

**MINUTES – Work Health and Safety Committee Meeting**  
**Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021**  
**GovTeams and 1S3 APH**

Meeting Opened: 9.30 am  
 Meeting Closed: 11:15 am  
 Meeting Facilitator: Dana Sutton - Ministerial and Parliamentary Services  
 Department of Finance (Finance)

**Present:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representative</b>
Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham (item 3)	Minister for Finance
Kate Sutherland Office of Ms Lisa Chesters MP	Australian Labor Party
Bryden Toner Office of Dr Mike Freeland MP	Australian Labor Party
Gai Coghlan Office of Mr Chris Hayes MP	Australian Labor Party
Stella Weston-Smith Office of Mr Andrew Wilkie MP	Independents
Nathan Winn (Deputy) Office of Mr Bert van Manen MP	Liberal Party of Australia
Rosemary Little Office of the Hon Peter Dutton MP	Liberal Party of Australia
Kelli Orrell Office of Senator Dean Smith	Liberal Party of Australia
Helen Lewis Office of the Hon Stuart Robert MP	Liberal Party of Australia
Simon Kelly Office of Mr Lew O'Brien MP	The Nationals
David Mejia-Canales Office of Senator Lidia Thorpe	Australian Greens
Steven Mammarella Minister for Finance	Management Representation
Rachael Thompson (item 3) Minister for Finance	Observer – Management Representation
Kate Boyd (Deputy) Office of the Hon Ed Husic MP	Observer – Australian Labor Party
Katherine Gurbiel (Deputy) Office of Ms Madeleine King MP	Observer – Australian Labor Party

Georgia Webster (Deputy) Office of Senator Lidia Thorpe	Observer - Australian Greens
Kim York (Deputy) Office of Senator Rex Patrick	Observer – Independents
Alison Byrnes Office of Ms Sharon Bird MP	Observer – ECG Representative
Thomas Moorhead Office of Senator the Hon Kim Carr	Observer – ECG Representative
Georgia Goldsworthy Office of the Hon Anthony Albanese MP	Observer – ECG Representative
Eleanor Kennedy	Community and Public Sector Union
Melissa Donnelly	Observer - Community and Public Sector Union
Poni Ravula	United Services Union
Suzanne Hopkins	Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT)
Dana Sutton (Finance)	Management Representation
Sharon Forester (Finance)	Management Representation
Ellen Laenen (Finance)	Committee Secretariat
David De Silva (Finance)	Observer - Management Representation
Cassie Alexander (Finance)	Observer - Management Representation
Nikki Baccon (Finance)	Observer - Management Representation
Luke Kostava (Finance)	Observer - Management Representation

**Apologies:** n/a

<b>Agenda Item 1 – Welcome</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms Sutton welcomed the members of the committee and thanked everyone for their attendance.</li> </ul>
<b>Agenda Item 2 – WHSC Membership</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms Sutton advised that Charles Headlam had ceased as a HSR and Nathan Winn was attending in his place.</li> </ul>

- Ms Sutton noted that Loretta Sist has also stepped down as a HSR and welcomed Kelli Orrell as a replacement for the Liberal Party workgroup.

### **Agenda Item 3 – Independent Review Consultation**

- Ms Sutton advised that Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Finance, was attending to seek the views of staff and staff representatives as part of his consultations ahead of establishing the review into the workplaces of Parliamentarians and their staff. Committee members were encouraged to provide their views in relation to the establishment of the review on behalf of their workgroups.
- Ms Sutton welcomed the Minister and thanked him for his attendance.
- The Minister thanked members for representing their colleagues on the committee.
- The Minister provided an overview of the objectives of the review and sought the views and experiences of the committee. The Minister advised he would consider the feedback obtained from this consultation in relation to:
  - ensuring current and former staff feel empowered and confident to participate and are supported;
  - drafting the Terms of Reference of the review;
  - setting expectations around the reviewer; and
  - timeframes for the review.
- The committee discussed a number of considerations in relation to the review, including:
  - ensuring the review considers international best practice
  - the requirement to ensure the reviewer is impartial and experienced
  - the requirement for improved training programs
  - examining the power imbalance in the employment relationship
  - looking more broadly at workplace culture and the employment framework
  - ensuring participants contributing to the review are adequately supported and their privacy protected
  - what supports are available when things do go wrong
  - safe workplaces being a key driver
  - an opportunity to expand peer to peer support framework
  - consulting broadly including current and past staff, electorate and personal/ministerial staff
  - ensuring the timeframe is sufficient for a comprehensive review, but not unnecessarily long
  - what can be done immediately to support staff.
- Minister Birmingham thanked the group for their time and engagement and encouraged the committee to engage with the review and encourage their colleagues to do the same. The Minister noted that he will be asking his colleagues to participate and allow their staff to as well. The feedback provided at the meeting would be consolidated and considered in developing a comprehensive, independent and timely terms of reference for the review.

### **Agenda Item 4 – Actions arising from previous meeting**

- Action items of the previous meeting held 16 November 2020 were considered:
  - Action 1: MaPS to distribute draft SAO contact form for consideration – complete.

Completed in December 2020. No feedback on form received.

- Action 2: MaPS to send an email to SAOs to seek a suitable time for training – complete.

Training occurred on 15 December 2020. A second session of this training may be arranged depending on interest.

- Action 3: MaPS to send HSRs and SAOs a resource pack – complete.

Email with resources sent on 9 December 2020.

