

EMPLOYEE CONSULTATIVE GROUP (ECG) MEETING 2 – RECORD OF MEETING

Thursday 26 February 2026
MS Teams

Meeting opened: 11:00am AEDT
Meeting closed: 12:30pm AEDT

Meeting Chair: Mr Scott McWhirter, Assistant Secretary (a/g), HR Frameworks

| Attendee | Office |
|---------------------|--|
| Liz Bateson | Hon Michelle Rowland MP |
| Katie Walker | Hon Michelle Rowland MP |
| Amy Knox | Ms Joanne Ryan MP |
| Gabriel Steger | Hon Ged Kearney MP |
| Kathy Quinn | Senator the Hon James McGrath |
| Simon Price | Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie |
| Catherine Moore | Hon David Littleproud MP |
| Kym Chapple | Senator David Shoebridge |
| Amy Ware | Office of the Special Minister of State |
| Emma Groube | Community and Public Sector Union |
| Joshua Polak | United Services Union |
| Katherine Messer | Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS) |
| Jaan-Clare Witcombe | Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) |
| Tanyth Lawless | Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority (IPEA) |
| Nate Riley | Finance, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (MaPS) (observer) |
| Amelia Haddock | Finance, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (MaPS) (observer) |
| Ellen Laenen | Finance, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (MaPS) (observer) |
| Laura Alimbakis | Finance, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (MaPS) (observer) |
| Lachlan Bayliss | Finance, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (MaPS) (Secretariat) |

Apologies:

- Brydan Toner, Senator the Hon Don Farrell.

Due to privacy arrangements some attendee details have been removed from this list

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- The Chair opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.
- The Chair provided an update on structural and personnel changes within Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (MaPS). This included some additional staff joining MaPS to support work adjacent to the ECG.

Agenda Item 2 – Updates from IPEA

- IPEA confirmed the commencement of their 2026 Education Program and noted that information regarding education sessions is available on the IPEA website, and through the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS) Academy.
- Bespoke training for authorised officers on requirements when authorising travel on behalf of their parliamentarians has been included in the education program following significant interest.
- IPEA provided a status update regarding the 'Uber for Business' proposal and advised they are working closely with Uber to obtain a robust business case. It was noted that while the proposal is progressing, it is not a "quick fix" and IPEA are working through the matter thoroughly to consider whether it is an appropriate option.
- IPEA briefed the committee on proposed changes to Family Reunion Travel for parliamentarians in accordance with the recent Remuneration Tribunal Statement, noting that the PBR Regulations will be updated to reflect the Tribunal's intent.

Agenda Item 3 – Updates from PWSS

- The PWSS spoke to draft guidelines on Learning and Development, Studies Assistance, and Ad hoc Training that were distributed prior to the meeting for consideration by the ECG.
- The PWSS noted that there are limited substantive changes proposed and updates were focussed on improving and simplifying accessibility arrangements, and removing duplicated content outlined across multiple guidelines.
- More substantial changes were included in the Studies Assistance Guideline such as a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities for all parties involved and updated provisions regarding courses delivered within Australia by overseas-based providers.
- Feedback on these guidelines was requested by close of business 20 March 2026.
- The PWSS also provided an update on their Professional Development Program and noted several key pieces of feedback received during a recent consultation from September to December 2025. In summary, key feedback was noted:
 - There is no single consensus on a preferred delivery method. Consequently, the PWSS will adopt a multi-modal approach to training.
 - There is significant demand for "bite-sized" learning modules (10 to 15-minute items).
 - Strong appetite remains for leadership and general management training.
 - There is also a notable increase in demand for conflict management sessions.
- Several ECG representatives questioned whether the training could be expanded to parliamentarians. The PWSS advised that some training would be made available to

parliamentarians however there are legislative considerations that limit the scope of training that can be provided to parliamentarians through the PWSS compared to what could be provided for MOP(S) Act employees.

- The CPSU requested an update on the status of the PWSS Resourcing Review. The PWSS advised there is ongoing consultation in relation to implementation of the recommendations.
- Ms Ware, from the office of the Special Minister of State, noted that implementation of the Resourcing Review would also be considered amongst the broader review of the MOP(S) Act ecosystem and information would be provided shortly after a formal announcement.

Agenda Item 4 – EA Implementation Updates

Same Day Travel

- The Chair acknowledged that while progress on the Same Day Travel Guideline has been made we would like to be further advance based on the update provided in November 2025.
- The Chair advised there were complexities associated with coordinating elements with multiple stakeholders and addressing existing systems requirements but noted that it was essential to design the entitlement correctly to avoid creating a process that administratively burdens MOP(S) Act employees, Parliamentarians, MaPS and IPEA.
- MaPS is currently modelling two options to ensure an administratively simple process for employees. These include an allowance model, which is taxable, and a reimbursement model, where the expense payment is likely to be subject to fringe benefits tax (FBT). Subject to finalising the systems solution for both options, current indications are that the deployment timeframes across these two options are different.
- The Chair suggested that both options may be presented for consultation due to their varying timeframes. Additionally, it was noted that we may be able to release a draft guideline within the next 4 weeks and an out-of-session meeting would be organised to consult further.
 - **Action Item 4.1:** Finance to provide an out-of-session update on Same Day Travel.
- An individual representative asked whether Electorate Support Budgets would be increased to support the introduction of this entitlement. The Chair confirmed that this was still under consideration.

