relating to caring responsibilities upon returning to work is also provided. Including an outline of the employees' rights for accessing carers leave to care for children and elderly parents, as well as detailing the types of leave available. Ms Sutton advised that a 'leave tree' was currently being developed and would be distributed shortly as a tool for determining appropriate leave options.
 - **Action 8: MaPS to publish leave tree tool.**
- Ms Kennedy also requested advice around reporting customer aggression is also communicated. Ms Forester advised that this information was included in the recent WHS Newsletter, however it can be distributed again.
 - **Action 9: MaPS to redistribute advice regarding reporting customer aggression to all staff.**
- The next WHS Committee meeting will be held on Friday 7 August 2020, to align with the ECG meeting.

Action Items

1. MaPS to publish link to ATO working from home deductions information on MaPS website.
2. Action: MaPS proposed 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.
3. MaPS to send emails to employees in WHS roles advising training requirements and provide flexibility for individuals unable to undertake training due to COVID-19.
4. MaPS to send email to Emergency Officers, Deputy Emergency Officers and parliamentarians regarding continuation of site visits.
5. MaPS to send link of PDP courses.
6. MaPS to distribute draft policies for consultation.
7. MaPS to send communications regarding transitions back to the workplace to all staff.
8. MaPS to publish leave tree tool
9. MaPS to redistribute advice regarding reporting customer aggression to all staff.