

EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING 4 – RECORD OF MEETING

Friday September 2023
GovTEAMS

Meeting opened: 11:03
Meeting closed: 12:05

Meeting Chair: Ms Jillian Flinders – Department of Finance

Attendee	Office
Amy Knox	Ms Joanne Ryan MP
Nathalie Rosales-Cheng	The Hon Anne Aly MP
Michelle Hutchinson	The Hon Peter Dutton MP
Cathy Heidrich	Hon David Littleproud MP
Emma Garbutt	Mr Adam Bandt MP
Minority Parties/Independents	C/Office of Dr Helen Haines
Emma Groube	CPSU
Joshua Polak	USU
Bryce Wilson	ASU
Bonnie Pederson	Office of the Special Minister of State
Ian Nicholas	Assistant Secretary, COMCAR and Programs
Peter Byass	COMCAR and Programs
Marco Spaccavento	Assistant Secretary, IPEA
Vicky Addison	Assistant Director, IPEA
Ellen Laenen	Finance, Assistant Director HR Policy and Assurance
Lachlan Bayliss	HR Policy and Assurance (Observer)
Simon Bartholomew	HR Policy and Assurance (Secretariat)

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- The Chair opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of country.
- Apologies were noted:
 - Jaan-Clare Witcombe, Director, IPEA
 - Leonie Lloyd-Smith, Office of Mr Rowan Ramsey MP
 - Liz Bateson, Office of the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP
- The Chair welcomed the following guests to the meeting:
 - Ian Nicholas, Assistant Secretary, COMCAR and Programs Branch,
 - Peter Byass, COMCAR and Programs Branch,
 - Marco Spaccavento, Assistant Secretary, IPEA
 - Vicki Addison, Assistant Director, IPEA

Agenda Item 2 – PEMS payment processing

- Peter Byass, COMCAR and Programs Branch, presented an update on the 2022 review of PEMS, the key findings, top priority issues to be addressed and next steps.
- ECG members were invited to join his presentation to the User Reference Group (URG) on 19 and 21 September 2023.
- The current priority for PEMS is to progress the PEMS expenditure reporting module which is due by the end of the year. ECG members noted their appreciation for the PEMS presentation and acknowledgement of challenges.
- Concern was noted regarding the accuracy of staff leave balances and the impact that has on employees. The Chair advised that the MaPS Payroll Team regularly conduct audits of employee leave balances, but will seek further feedback and provide an update to the ECG (refer Action Item 4.1, below).
- The PEMS Help function was noted as being very useful.
- ECG members advised that the budget reporting function would benefit by having a detailed table available to help manage expenditure and prevent overspends but acknowledge the system was an improvement from the previous process which involved a form to request expenditure information.
- There was concern regarding the high levels of stress and workload at the end of the financial year due to reporting requirements and improved systems may assist this.

Action Item 4.1

Leave recording and leave balances for MoP(S) employees.

- Concerns regarding the accuracy of employee leave balances to be raised with Payroll and advice to be provided back to the ECG.

Action Item 4.2

PEMS representative to be invited as standing agenda item.

Agenda Item 3 – IPEA Travel Allowance processing

- The Chair welcomed Marco Spaccavento, Assistant Secretary, IPEA, to speak to this item.
- Mr Spaccavento confirmed that staff travel rates had been updated as at 1 July 2023 for locations other than Canberra. The Canberra rate was updated with effect 27 August 2023 as per the Remuneration Tribunal, and advised that travel allowance claims were being processed within an average of four days and noted that recent education sessions have received positive feedback.
 - Interested members were invited to join a virtual GovTeams training session run by the IPEA Education team on Friday 22 September 2023 at 11.30am.
- IPEA is also working on PEMS enhancements.
- The team is available to work with areas on issues as they arise or for training purposes.

Agenda Item 4 – Action Item update

The Chair thanked members for their feedback regarding the:

- Privacy Collection Notice and MaPS Privacy Statement, which is now being progressively rolled out onto forms; and
- additional electorate staff resources and nominated traveller provisions, which have been updated and are on-line.

Agenda Item 5 - Policy update

a. Guideline refresh

- The Chair advised that Guidelines under the current Enterprise Agreement are currently being reviewed, noting that there may be some updates pending legislative changes currently before the Parliament.
- The Guidelines will be reviewed in manageable tranches (there are 16 overall).
- The ECG will be consulted on any proposed changes to the Guidelines.
- Feedback was welcome, including any indication of priorities.
- The CPSU and USU advised that they are preparing to speak with MaPS regarding the new Enterprise Agreement. To avoid overlap on issues, more information regarding the Guideline refresh would be helpful (refer Action Item 4.3, below).

Action Item 4.3

Review of HR policy and guidelines

- Provide advice to ECG regarding:
 - Policy groupings
 - Timeframes for presentation and review
 - Highlight impact of possible future legislative changes.

b. Superannuation salary sacrifice

- The Chair thanked Bryce Wilson for his query received on 25 July 2023 regarding superannuation salary sacrifice for MoP(S) Act employees.
- Bryce noted his concern and appreciated that it could now be resolved through the ECG (other salary sacrifice arrangements via Smartsalary are not under consideration).
- The Chair confirmed this is an administrative matter and that a clause is not required in the Enterprise Agreement.
- Finance supports this proposal in-principle and enquiries are continuing as to how give effect to this, including clarification of any contract arrangements with Smartsalary and payroll administration issues.
- The Chair proposed that this remain as an open item (refer Action Item 4.4, below).

Action Item 4.4**Superannuation salary sacrifice – administer ‘in-house’**

- Update ECG once resolved, or once further information is available.

Agenda Item 6 - Other business**Legislative update**

- The Chair thanked Michelle Hutchinson for raising this matter.
- Michelle sought advice on a number of matters, as reflected in action items 4.5 below, including that a range of practical questions remained which affect daily administration and management.
- The Chair advised that MaPS was not able to respond to these concerns specifically but will forward the matters raised to relevant areas (refer Action Item 4.5, below).
- The Chair advised that the Members of Parliament (Staff) Amendment Bill 2023 and PWSS Bill 2023 are both now before Parliament and subject to the relevant parliamentary processes.
 - MaPS News published on 11 August 2023 provided links to the Bill, and advice regarding support services should an employee not feel comfortable discussing any concerns arising from these Bills with their employing parliamentarian or authorised officer.

Action Item 4.5**Legislative update – Machinery of Government changes**

- Advise MOG team of queries about changes that will affect MoP(S) Act employees:
 - Implementation plan
 - Timetable
 - Structures
 - Support and material
 - Implications for the PCBU
 - HR functions and contacts
 - Location/access arrangements in the future to the current PWSS function.

Enterprise Agreement

- Bryce noted that the current Enterprise Agreement only had a year to run, and asked when bargaining may commence.
- The Chair advised that expectations are that it may commence at the end of the year with bargaining meetings expected from January 2024 onwards.

Agenda Item 7 - Next meeting

- It was agreed that the next meeting be held on Friday 24 November 2023, 11-12 noon (AEST).
- The Chair thanked members for their time and support.
- The meeting closed at 11.55 pm.