

MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday 27 August 2021

Meeting opened: 10:30am

By GovTEAMS

Meeting closed: 12:30pm

Meeting Chair: Ms Dana Sutton – Department of Finance

Attendee	Office
Helen Lewis	The Hon Stuart Robert
Rosemary Little	The Hon Peter Dutton
Alison Byrnes	The Hon Sharon Bird MP
Thomas Moorhead	Senator the Hon Kim Carr
Georgia Goldsworthy	The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Colin Lees	Mr Adam Bandt MP
Kim York	Senator Rex Patrick
Thomas Pretty	The Hon Dan Tehan MP
Luke Barnes	Mr David Sharma MP
Eleanor Kennedy	CPSU
Mick Jones	USU
Steven Mammarella	Minister for Finance
Dana Sutton	Finance
Luke Kostava	Finance
Chris Gavel	Finance
Gary Jolly	Finance
Scott Grocott	Finance
David Sandbach	Finance

Apologies: Jill Flinders (Finance), Jo Fernandez (Finance) and Leonie Lloyd-Smith (Mr Rowan Ramsey MP)

Agenda Item 1- Welcome and apologies

- Ms Sutton opened the meeting and noted apologies.

Agenda Item 2 - Business from the previous meeting

- Ms Sutton reviewed action items from the previous meeting.
 - 2021/1 – Finance has collated the emails that were sent to affected current and past employees and can distribute these after the meeting if people wish to see them.
 - 2021/2 - Finance received 37 queries relating to the EOA matter. Of these, 67% were resolved within 24 hours and 80% were resolved within seven days.
 - 2021/3 - A number of communications were distributed in relation to PEMS. Finance has also added training packages to MOPS Learning and refining them in response to feedback.
 - 2021/4 - Centrelink advised that it is a matter for each individual to inform Centrelink of their specific circumstances. Finance provided updates to individuals who had asked similar questions.

Agenda Item 3 – Enterprise Agreement Guidelines

- Finance distributed four draft guidelines for comment. These Guidelines are consistent with the government’s response to claims submitted by bargaining representatives.
- During discussions it was agreed that any further comments on any guidelines should be submitted by COB, 10 September 2021.

Salary Setting and Progression

- Mr Kostava outlined the changes for ongoing and non-going employees rising to EOA-4, noted that staff who are promoted must be paid at a higher salary point and competency assessment had also been updated.
- In response to feedback on Higher Duties Allowance (HDA) Mr Kostava explained that staff had to move to different classifications in order to receive HDA.

Debt recovery

- Mr Kostava noted that this is a new guideline – outlines how MaPS approaches debt recovery from an administrative point of view.
- ECG members commented that further information on how an overpayment is determined and consultation with IPEA regarding consistency in its debt recovery processes would be welcomed.

Leave and Public Holidays Guideline

- Mr Kostava outlined the changes:
 - Additional information about surrogacy, stillbirth and leave for cultural or ceremonial purposes
 - Clarification of unpaid carers’ leave and compassionate leave
 - Clarification of miscellaneous leave

- ECG members made a number of suggestions, including greater clarification for parliamentarians about the entitlement to take leave and clarifying the arrangements for adoption leave. Mr Jones indicated he would provide some feedback on these issues.
- Ms Byrnes raised concern about requiring a medical examination of employees.
- Ms Sutton explained that this clause was consistent with the previous guideline and had not changed. It supports work health and safety and ensuring staff are supported.

Family and Domestic Violence Policy

- Mr Kostava explained that arrangements regarding family and domestic violence had been made a separate attachment for clarity and the policy goes into a range of arrangements regarding family and domestic violence beyond leave.
- Mr Kostava noted the policy provided contacts outside a Parliamentarians' office, including the power to grant leave if a victim did not feel comfortable talking to their colleagues about their concerns. Ms Sutton had been nominated in the Guidelines.
- ECG made a number of initial comments, including around the definition of family and/or domestic violence' and clarification that information would not be kept on an employee's HR records.
- Ms Sutton highlighted that MaPS had discussed draft workplace policies with the WHS Committee including the new Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS). ECG Committee members are welcome to also provide feedback and talk to their HSR group representative.

Additional hours

- Mr Kostava noted that the additional hours guideline had previously been the Electorate Staff Allowance (ESA) guideline. The guidelines now included more background information and detail about what constitutes reasonable additional hours
- ECG members made a number of comments. There was concern that employees may experience negative consequences as a result of raising concerns over their hours.
- Ms Sutton noted there were a number of mechanisms to address these issues, and the inclusion of these provisions was to provide greater support to staff to have discussions with their employing parliamentarian. ECG members requested that the guideline be clarified to better explain how to manage disputes about working arrangements.
- ECG members noted that the table outlining how many hours per ESA point was helpful in discussions with Parliamentarians. Further detail and examples would be welcomed. Members asked if this guidance could be provided to Parliamentarians before 10 September to assist discussions regarding allocation of ESA. Finance agreed to consider further.

Note: This information was provided to Parliamentarians on 1 September.

- **Agenda 4 - EOA underpayment update** Mr Jolly noted that Finance has paid close to 1000 of the 1200 employees and the remaining employees (260) are expected to be paid within the next 2-3 weeks. Further updates would be provided to the ECG on completion of the project.

Agenda 5 - PEMS update

- Mr Gavel provided a PEMS update on behalf of Ms Millard. Mr Grocott from the Service Delivery Office (SDO) also provided further information about PEMS. The remaining functions of PEMS are in development. Key functions that will rolled out are management of office expenses and reporting of international travel claims
- Ms Byrnes raised concerns about the format of payslips requesting that leave accumulated be recorded on each payslip. Mr Grocott explained that the payslip format was agreed with all SDO clients. The SDO would further investigate possible changes.

Agenda 6- Other business

Payroll

- Mr Jolly gave a payroll update and noted with the introduction of PEMS, and a large volume of transactions associated with annual retention payments, tier advancements and the introduction of the new EA on 5 August, there has been a period of payroll processing prioritisation. Priority to pay staff their base pay, noting that the backlog has now been addressed.
- Ms Sutton noted that Finance had recently met with the CPSU to discuss their concerns. Finance accepts that the key message is to ensure we are communicating with staff about these issues, either at an individual level or broader communications. The CPSU raised other matters for further consideration in relation to consulting on the prioritisation of work and what matters are taken into account in determining hardship and had suggested the ECG may wish to further consider these matters.
- Finance will do further work to consider how smart forms or further tips could reduce the number of errors made in contracts submitted; and also messaging within the PEMS system regarding pay cut offs. Ms Byrnes suggested that training for office managers about how to use forms would be beneficial.

New ESA payments

- ESA continues to be paid in accordance with existing allocations (indexed by 1.7 %). The new allocations will come into effect for pay day 30 September backdated to 5 August 2021.
- ESA will start to be paid from 30 September. Our intention that no staff will be disadvantaged by any adjustments in the ESA in relation to the period 5 August – 16 September 2021.

Agenda 7 - Next meeting date

- We will provide an update of when the next meeting, which is proposed to align with WHS. Finance will continue to review all guidelines and ensure cross referencing and other minor changes are incorporated and provided to the ECG for review.

Action Items

2021/5 – SDO would investigate the possibility of adding leave entitlements to payslips
