

Office of the Children's Guardian – PSA consultation

On 24 September 2018, PSA staff and delegates met with the Guardian, Janet Schorer and Director, Liz Mc Gee from the NSW Office of Children's Guardian (OCG), for our quarterly Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) meeting to discuss member issues and concerns.

Changes to the Policy Team

On 10 September 2018, the OCG Director contacted the PSA via email stating: *The OCG is undertaking a review and restructure of our policy functions based on a need to better resource this function within the OCG.*

The PSA immediately asked this be added to the agenda for the upcoming JCC in order for the OCG to explain their intentions and arrange meaningful consultation with the PSA on the matter.

The PSA would expect a draft Change Management Plan, if it became clear that proposed changes impacted more than a few people.

The policy restructure was the first item on the JCC agenda on 24 September.

The Guardian announced that the OCG intended to grow the Policy Team to increase its position and influence in the organisation.

She explained the intended functions of a new Policy Team in light of Royal Commission recommendations, to provide advice to senior management to develop the OCG's policy positions on important matters such as child safety, ministerial work and national research.

The Guardian explained that the Policy Team has had three personnel and the agency intends to expand it to five roles, comprising four grade 9/10s who report to one grade 11/12 Policy Manager.

One position will be a targeted Aboriginal position and there will be an analyst role.

Whilst the PSA always welcomes the creation of more ongoing roles, we questioned whether the agency has received more funding to be able to do this. The funding question received a non-committal response but was answered to the effect that it is a matter of changing priorities.

The PSA has been informed that of the three Policy Team members, one successfully applied for new ongoing role in a new team and the other two after being offered the opportunity to be matched, elected to take voluntary redundancy.

The PSA acknowledges that the two affected staff members were given consideration and privacy in being consulted first and OCG management held off making any announcements concerning the policy team until after the JCC.

Despite that, most of the information provided to the PSA represents good news for our members, the PSA strongly reiterated our dissatisfaction with the OCG's omission to consult, pursuant to Clause 65.1 of the *Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Award 2009* requiring that:

There shall be effective consultation, as set out in the Consultation Arrangements Policy and Guidelines document, on matters of mutual



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interest and concern, both formal and informal, between management and the Association.

The PSA stated that this is precisely the type of matter over which we expect to be consulted prior to any significant decisions or changes being made.

The PSA indicated we expect to be included in future communications and decisions affecting this team as recruitment progresses and the new team's function impacts the rest of the organisation. The Guardian agreed.

KPIs for Risk Assessors

The PSA conveyed member concerns that the new KPIs will be utilised to performance manage staff.

We raised concerns over the fact that Risk Assessors will need to attend duty days – usually 1-2 per month and that the complexity of assessments can vary.

Management assured the PSA that the Team Leader will be required to allocate the workload fairly, with a mix of simpler and more complex assessments spread across the team.

Workload and complexity of assessments will be taken into account in any given month, if the KPI of 10 assessments is not met.

Management provided assurance that the purpose of the KPI is to provide an aspirational guideline of reasonable expectation concerning what fulltime staff can do.

The OCG intends to use this as a guide to support flexible working arrangements including staff working from home.

The PSA indicated we would support staff being given greater access to flexible working arrangements.

Management also indicated the measure will provide an indicator to support increased staffing requests, if the workload increases beyond a reasonable quantity.

The PSA has been assured that the intention is not to performance manage people, rather it will be incumbent on the Team Leader to distribute the risk assessments fairly across levels of complexity and will form the basis of an argument for staff not to be given unreasonable workloads.

The PSA will continue to monitor this and hold management to this commitment.

Risk Assessor Matrix

The Risk Assessor Matrix is a tool that has been developed with some consultation to assist the Risk Assessment team to make consistent high quality decisions.

This new tool is currently unreferenced and lacks the research sources on which it is based.

The PSA has conveyed that if this is to be a useful and valid tool to assist Risk Assessors, it must be informed by current research.

The Guardian confirmed that this is a 'work in progress'.



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The document has been live for 6 months and continues to be a living document, reviewed regularly and adjusted to incorporate academic peer reviewed material.

It will be informed by the OCG's Expert Advisory Panel and is open to inputs from the Risk Assessors themselves.

The review date for the Risk Assessors Matrix is coming up on 31 October 2018.

Senior Clinical Assessor role

After the PSA raised concerns about this role which has been trialled for the last 6 months, the role description has altered slightly.

PSA members were concerned at having to undertake another form of supervision from this person, when they are already supervised by their Team Leader.

They also did not wish to take clinical advice from a person not registered with a professional organization, for example, a registered psychologist.

The Guardian has confirmed that the Team Leader will continue to supervise the Risk Assessors and this role will not undertake direct supervision, nor will the role provide clinical advice.

Instead, the role will work alongside the quality assurance role to engage in discussions with Risk Assessors about best practice. It will also function to advise senior management concerning risk assessment decisions being taken by the agency.

The PSA identified that the semantics of naming the role as a "clinical" role is confusing for staff and we suggested changing the title from clinical to something like Senior Practice Support.

If the role in reality will provide professional practice support to the Risk Assessors, we will encourage our members to utilise it as such.

To ease concern and confusion, the PSA encouraged the OCG to provide further clarification to staff about how the role is expected to operate. The Guardian agreed to do this.

PSA WIN: Professional development and 'Acting up Opportunities'

Following representations by the PSA, long term 'acting up opportunities' (3 months or more) are now being advertised as internal EOIs.

The PSA relayed however that members still have concerns that the same people seem to repeatedly access short term acting up opportunities whilst others miss out.

We asked HR to review the process of filling short-term acting up opportunities and consider devising more equitable ways to distribute these. We recommended an EOI be posted for acting up opportunities of six weeks or more and an email be sent to those who have indicated they want an acting up opportunity, letting staff know when short-term opportunities are coming up.

This has been taken under advisement by the Director.



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Management confirmed that 12 month talent pools are created from current EOIs, out of which staff can be approached, when an opportunity to act up arises.

The PSA encourages members to be proactive in communicating to management (through PDPs and EOIs) your desire to act up.

Further discussion concerning learning and development opportunities lead to the Guardian conveying her support for staff “shadowing” someone in another area of the organisation and for “community engagement” opportunities – such as attending conferences and community forums.

The PSA will fully support members to access these professional development opportunities.

Workplace health and safety (WH&S)

WH&S is now a standing agenda item on the JCC.

PSA delegate Paul Townsend and Health and Safety Representative (HSR) advised management that an inspection is due for the new office premises in Strawberry Hills and this will be undertaken in the next fortnight for report back to management.

PSA Staff

Katy Ambler - Industrial Officer

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.

If you have moved home or work location, or you have changed your contacts, please update your membership details [HERE](#).

