

17 October 2017

Ministry of Health member update

Joint Consultative Committee Meeting 11 October 2017

Key issues discussed were:

Contractors and staffing update

The most concerning issue arising from the meeting was the fact the number of contractors at the Ministry has now increased to **126**. This is completely unacceptable. The Ministry is using contractors to backfill roles, undertake project work and to manage “surges in work”.

In April 2017 the NSW Auditor-General produced a report critical of the State Government’s excessive use of contractors and concluded it was not achieving value for money. Yet nearly six months after this report was issued, the Ministry now has more contractors on the payroll.

The PSA supports the Auditor-General’s findings and will continue to pursue this issue with the Ministry. Our position is that roles should be filled on a permanent basis and where staff are affected by restructures they should be assigned to other roles in the Ministry rather than contractors being recruited to backfill a vacancy.

In addition to the number of contractors, the Ministry advised that since the previous JCC there were:

- » 29 ongoing appointments
- » 45 temporary appointments, including extensions of appointments
- » 2 secondments, including an extension
- » 28 roles externally advertised
- » 1 role filled through activation of a talent pool.

Recruitment and Onboarding

Management gave a briefing about the new online recruitment and onboarding system, which goes live on 13 November 2017.

This will eliminate much of the paperwork involved in the current recruitment process. The PSA has some concern the new system may make it more difficult for a member to request a review of a promotion decision under rule 24 of the *Government Sector Employment Rules 2014*.

If members experience any difficulties with the new system you should advise both HR and your union.

Relocation to St Leonards

Members have expressed concerns that the Ministry should be setting an example in terms of the health and wellbeing of staff. In particular, members have asked if space will be provided for bicycles and showers (and shower products) at St Leonards. There is concern that if very limited space is provided for staff for permanent personal storage, they will not have sufficient space for storing products required for showering such as towels, soaps, change of clothes, and though showers may be provided it may not be practical to make use of them. Since this is not core business, it is very much a work in progress.

The Executive Director of Workplace Relations gave clear advice there will be “far more places to sit than there will be people” at St Leonards which is a departure from earlier advice the PSA was given and contrary to the directions being taken by other government agencies.



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This is welcome news, but as the move will now not occur until 2020 it is early days.

The Ministry has also found the resources for two new executive positions largely dedicated to the relocation and implementing “new ways of work”.

The Executive Director advised the Ministry would seek to convene a meeting of the sub-JCC group established as a consultation vehicle about the relocation. When the PSA receives a proposed date and time, we will seek input from members about their concerns and agenda items.

The PSA encourages members to participate in the relocation process and to check what the Ministry is saying on the mintranet.

Grievance process

The PSA and members note with great concern that the Your Say Survey Results revealed that staff having confidence in grievance process dropped from 36 per cent to 31 per cent.

The Ministry reiterated steps that have been taken which include:

- » defining what bullying is
- » defining what a grievance is
- » defining what is acceptable behaviour in the Ministry
- » values charter
- » leadership charter
- » training in performance management
- » coaching.

Our response was that this is all well and good but these initiatives followed the 2015 survey and there are still clearly problems in relation to grievances which need to be addressed. We were advised that a program of work is still being developed in relation to the 2017 survey.

The PSA expressed the view that there is a problem when the organisation investigates itself following a grievance being lodged as there is immediate defensiveness and unwillingness to face up to problems in the workplace. There is also a lack of transparency.

The PSA shares members’ concerns about the grievance process in the Ministry. If you are thinking of lodging a grievance, it is strongly recommended you have a discussion with one of the PSA’s industrial officers in the first instance.

The PSA notes the new Deputy Secretary for People, Culture and Governance will shortly commenced duty at the Ministry. The PSA will raise its concerns about the grievance process with the new Deputy Secretary who is tasked with changing and improving the culture of the organisation.

Anti-bullying management advisors

Members noted the *Prevention and Management of Workplace Bullying Policy PD20011_018* which states on page 2 that “Anti Bullying Management Advisors are responsible: providing information and coaching to managers on effective bullying complaints management”. It was identified that there are no such advisors in the Ministry.



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This appointment of anti-bullying management Advisors arose from a recommendation in the Garling Report.

The PSA was advised these officers were never appointed to the Ministry; however there were appointments in the Local Health Districts and Ambulance Service.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the JCC will be held on 6 December 2017. If members have matters they wish to place on the agenda they should please contact their delegates no later than 24 November, 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
jbart@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

Help maintain a strong union voice. Ask your colleagues to stand with you by joining the PSA.