Excess Canberra Travel Leave (ECTL)

- The CPSU requested an update on the status of the automation of crediting of ECTL and sought advice on any audit processes to confirm accurate transition arrangements. The CPSU highlighting that some members had indicated they believe their leave had not been credited or credited incorrectly.
- The Chair advised MaPS would review specific instances where employees believe their leave has not been correctly applied.
 - **Action Item 4.2:** CPSU to provide MaPS with information on individual cases where ECTL had not been credited correctly.
- The Chair explained that the automation process requires the integration of payroll data (held by MaPS) with travel data (held by IPEA). MaPS has now completed relevant user

acceptance testing and was working closely with IPEA on finalising the first data set. MaPS anticipates it will be able to run the first 'automation of ECTL' in mid-March. It will take approximately a week for MaPS to complete this step.

- The automated process will initially capture data back to the commencement of the 48th Parliament. Employees should continue to make manual claims for outstanding requests before this date.
- The Chair highlighted that MaPS was working on a six-month transition period where manual claims will remain available for employees to submit.
- Subject to any unforeseen issues arising, eligible MOP(S) Act employees can expect to see ECTL credits appearing in the system by the end of March 2026. All employees will receive an email confirming which eligible periods of travel have received an ECTL credit. This is a new step that is currently not in place under the manual claim process.
 - **Action Item 4.3:** MaPS to share communication products/ materials to ECG members.

Agenda Item 5 – Policy Updates

- The Chair confirmed that the final tranche of guidelines had been circulated to ECG members for comment. Members were provided with an opportunity to discuss their comments, and it was noted it would also assist for consolidated written comments to be provided.

Corporate Responsibility Allowance, and Loss or Damage to Personnel Effects Guidelines

- The CPSU noted they had no feedback on the Corporate Responsibility Allowance or Loss or Damage to Personnel Effects Guidelines.

Domestic Travel Guideline

- A member raised concerns that the guideline currently gives employees a large degree of flexibility to determine what should be considered the lowest reasonable fare, and that further guidance on what could be considered reasonable would be appreciated. IPEA responded that this flexibility was intentional to facilitate a variety of working arrangements.
- Questions were raised about whether employees could book a second seat on buses (such as on the return service from Sydney to Canberra) to enable them to work more effectively while in transit. Members raised concerns around ongoing challenges with approval. IPEA endeavoured to seek clearer guidance on this position.
- The CPSU sought clarification on allowing travel to work from a location other than an employee's work base, particularly when it represented a saving to the Commonwealth. For example, an employee who usually resided in Canberra being in Sydney on a weekend seeking direct travel to attend work in Brisbane on a Monday, rather than having to return to Canberra before travelling to Brisbane. IPEA clarified staff travel conditions and noted that employees had access to personal stopover arrangements.

Motor Vehicle Allowance Guideline (MVA)

- Members sought guidance on whether an employee could receive MVA when travelling from their home to an electorate office where that electorate office was not their usual work base. IPEA responded suggesting while employees were expected to get themselves to and from work each day, there were some instances when travel to an electorate office that was not an employee's work base would facilitate the payment of

MVA.

- **Action Item 5.1:** MaPS to arrange an out of session discussion on MVA with IPEA and ECG members.

Travel Allowance Guideline

- There was discussion on whether the Same Day Travel Allowance Guideline was best kept as a separate guideline or incorporated into the existing Travel Allowance Guideline. The Chair suggested that it will likely be kept separate as a transitional measure but recognised that eventually it would make sense to incorporate as part of the Travel Allowance Guideline

Private Plated Vehicle or Allowance Guideline

- The CPSU requested further guidance on insurance liabilities in certain circumstances.

Working From Home

- CPSU representatives raised concerns that timeframes associated with seeking ministerial approval of working from home arrangements in excess of five consecutive working days created operational and administrative challenges, particularly in relation to short-term or temporary arrangements.
- The Chair acknowledged the feedback and noted that further comments on working from home arrangements could be used to form a basis for further consideration.
 - **Action Item 5.2:** ECG members to provide written comments and feedback on approval requirements for working from home arrangements.

Agenda Item 6 – Classification Review

- A representative from MaPS noted the previous out of session meeting where feedback was provided on the draft survey. The Chair requested that all feedback be provided in writing please.
- A member queried timeframes for finalising the survey and progressing the review. A representative from MaPS confirmed that once all feedback was received and considered the survey could be finalised.

Agenda Item 7 – Other Business

- A representative from MaPS noted that no other business was raised and that responses to outstanding matters raised prior to the meeting by the CPSU were addressed in an out of session email.
- The next meeting of the ECG is scheduled for 11am on 30 April 2026.
- The meeting closed at 12:30pm AEDT.