

29 November 2017

## PSA recommences consultations with the Office of Children's Guardian (OCG)

On 13 November, after agreeing to consultation Terms of Reference, the PSA's recently elected delegates together with the industrial officer, met with the newly appointed NSW Children's Guardian, Janet Schorer and OCG Director, Liz McGee.

The PSA requested a number of standing agenda items for our future quarterly joint consultations, including workplace health and safety (WH&S), current and upcoming vacancies; and labour hire staffing numbers. This was agreed by the Guardian. We also proposed the quarterly meeting dates for 2018.

The PSA stated that workplace health and safety must be a high priority at the OCG since it encompasses a broad range of issues including bullying, unmanageable workloads/understaffing and potential vicarious trauma from the type of work staff are required to do, especially the Risk Assessors.

The PSA stated that the OCG should re-establish a compliant structure for staff to address WH&S concerns.

We indicated that Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) should be elected and trained, as soon as practicable so that WH&S issues can be raised through proper processes and effectively addressed.

The Guardian agreed to this as a priority and to cooperating with PSA efforts to educate staff on the role of HSRs and the obligations and entitlements under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)*.

### Vacancies and labour hire

On our request, the Director provided the PSA with a brief report on current vacancies and labour-hire staff numbers filling temporary vacancies. The PSA reiterated that where there is a demonstrated demand for provision of public services, we believe these services are best provided by skilled and experienced public servants in secure ongoing employment.

The Guardian indicated that the OCG is undertaking a human resources review conducted by a consulting firm including forums for each team to provide feedback on their current workloads, systems and processes, as well as to identify staffing needs.

### Transparency in recruitment and 'acting up' opportunities

The PSA raised concerns about a 'tap on the shoulder' culture whereby promotion and 'acting up' opportunities appear to have been based on favouritism rather than equity and merit. We called for transparency in the Expression of Interest (EOI) and talent pool recruitment processes citing examples where this had appeared lacking.

We asked for a commitment from management for better communication both before and after these processes - providing information to staff on their eligibility and if requested, detailed feedback on what they need to do to be successful in obtaining future roles. We reiterated that 'acting up opportunities' form part of the skilled labour force's professional development together with training and support.



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### Performance development and training

The PSA stated we've received feedback from our members that their Performance Development Plans (PDPS) have not been maintained and are out of date, useless or non-existent.

We believe that an employee's Performance/Professional Development Plan should be a working document easily accessible to staff and contain meaningful and reviewable information agreed between the line manager and employee.

A useful PDP will record not only organisational KPIs but also the employee's identified training and support needs and/or their desire for 'acting up opportunities' in the next 6-12 month period.

The Guardian agreed that as part of the current HR consultation, PDPs will be revitalised and that further information and/or training will be provided to staff for the purpose of performance development plans.

### Workload/process improvement for Risk Assessors processing backlog

PSA delegates presented detailed feedback to management on the current workload of Risk Assessors being required to prioritise a backlog on the system. Members in the Risk Assessment team conveyed a sense of overwhelming concern over the potential risk that something will be missed. The current and what looks like on going, workload will require some reprieve very soon – either by additional staffing and/or improved processes.

The Guardian is aware of and acknowledged the situation. There was some discussion about past integrated team approaches. The Guardian said that the HR consultant would meet with the Risk Assessors and other teams to record their feedback against process data already gathered to see where process improvements can be made. This was acknowledged as a positive step along with the move of all staff together onto one floor. However, it was reiterated that the vacant position in the Risk Assessment Team should also be filled as soon as possible.

### Ongoing consultation

Overall, it was a respectful and constructive meeting and represented a good start to ongoing joint PSA/OCG consultations. We believe that as we move into 2018, we are well positioned to represent member interests and concerns to the Guardian and OCG management.

### PSA Staff

**Katy Ambler** - Industrial Officer

**Marianne Ledic** - Organiser

**Mary Jo Costache** - Organiser

You can support the work of the PSA and your local delegates by asking your colleagues to [JOIN](#) their union.

If you have any questions about this bulletin please email: [FACSOrganising@psa.asn.au](mailto:FACSOrganising@psa.asn.au).

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