

Transport for NSW Reform - Transport Secretary Says 'Nothing Up My Sleeve' – SMH and GIPA Says Otherwise

Most of you would be aware of the *Sydney Morning Herald* story on Thursday 13 June 2019 regarding transport 'options' for the newly re-elected Government. A number of those options were rather disturbing for the continued employment security of the current TfNSW and newly amalgamated RMS workforce.

Members would also be aware that the PSA and combined unions have been consulting over the dissolution of the RMS and amalgamation of those functions into TfNSW proper. This begins with the lift-and-shift process to give all business units cover and reporting to a Deputy Secretary within TfNSW. The PSA and combined unions have already stated their concerns over the inefficient and ineffective reporting structures. The likelihood is that the divisional structure provided as of 1 April 2019 will see further change into the future.

The PSA and combined unions have entertained countless discussions with members of the TfNSW Executive seeking information on the direction of TfNSW after this lift-and-shift phase. The PSA and combined unions were repeatedly told that there were no plans for the agency post 1 July 2019 and that decisions will be made as a part of this co-design process. It would appear there are most certainly options; some that pose more concerns than others.

The PSA is most disappointed by the substance of the material being touted as options without the input from the thousands of stakeholders employed to deliver this massive infrastructure spend. The concern is that TfNSW only wants to involve the unions in limited matters and to be totally left out of the big decisions. These are not just run-of-the-mill activities; they are wholesale reforms that place the jobs of our members in jeopardy; curtail services to the public at a period where those patronage rates are expanding rapidly or; place additional financial burdens upon NSW taxpayers who are already suffering from wage stagnation.

Alternatively, the NSW Government can simply decide to subsidise the extra billions of dollars for public transport provision over that period of time. After all, the payment for the provision of services comes directly from taxpayers doesn't it? With the current 'user pays' Government ideology, this seems highly unlikely.

Through our current disputes process oversighted by the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW (IRC), the PSA and combined unions sought the TfNSW response from the *Sydney Morning Herald* GIPA application. TfNSW agreed that the contents would be provided to unions and was received on 17 June 2019. The PSA and combined unions also sought for any further information on the development of the divisional model and the appointment of a consultant to review the operational structures.

The PSA and combined unions met with the Transport Secretary again on Monday 17 June 2019 where he provided some information on what had been sought from the beginning:

- » what is the plan for TfNSW?
- » what are the presiding factors (cost and service) that will affect future decisions?
- » the workforce demography and contingent labour spend.
- » the future funding cuts/efficiency dividends.
- » what are the future knowledge requirements for staff as part of 'evolving transport'?

The only matter not touched on was how staff and unions will be involved in those processes going forward.

It seems that maybe the PSA and the combined unions should be doing their consulting on TfNSW reform with the *Sydney Morning Herald* instead. After all, they are the ones with all the information. The PSA has put it on



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TfNSW that they need to be open, transparent and willing to entertain the proper processes for effective consultation. Anything else is just lip service.

What Else Should I Be Aware of? TSS Reform Update

There has been considerable reform in the shared services sphere of late. One of the major reforms include the procurement branches where there have been significant job losses proposed. The most disturbing aspects of the reform has been the decision not to directly appoint to positions where there are more jobs than affected staff applying for roles at grade. As part of this process, some candidates have been considered unsuitable.

Why Is This Bad?

This provides scope for the agency to re-prosecute the argument of merit for staff already identified as working within a capability set. Without agreement on direct appointments, the PSA and combined unions have subsequently disputed those recruitment decisions in the IRC. A Report back in the IRC is scheduled to take place on 24 June 2019. It is important to note: further instances of these assessments have also been challenged in current reforms within the RMS.

But I Thought That 'People Were at the Heart'?

It would appear that some people are more at the heart than others and that the agency is seeking to cleanse its workforce using these recruitment practices as performance management via the back door. Obviously this is where staff have been let down by TfNSW HR practices and it is abundantly clear that PDR processes are distinctly lacking in the 'development' portion of the procedure. Put simply, this is an unacceptable all care and no responsibility argument from TfNSW.

The creation of the capability framework provides greater workforce mobility options for TfNSW going into

massive reform – the *quid pro quo* means there is much better capacity to redeploy and transfer staff in order to negate some of the negative consequences of restructuring.

Lift-And-Shift Processes – Consultation

The PSA and combined unions thank all staff who have provided input on the reform piece. Already there have been considerable modifications to the proposed divisional structures as a consequence of involving staff in the process. However, it must be recognised that these processes are simply the calm before the storm and that significant and disruptive restructuring will follow post 1 July 2019. The PSA has attended almost all of the staff briefings as part of our commitment to members and has provided TfNSW with the information gleaned from the membership.

The PSA and combined unions continue to seek information on what positions are mirrored within each agency; who will be affected by reform and; whether any members or groups of members have been left out of the process.

Post 1 July 2019 Reform - What are the Concerns?

Pay and Conditions Disparity

The PSA has identified the pay and condition disparity for like roles, as a challenge that will require addressing. Whilst the current Awards will continue to set out the terms and conditions for staff employed by TfNSW and the ex-RMS group there is little understanding of what this will look like into the future. The PSA and combined unions have already flagged that having staff sitting beside each other on different terms and conditions is an undesirable process into the future, that is, post TfNSW/RMS reform.



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Capability Assessment Disparity Between Like Roles in TfNSW & RMS

Like the pay and conditions disparity, there have been a number of roles where the role expectations are similar if not, the same, however capabilities are addressed differently. The initial identification is those Senior Executive Service roles. The PSA and combined unions have already sought to establish a working party with TfNSW to address these issues with the assistance of members and combined unions.

Poor Cousins

Without adopting processes to minimise the negativities surrounding like roles and the issues of disparity, there is a concern that RMS staff could be considered as not meeting suitability for new roles or being uncompetitive with TfNSW staff in future restructuring. Alternatively, paying less for the same roles could be considered as favourable by TfNSW especially when budgets are tight. Either way, there is scope for groups to be negatively affected by the differences.

Inconsistent Application of PDRs

PDRs are touted as a development tool for staff. However, it has all too often been used as a tick and lift exercise, or a stick to pseudo performance manage staff. As far as the PSA is concerned, the PDR process lacks rigour and the development functions are lacking. Despite this, the PDR processes will require alignment and further progress on the development procedures, that is, what can staff expect as part of development within TfNSW.

TfNSW Take Over

Whilst TfNSW secretaries have been conscious to say that it is business as usual there has been an underlying tone of working new ways as part of the TfNSW/RMS amalgamation reforms. What those new ways of working are, have not be qualified.

Members have provided anecdotal evidence of TfNSW representatives having a negative mindset with respect to the capabilities of RMS staff. The PSA must hold TfNSW to account when they said that this process is to get the best of both worlds through this reform process.

Reading this and not a member? Now more than ever, we need to be strong, united and active in our workplaces. To [JOIN](#) or get involved, contact your union today!

