

OEH and NPWS restructure update

OEH were back before the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) on Thursday 31 August regarding the NPWS restructure. The PSA again raised concerns regarding the lack of consultation and information regarding the restructure.

During our last appearance, OEH agreed to provide the current and proposed area establishment. Unfortunately this was not provided. OEH stated they could not provide this information as there are over 400 movements within National Parks each year and it is very difficult to keep track of.

The IRC advised OEH that the PSA was not seeking the names of the staff that held these roles, but the actual roles. On that basis OEH are to provide the PSA with the current area establishments.

The PSA also raised concerns regarding boundaries, stating PSA delegates believe 35 boundaries are unmanageable. However, our feedback had found that 40 would be more manageable. The PSA also put to the IRC that the only way an agreement could be reached on boundary changes was if PSA delegates and Park Operations management met without industrial involvement and looked at the boundaries collectively and come to an agreement.

The IRC agreed and advised a meeting should be scheduled within the next week with PSA delegates and Park Operations management.

The PSA again raised concerns with the accuracy of the Role Descriptions including the reclassification to Clerk grades, challenging the matter expert who developed and evaluated the Role Descriptions without consulting the PSA or broader membership for input. The IRC advised that this matter would be dealt with separately.

OEH stated the fire season was due to commence and therefore the restructure needed to be carried out reasonably quickly. The IRC stated that OEH were still required to engage in proper consultation with the PSA.

In addition to actions in the IRC, questions about the current restructure were raised in Parliamentary Budget Estimates on Friday 1 September by Penny Sharpe, Shadow Minister for Environment and Heritage.

Amongst other things, Ms Sharpe questioned the current Minister for Environment, Gabrielle Upton, about funding cuts to NPWS, the loss of 246 full time staff since 2016, and the reclassification or downgrading of jobs in the current restructure.

Whilst the responses were underwhelming, PSA members can be assured that the issues in the current restructure are being progressed in the Parliament as well as the IRC.

To summarise, these are the next steps in ongoing consultation around the restructure:

1. PSA delegates and Park Operations Management will sit down collectively after the JCC on Wednesday 6 September and Thursday 7 September and try to come to a landing regarding boundaries
2. The PSA will then look at the Role Descriptions which have been affected by downgrading or being deleted
3. The PSA will continue workplace visits to engage the membership
4. Whilst continuing consultation, any action in relation to the reclassification of roles will be undertaken separately
5. OEH to provide an up-to-date Change Management Plan.

