4 July 2019

Meeting between the PSA and management, Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission

On 1 July 2019 the PSA discussed several significant issues with the CEO at the Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commission (GWIC) and Matthew Tutt, Director, Legal Services.

The following is a summary of these discussions.

Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)

Management has agreed to trial a JCC process. The JCC is the consultation mechanism between the employer and the PSA.

Whilst the PSA will provide a draft Terms of Reference for this process, essentially it will be regular, possibly quarterly, meetings with management, PSA representatives (delegates) and the appropriate industrial representative(s) from the PSA.

The meetings will discuss agency-wide issues to seek positive resolution, as well as aiming to ensure the PSA and its members are properly consulted on matters relating to their conditions of work.

An initial meeting is intended for the first week in August. The PSA welcomes members providing agenda items for that meeting.

Customer service team

We were advised that employees in this team have been asked if they wish to volunteer for overtime on the weekend to catch up with re-registrations and other backlogs. The PSA reiterates that staff should be appropriately recompensed for work outside of hours and that where staff do not wish to take part, they should not have to do so.

Section 8 of the *Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Award 2009* addresses your overtime entitlements.

Excessive hours

Some members have expressed concerns about the length of their work day, particularly when attending race meetings. The PSA raised this issue advising that, in particular, travelling long distances home from a meeting can be unsafe. We are advised there is a Safe Driver Policy and that when appropriate, staff can stay in accommodation overnight.

We were further made aware that Inspectors may be involved in major investigations that result in long days. Time off in lieu is also available as an option to address excessive work.

Mr Tutt offered to meet with the PSA in person to provide examples of rostering. As well as taking up this offer the PSA also seeks information from affected members that we can discuss with management. Management advised that it would be fine with us providing examples in confidence if members did not wish to provide their names.

AUTHORISED BY STEWART LITTLE, GENERAL SECRETARY,
PUBLIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION OF NSW, 160 CLARENCE STREET SYDNEY

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This is an issue which the PSA wishes to further explore with its members.

Abuse and complaints from participants

The PSA raises concerns raised by members relating to the need for GWIC to:

- Protect staff from abuse (including physical) from participants
- Addressing allegations and complaints for participants against staff with appropriate time frames and ensuring procedural fairness. Within this it is important to find measures to address vexatious complaints effectively and in a way that prevents undue stress to the affected staff member
- Measures to address inappropriate comments, the propagation of rumours and false comments from participants against employees of the agency as well as the agency itself
- Mechanisms to support staff relating to the above.

Management recognises the need for more "Aggressive Customer Training" and in dealing with behaviours of participants as well as looking at remote worker arrangements.

It advised that actions they can take against participants include suspension or disqualification from the industry but that they need evidence to be able to establish the allegation on the "balance of probabilities".

Management encourages staff to report incidents immediately and supports the PSA's view that incident reports should be put in. They said they refer affected staff to counselling and were looking at a more formal one-on-one process for debriefing staff.

The PSA advised that currently staff did not feel supported and that matters were taking too long to address. Staff need to not feel unduly threatened by vexatious complaints from disgruntled participants.

Management advised that they were open to hearing back from staff and the PSA about what staff want and need. It was recognised that there needs to be an ongoing discussion on this matter. The PSA seeks the views of members and recognises that this is a very important issue.

Work health and safety

Workers' health and safety should be paramount in everyone's mind and in everyday actions.

Risk assessments and planning should be a pre-requisite of day-to-day work. Risk assessments can assist in avoiding or minimising potential fatigue situations or violent incidents, for example.

As stated above, incident reports should be filled in, not only for actual occurrences, but also for near-misses. This is one of the ways to lessen danger in the workplace. The PSA advised management that they would urge staff to routinely submit their forms. Management accepts this as a valuable action.

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The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 states:

"84 Right of worker to cease unsafe work

A worker may cease, or refuse to carry out, work if the worker has a reasonable concern that to carry out the work would expose the worker to a serious risk to the worker's health or safety, emanating from an immediate or imminent exposure to a hazard."

In such an instance the employee is obliged to advise their manager of their action as soon as practicable and remain available to carry out suitable alternative work.

Please contact Nick Player, Industrial Officer, on nplayer@psa.asn.au or contact your local delegate if you wish to raise a concern.

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!

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