

16 August 2017

Ministry of Health adopts PSA proposals

PSA delegates Julie Westacott and John Bertacco along with Industrial Officer Carmel McKeough met with the Ministry of Health for the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meeting on 9 August 2017.

Key issues discussed were:

Contractors

The PSA continued to express concerns about the high number of contractors working at 73 Miller Street. The current total is 123. The Ministry's use of contractors gives the appearance of little or no change in staffing levels for the last several years but is preventing opportunities for public servants to be appointed to permanent ongoing roles.

After raising issues about a number of apparent anomalies in regard to employment practices for contractors, the PSA argued that the Ministry needed to take action to clarify the following:

- » contractors must work strictly within the terms of their contract
- » contractors must work the hours specified in their contracts
- » accurate attendance records must be maintained.

The Ministry agreed with this proposal and will prepare a memo to be circulated to all managers.

Restructure Policy and Procedures PD2013_042

The PSA raised with the Ministry that this policy is now out of date as it was written and approved before the implementation of the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*.

The Ministry advised that the policy will be updated by Workplace Relations and made a commitment to consult with the PSA. The PSA will argue that the new policy needs to refer to assignments to role under S46 of the *Government Sector Employment Act* and how this applies during restructures. To date, the PSA has not seen much evidence of the Ministry's commitment to assign members affected by restructures to at-level vacant positions in other parts of the agency.

Members can be assured that your views will be sought during this consultative process.

Social Media Policy

The PSA continues to raise the fact the Ministry of Health does not have a Social Media policy. We were originally advised that a separate policy was unnecessary as the employee's responsibilities were addressed in the Code of Conduct.

The Strategic Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Branch is currently undergoing a restructure and proposes a greater focus on social and digital communication strategies. Therefore, the PSA argues that a Social Media policy is essential to underpin these changes and clarify the responsibilities of staff.

We have also recommended that the introduction of a policy should be supported by a commitment to training.

The PSA outlined its position in our submission to the Change Management Plan for the restructure of the Strategic Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Branch.



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There was a more positive discussion about the need for a Social Media policy at this meeting and the PSA is now seeking a response from the Ministry.

Re-location to St Leonards

The Ministry referred to the Secretary's establishment of the New Ways to Work - Ministry Engagement and Collaboration Group.

It was reiterated by the Ministry that the sub-JCC group established as a consultation mechanism with unions will continue. This will be the vehicle for members to express concerns about the re-location.

However, the PSA also encourages your participation on the Secretary's group to ensure that issues of concern are fully considered. If you raise an issue at the Secretary's group which is not addressed then the matter can be pursued through the sub-JCC.

Have Your Say Survey

Following issues raised by a member, the PSA asked:

"The 2015 Have Your Say Survey identified that staff know how to report a grievance but had no faith in the process or HR." What action has the Ministry undertaken to change this perception?

The question was taken on notice and Ministry committed to providing a response. When the PSA receives this advice it will be circulated to members.

Next meeting of JCC

The next meeting of the JCC will be held on **Wednesday, 11 October 2017**. The JCC is your opportunity to raise issues of concern with management. If members have agenda items could they please contact their delegates by no later than cob Friday, 29 September 2017.

PSA members have access to advice, support and representation, either via the PSA's Member Support Centre (ph 1300 772 679) or by contacting your local delegates, the PSA's Industrial Officer or Senior Organiser.

Julie Westacott - PSA Delegate
jwest@doh.health.nsw.gov.au

John Bertacco - PSA Delegate
jbirt@doh.health.nsw.gov.au

Peter Gilfedder - PSA Delegate
pgilf@doh.health.nsw.gov.au

Carmel McKeough - Industrial Officer
cmckeough@psa.asn.au

Siobhan Callinan - Senior Organiser
scallinan@psa.asn.au

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