

Legal Aid – Early Appropriate Guilty Plea reforms

As many members are aware, the Early Appropriate Guilty Plea Reforms introduced by the NSW Government will come into effect at the end of April next year. This will mean significant changes to how Legal Aid's Crime Division will be run. Legal Aid has also provided the PSA with a final EAGP proposal which can be found [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

The PSA held a members' meeting on 29 November 2017 and subsequently sent a letter to Legal Aid detailing member concerns about the Crime restructure. Read the letter [HERE](#).

Members concerns include:

- » the need for ongoing structured consultation with employees via the PSA
 - » the potential for an increased workload
 - » other Work, Health & Safety implications arising from such a significant change to service delivery
 - » the changes to roles, and the impact this may have upon highly specialised staff (including deskilling)
 - » the need for ongoing training, support and professional development for all staff, including supervisors
 - » the need for transparent recruitment practices
 - » the impact of such changes to Flexible Working Practices and on staff requiring reasonable adjustments.
 - » the impact on staff working part-time, many of whom have carers' responsibilities
- » the need for ongoing consultation and monitoring of the impact of changes on members as the Early Appropriate Guilty Plea reforms are rolled out.

The PSA has requested Legal Aid establish a working party with the PSA to ensure ongoing consultation throughout this process.

In response to the PSA's letter (found [HERE](#)), Legal Aid:

- » is prepared to meet with the PSA. However, the PSA will follow up to determine a more structured arrangement
- » agreed that any increase in workload and the implementation of the EAGP reforms will be closely monitored. Legal Aid has sought an additional 12-16 Legal Officer positions (mostly for regional areas)
- » emphasised the changes are designed to increase the skills of all staff
- » expressed a commitment to Flexible Working arrangements. However, in general, the PSA notes Flexible Working arrangements are not necessarily accommodated for by Legal Aid, even when proposals from staff are reasonable
- » specified there will be training and support offered to members from February 2018 to April 2018
- » will invite the PSA to participate in a working group tasked with increasing confidence in Legal Aid's recruitment processes.



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PSA delegates and PSA staff will meet with Legal Aid management on 18 December 2017 at the Peak Consultative Committee. The PSA will continue to pursue member concerns in this forum. In relation to the above issues surrounding the EAGP reforms, the PSA will push for specific detail from Legal Aid on what it has agreed to, such as the structure of consultation, and the recruitment working group. Also, it is critical the PSA be represented on the EAGP implementation group. This has not occurred to date.

What can you do?

- » Give a copy of this bulletin to your colleagues.
- » Print this bulletin and put it up on your notice board.
- » Ask a colleague to join the PSA.
- » Get involved as your Area Contact.
- » Get involved by being on the Legal Aid DC