- Action 4: MaPS to provide information in relation to the recent MOPS survey – complete.

The survey was sent to all MOPS staff and there were 155 responses.

- Action 5: Finance to consider CPSU's request to schedule an out of session meeting to discuss the operation of the Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy.

MaPS advised that work has continued on providing a draft policy. The policy will also need to take into account the matters under consideration in the respective reviews.

- Action 6: MaPS to provide date of upcoming WHS webinar to committee – complete.

Home Office Ergonomics and WHS Training Webinar was delivered on 11 December 2020. The slides and webinar are now available on MOPS Learning.

Ms Sutton noted that the learning and development program utilised a blended learning format. Ms Sutton encouraged everyone to look at further learning and development opportunities on the MOPS Learning Management System.

## Agenda Item 5 – Bullying and Harassment Discussion

- Ms Sutton noted that many of the issues have been captured by the Minister in the earlier discussion regarding the scope and terms of reference of the independent review. Finance will support the current reviews and modify policies and procedures in line with relevant recommendations.
- Ms Kennedy raised concerns in relation to reporting of incidents of workplace violence and indicated that staff feel the process for reporting hazards is unclear. Ms Kennedy referred to a survey that the CPSU had commissioned that indicated this was an ongoing concern in relation to reporting to Finance. She also encouraged the committee to recommend the EAP engages trauma specialists to provide specialised services.
- Ms Sutton thanked Ms Kennedy for her feedback and advised the EAP offers specialist services. Ms Sutton also confirmed that on site EAP services at APH had been made available in parliamentary sitting weeks in addition to usual services. Ms Sutton also indicated that other support was being considered that could be provided to staff. MaPS would look into increasing awareness of the services available under the EAP.  
**Action 1: MaPS to issue communications regarding services such as trauma assistance available through EAP.**
- Ms Sutton asked Ms Kennedy if a copy of the CPSU survey could be sent to Finance, noting recent media reports.  
**Action 2: CPSU to consider providing Finance with a copy of the recent survey.**
- Ms Sutherland noted that party members have been approaching her reporting historical incidents as they feel like they are in a position to report now due to recent events.
- Ms Sutton noted the additional EAP services offered at Parliament House, and advised that there are dedicated case support resources within MaPS who are trained and available to offer support and assistance to staff if needed via a dedicated phone number. Communications in relation to these services will be issued to all staff shortly.

- Ms Little noted an instance in relation to delayed timeframes for services offered by the EAP provider. Ms Forester encouraged the committee to provide feedback on issues with EAP in relation to timeliness or quality of services delivered.
- Mr Toner noted concerns that complainants are often reluctant to report instances of bullying or harassment as feedback is provided to the employing Parliamentarian and staff are unsure of other processes for reporting. He suggested adopting a proactive approach and sending a contracted service provider to each site to ensure and issues in electorate offices were captured. Ms Forester reiterated the role of a WHS Site officer in each office is a reporting role.
- The committee discussed the need for all staff to prioritise WHS roles and arrangements.

### **Agenda Item 6 – WHS Report**

- The committee was provided with the quarterly WHS report for the period 1 October to 31 December 2020. Ms Hopkins highlighted the key statistics for the quarterly report and welcomed any queries related to the data provided.
- The committee discussed reporting of incidents of workplace violence and training reminders.

### **Agenda Item 7 – SAO Training Discussion**

- Ms Sutton noted that Bullying and Harassment Refresher Training delivered to SAOs in December was well received. If there is further interest an additional session can be arranged.
- Staff Assistance Officer Contact Forms have been distributed. No completed forms have been received to date.
- SAOs were encouraged to continue to advise MaPS of any further training opportunities they would benefit from.

### **Agenda Item 8 – MOPS WHS Update**

- Due to time restrictions Ms Sutton advised that this agenda item would be deferred until the next meeting, however briefly noted the following:
  - As noted above, onsite EAP services were arranged at APH this week.
  - COVID 19 vaccinations have started to roll out. A process will be established for MOP(S) Act employees consistent with the staged approach to roll out. COVID plans should remain in place and staff should continue to monitor restrictions impacting their own state.
  - Advice was provided to specific states experiencing bushfires that may have an impact on health and safety.
  - The 2021 Flu Vaccination Program for staff will commence shortly.

### **Agenda Item 9 – WHS Policy/procedure updates – consultation**

- Discussions around WHS policies and procedures was deferred until the next meeting. Draft policies may be provided out of session for consideration by the committee.

### **Agenda Item 10 – Other Business**

- Ms Coghlan noted that there was no requirement for temperature checking for the public at Parliament House, and queried whether that would be introduced in accordance with COVID requirements in other establishments. Mr Winn advised that there were no plans to introduce temperature checking requirements as the risks were managed consistent with the advice of ACT Health.
- Ms Coghlan asked whether it is possible to establish Deputy SAOs. Ms Forrester advised that anyone is able to complete the SAO training, however there are limited paid positions for each

work group. Ms Forester commented that the SAO program was evolving and expanding the program was an option to consider.

### **Agenda Item 11 – Next meeting**

- The next WHS committee meeting will be advised out of session in accordance with the Terms of Reference and to align with ECG meetings.

### **26 February 2021 WHS Committee Action Items**

Action 1: MaPS to issue communication regarding services such as trauma assistance available through EAP.

Action 2: CPSU to consider providing Finance with a copy of the recent survey.