

MINUTES – EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING

Friday, 26 November 2021
GovTEAMS

Meeting opened: 11:35 am
Meeting closed: 12:45 pm

Meeting chair: **Ms Jillian Flinders** – Department of Finance (Finance)

Attendee	Office
Mr Luke Barnes	Mr Dave Sharma MP
Ms Alison Byrnes	The Hon Sharon Bird MP
Mr Colin Lees	Senator Richard Di Natale
Ms Helen Lewis	The Hon Stuart Robert MP
Ms Georgia Goldsworthy	The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Mr Thomas Moorhead	Senator the Hon Kim Carr
Ms Eleanor Kennedy	Community and Public Sector Union
Ms Michelle Hutchinson	Special Minister of State
Ms Meg Brighton	Head of Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS)
Ms Jackie Paul	PWSS
Mr Michael Douglas	PWSS
Mr Tim Abrahams	Finance
Ms Jillian Flinders	Finance
Mr David Sandbach	Finance

Apologies: Ms Leonie Lloyd-Smith (Office of Mr Rowan Ramsey MP), Rosemary Little (Office of Mr Peter Dutton MP) and Ms Kim York (Office of Senator Rex Patrick)

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- Ms Flinders opened the meeting and delivered the Acknowledgement of Country.
- Members of the ECG, Finance and the PWSS introduced themselves and apologies were noted.

Agenda Item 2 – Presentation from the Head of Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS)

- Ms Brighton:
 - noted that the PWSS was established in response to the Foster report released in July 2021
 - explained that she reports to the Parliamentary Services Commissioner and that the PWSS was independent of any executive agency
 - outlined PWSS' core functions:
 - culture and education
 - service and support to Parliamentarians and MOP(S) employees
 - independent Review of complaints
 - noted that PWSS has started providing support to MOP(S) employees and Parliamentarians regarding bullying/sexual harassment
 - noted that PWSS is seeking to hold briefing sessions with each of the parties and with the Unions
- Ms Goldsworthy asked what briefings would be provided to staff. She had received feedback from staff that it was unclear how to make a complaint to PWSS.
 - Ms Brighton advised that briefings would be provided to all stakeholders – MOP(S) employees via their parliamentary workgroups and parliamentarians.
- Mr Lees asked if the presentation and briefing notes would be distributed.
 - Ms Brighton confirmed that the presentation slides would be sent to Finance to distribute to the ECG members as well as briefing notes from meetings with stakeholders

Action item 1 – Presentation slides and any briefing notes from PWSS to be provided to the Committee

- Ms Byrnes noted that she had received good feedback on the PWSS from her colleagues. She asked if there is anyone on the PWSS staff who has previously worked at DPS, MaPS and IPEA?
 - Ms Brighton confirmed that there are no former DPS, MaPS or IPEA staff in PWSS.
- Mr Moorhead asked if PWSS would assist MOP(S) employees navigate the shared services provided by DPS, MaPS and IPEA?
 - Ms Brighton:
 - explained that PWSS will always provide an 'open door' to the other services provided to MOP(S) employees
 - acknowledged that it can be complex to navigate these different services noted that MOP(S) employees should approach the appropriate service provider if they know where to go.

Agenda Item 3 – COVID-19/Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS)

- Ms Flinders advised that a letter from Finance had been sent to DPS about the issues raised during the 1 November meeting
- DPS had acknowledged receipt of the letter and indicated that they were not available to attend the ECG meeting.
- Mr Barnes reiterated concerns he had raised at the previous ECG and out of session regarding working arrangements for employees at Parliament House during the forthcoming sitting.
 - Ms Byrnes raised her concern that:
 - DPS was making decisions without consulting MOP(S) employees, Parliamentarians or ECG/WHS Committees
 - The management of this issue has had a negative impact on MOP(S) employees in terms of managing their workloads
 - Mr Moorehead noted that
 - Agreed with Mr Barnes and Ms Byrnes' concerns
 - Staff are under pressure and that this pressure would increase with an election likely to occur next year.
 - Acknowledged that Finance was in a difficult position on this issue and was only able to relay concerns of the ECG Committee to DPS
 - Ms Kennedy outlined that:
 - DPS as the property manager of Parliament House has WHS obligations that need to be met and this includes responding to this correspondence. DPS should be attending the WHS Committee meeting next week.
 - Recommended that an organisation chart outlining WHS obligations of different departments/agencies and how they relate to MOP(S) employees in particular employment responsibilities
 - She also raised her concerns when union representatives have been prevented from raising their concerns.
 - Requested that the terms of reference for the ECG Committee be reviewed to address how confidential information needs to be handled following the election. Ms Kennedy also requested that there be more effective consultation on new terms of reference
 - Ms Goldsworthy agreed with Ms Kennedy's points and suggested more formal arrangements should be established with DPS.

Action item 2 – CPSU to write to Finance outlining what changes they would like to be made to the terms of reference of the ECG Committee.

Action item 3 – Finance will ask DPS to attend the WHS Committee on Friday 3 December 2021.

Action item 4 - Finance prepare an organisational chart outlining the WHS obligations of different departments/agencies and how they relate to MOP(S) employees

- Ms Flinders noted:
 - Finance has no control over building access/Covid-19 arrangements
 - Finance has no control over who is considered an 'essential worker' for each state or territory
 - Finance will invite DPS to attend the next ECG and the next WHS Committee meeting
 - ECG members are able to raise matters in group anonymously by bringing the issue to Finance.

Agenda Item 4 – Guidelines

- Ms Flinders passed on her apologies for not redistributing the Guidelines which ECG members have already seen for further comment prior to this meeting – it is expected that these will be distributed shortly.
 - When Finance redistributes the Guidelines, a table outlining the feedback received and any changes subsequently made will also be provided.
- Further, there are an additional 4 Guidelines:
 - Domestic Travel
 - Motor Vehicle Allowance
 - Travelling Allowance; and
 - Overseas Travel which Finance will distribute for consideration and feedback.
 - Finance have consulted with IPEA on these Guidelines already.
 - ECG members agreed with comments and feedback to be provided by 21 January 2022.

Action item 5 – Finance to send out the next set of Guidelines next week for ECG members to provide comments on by 21 January

Agenda Item 5 – Other business

- Ms Goldsworthy requested that a briefing from Commissioner Kate Jenkins to the ECG Committee about the key recommendations from her report for an ECG meeting out of session.

Action item 6 – Finance will request Commissioner Jenkins attend a joint ECG/WHS Committee meeting following the release of her report.

Agenda Item 6 – Next meeting date

- The next ECG meeting will be held end of February via GovTeams.

Action Items
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