

# MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 23 March 2018  
Parliament House, Room 1S4

## Present:

Mr Nathan Winn	Ms Nola Marino MP
Mr Josh Manuatu	Senator the Hon Eric Abetz
Ms Cathy Heidrich	The Hon Mark Coulton MP
Ms Alison Byrnes*	The Hon Sharon Bird MP
Mr Thomas Moorhead	Senator the Hon Kim Carr
Ms Maree Goodrick	Senator Kimberley Kitching
Mr Tim Hurd	Mr Andrew Wilkie MP
Mr Josh Zwar	Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann
Mr Tony Nairn	Department of Finance (Finance)
Ms Bek Bjarnadottir	Finance
Ms Amy Knox	CPSU

\* via teleconference

Apologies:  
Ms Helen Lewis  
Mr John Harris  
Ms Sophie Nicolle

Meeting Opened: 10:05 am  
Meeting Chair: Mr Tony Nairn  
Meeting Closed: 12.00 pm

## **Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies**

- Mr Nairn opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees.

## **Agenda Item 2 – Business from previous meeting**

- Ms Byrnes noted she had copied Mr Nairn into correspondence to the Department of the House of Representatives (HoR) regarding access to trolleys. She advised she would provide the feedback from HoR to the members of the ECG when received.
- Mr Nairn noted he had yesterday distributed the last set of guidelines for consultation – those related to travel. He advised he has invited a representative from the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) to attend the ECG meeting when the guidelines related to travel are discussed.
- Mr Nairn noted revisions to the Bullying and Harassment Policy, specifically focused on sexual harassment, was tabled at the last meeting of the WHS committee and is currently undergoing consultation with Senators and Members.
- Ms Goodrick advised she had contacted the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS) regarding their prescription-filling service. Their response indicated DPS ‘...would look at the policy to broaden to other building occupants’. Ms Goodrick advised she would follow this up with DPS.

## **Agenda Item 3 – Enterprise Agreement Guidelines**

### **Working from Home**

- Ms Byrnes indicated there is confusion regarding the ‘Working from Home’ guideline with respect to ‘five consecutive days worked’. Ms Byrnes provided draft changes to this part of the guideline. Mr Nairn suggested some changes, which were discussed. Mr Nairn will distribute the revised guideline to the ECG for review before it is published.

### **Learning and Professional Development**

- There was discussion on consultation between the department and a Senator or Member on the approval of requests for ad hoc training, particularly where a request may be refused. Mr Nairn suggested an edit to indicate ‘the department will consider, in consultation with the employing Member where relevant’, applications to attend ad hoc training. Mr Nairn advised he would also discuss this with the Advice and Support Directors.
- Mr Nairn will distribute the revised guideline to the ECG for review before it is published.

### **Leave and Public Holidays**

- Mr Nairn explained an amendment to the guideline to include existing arrangements regarding Finance approving leave for employees during the period of deferral of termination of employment.
- Mr Nairn indicated that workplace relations leave has been included in the provisions for miscellaneous leave.
- Mr Nairn explained a clarification of arrangements regarding casual employees and public holidays in accordance with advice received from the APSC. Casual employees will be paid the hours stated on their employment agreement, inclusive of public holidays.
- Ms Byrnes raised concerns regarding maternity leave for staff employed against the Electorate Support Budget. She suggested the ECG write to the Minister to request that maternity leave provisions be provided separately from the staffing budget. Mr Manuatu advised that Senator Abetz had recently written to the Special Minister of State to

consider this issue and he will circulate the response to ECG representatives once received.

- Mr Moorhead asked about the maternity leave guidelines regarding certification that an employee is fit to work during the period of required absence which states that 'a midwife is not a medical practitioner for this purpose'. Mr Nairn explained that the *Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1973*, requires this certification from a medical practitioner and a midwife is not a medical practitioner under the legislation for the registration of health practitioners.
- Ms Knox raised an issue with the provision of miscellaneous leave due to domestic/family violence as personal leave credits must first be exhausted. Ms Byrnes suggested the ECG write to the Minister to remove this requirement. Mr Nairn noted that this would be a bargaining issue, as the Minister would be providing a new leave type under the Enterprise Agreement.
- Mr Manuatu suggested a change to the wording for compassionate leave, to note that it may be used in conjunction with miscellaneous leave.
- There was extensive discussion of political exchange leave and which programs may be covered by this leave. The ECG representatives will consider proposing a list of programs for inclusion in the guideline to more clearly define this type of leave.

#### **Recognition of Prior Service**

- The guideline was accepted without changes.

#### **Studies Assistance**

- The guideline was accepted without changes.

#### **Corporate Responsibility Allowance**

- Mr Moorhead queried what a Staff Assistance Officer is. Mr Manuatu and Mr Nairn described the Staff Assistance Officer role and directed him to the page on the M&PS website.
- The guideline was accepted without changes.

#### **Loss or Damage to Clothing or Personal Effects**

- Ms Knox queried if staff would be covered for loss or damage if an employee were flying interstate and an item was stolen at the airport. Mr Nairn explained this is travel for official business and would therefore be covered.
- The guideline was accepted without changes.

#### **Salary Packaging**

- The guideline was accepted without changes.

#### **Agenda Item 4 – Other Business**

- Mr Moorhead asked if the amendments to the travel determination had been circulated to staff. Mr Nairn explained that it was published on the M&PS website and advertised on the rolling banner on the front page of the website. An email to Senators, Members and staff may be issued if there are significant or extensive changes to provisions.
- Mr Manuatu requested an update on the progress of the new digital system. Mr Nairn advised the system is called PEMS (Parliamentary Expenses Management System) and there is currently a lot of work being conducted to get aspects of the new system up and running over the second half of the year. Mr Zwar noted that there is consultation being undertaken with some Senators, Members and staff as part of developing the new system.

- Ms Goodrick queried what the activities of the ECG would be once all of the guidelines have been reviewed. Mr Nairn advised this can be at the discretion of the ECG and will include any matters that the ECG representatives place on the agenda. Ms Goodrick said she has some ideas and will present these to ECG representatives for consideration.

### **Agenda Item 5 – Next Meeting**

- The ECG agreed the next meetings would be on the following dates:
  - Friday 27 April, 2018
  - Friday 22 June, 2018
  - Friday 21 September, 2018

### **Action Items**

Ms Byrnes to provide feedback from HoR regarding access to trolleys, to the ECG when received.
Mr Nairn to distribute the edited versions of the Working from Home and Learning and Professional Development guidelines to the ECG for final review before publication.
Mr Nairn to discuss with the Advice and Support Directors a process for consulting with the employing Member about any application to attend ad hoc training that may be denied.
Ms Goodrick to present ideas regarding possible tasks for the ECG for consideration.