

October JCC – NSW Ombudsman

The most recent JCC between Ombudsman NSW and the PSA was held on 17 October.

The PSA raised several issues on behalf of members.

Employment Related Child Protection Division (ERCPD)

The PSA sought clarity regarding the move of ERCPD to the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG). We still await the passing of legislation for this move. Ombudsman and OCG are developing an MOU regarding the transfer. Existing advice is that the fit out for staff, at Queens Square, is anticipated to be done by 29 November. From past experience we would imagine that to be optimistic. Until that does happen staff will remain based in their current office.

Staff will be under GovConnect once they move over but until then (even if delays occur) they will remain under existing corporate systems for pay and leave-related issues.

The PSA was told existing commitments made by both agencies remain. Temporary contracts will continue until 8 January 2020.

We reiterated our view that any temporary officer who has met the relevant requirements for direct placement under the Government Sector Employment (GSE) Act should be considered for permanency. If you believe you fit that category you should make contact with your employer and advise the PSA if you are unsatisfied with their response.

The PSA sought advice about five roles it understood were currently vacant and were not going over. It was advised these were not ongoing roles.

People Matters Survey

The PSA raised concerns about the downward trend in many key areas including –

- Communication
- Bullying
- Organisational Change

Management advised that it was methodically working towards developing a strategic plan which will incorporate results of the People Matters Survey and improve the culture. It has recently hired an interim communications manager. It is also looking towards a one-team one vision strategy, having staff morning teas, health and wellbeing forums and regular division meetings. It also wishes to apply an open door policy for executives.

The PSA expressed the view that matters were significant now and particularly pointed out that the perception of bullying had increased from 34 per cent to 39 per cent. Management advised that it had no active bullying/harassment claims and suggested that perhaps the concern was that staff may not have a clear perception of the definition of bullying.

The PSA advised:

- Staff may not be comfortable raising bullying complaints with management
- The comment about understanding the definition of bullying does not account for the increase
- There is no denying the serious concern that there is, at the least, a significant and growing perception of being bullied in the office.



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The PSA is concerned that significant concerns from an extremely negative and concerning survey are not being properly acknowledged by the office. We do not accept that these issues can be explained simply by the recent restructuring of the organisation.

Particularly in regard to bullying we urge members to make contact with the PSA if they require assistance or advice.

Restructure

We were advised that as a result of the restructure two people were offered and accepted voluntary redundancies.

The PSA advised management that members had indicated a dissatisfaction with their preferences relating to matching not being considered. The Director Corporate advised that she went through much of the feedback and requests herself and gave it proper consideration. Some was able to be taken on board but not all. We ask that further consideration occur from management as to how information is communicated.

We raised concerns relating to Role Descriptions and reporting lines and the lack of clarity regarding responsibilities by managers. Often there are different views on who reports to who and who approves leave and any other requests. Along with this we are concerned that people may have been placed in supervisory roles without appropriate training. Management agreed to look at and clarify reporting lines and advised that leadership training is pending.

We expressed major concerns and frustration regarding the Assessment team. We had raised early on in the process that this would be an obvious area for work overload. Unsurprisingly our comments have been validated. This is further exacerbated by there being current vacancies in the team.

Management advised that rather than hearing the perception of things from the PSA it needed evidence. We were advised that someone reported that they did not have enough work.

Management also urged that staff should contact them with such concerns. The PSA expects that management should seriously take on board comments from the union regarding its members. But we are entirely prepared to provide further information to management to demonstrate what we already believe to be obvious.

We will seek a meeting with our members in the near future to discuss these issues and how we further bring them to the attention of management.

In the meantime we remind our members that you are paid for 35 hours a week. Your hours may vary within the flexible working hours' guidelines but you should not work for nothing. There will be more impact from the budget in coming months. It is time to stop gifting the employer and government your valuable time.

Finally, the PSA would like to thank your delegate team for all the good work they are doing for the members. We urge that you too show your appreciation and support.

