

## DCJ Communities update: PSA win for temporary staff, plans for a gradual return to offices and more

### Covid-19 and return to offices

PSA Delegates and Staff recently met with the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to discuss COVID-19 conditions and how DCJ is looking at moving forward with restrictions easing and some workers starting to return to offices.

DCJ advised strategies and arrangements that are in place would continue until at least July. There will be flexibility for Districts to make some adjustments, based on their local needs and circumstances. There is no one rule that applies to all.

It is expected that staff will continue to work from home (WFH), where this is possible. DCJ confirmed that most WFH arrangements will remain in place until at least July and possibly later.

### PSA win for temporary staff at the Helpline

The PSA raised concerns for 43 contract caseworkers working at the Helpline whose contracts were due to expire at the end of June 2020. DCJ advised it will renew these contracts for a further six months ensuring they are gainfully employed at least until December. This is a great win by our Delegates at the Helpline.

### Improvement plans and unsatisfactory performance

The PSA made a request to postpone any Performance Improvement Plans until after staff return to the office, due to concerns about the ability to support staff remotely at this stage. DCJ understands the issue but as it impacts on the whole of the Department and Public Sector, it is looking further into it. DCJ advised it is not aware of any new formal Performance Management matters since the WFH arrangements were put in place.

### DCJ reinforces ability to accrue Flex when working from home

DCJ reinforced that there have been no changes to current Flexible Working Hours Agreements and that this information remains on the Intranet. DCJ has asked the PSA to let it know of areas where policy may not be consistently applied. Please raise this in the first instance with your PSA Delegate.

You can read centralised DCJ advice on this [HERE](#):

### Excess leave balances

DCJ is looking at how to best manage this issue. It understands staff are currently not in a position to take leave and that many have cancelled plans. The PSA has advocated for managing excess leave protocols to be put on hold until staff are able to travel. At this time no employee is being directed to take time off due to excess leave balances.

### Workload and child protection reports

The PSA raised that there is expected to be a significant spike in child protection reports now that children have returned to school and asked what strategies to deal with this have been put in place to manage the expected spike in reports, both at the Helpline and in the Districts.





24 June 2020

## DCJ Communities update: PSA win for temporary staff, plans for a gradual return to offices and more

The PSA highlighted the fact that casework staff are already working to, and in many cases beyond capacity. PSA pointed out, that based on its own Caseworker Dashboard, some Districts are seeing 90 per cent more children subject to ROSH reports than four years ago, with negligible increase in caseworker numbers. DCJ has stated there are contingency plans in place for the Helpline and that Districts have to work with what resources they have.

Workload is a significant and genuine issue in Community Services and the PSA advises all members to utilise the workload planner. For your own health and safety, do not forfeit Flex hours by working excessive hours. Further updates on the workload planner will be distributed shortly.

### Do you know someone who still needs to join the PSA?

You can support the work of the PSA and delegates to get better outcomes for everyone just by asking your colleagues to [JOIN](#) the PSA.

### How to contact the DCJ Communities Team at the PSA

You can contact the DCJ Communities Team at the PSA via [communities@psa.asn.au](mailto:communities@psa.asn.au).

If you have an individual workplace issue or require specific advice, please contact PSA Organiser or the Member Support Centre on 1300 772 679

