

Department Regional NSW (DRNSW) Update

Member Representation – DRNSW Departmental Committee Development

DRNSW was created in April 2020 behind a backdrop of Bushfires as well as flooding rains and a breaking COVID-19 crisis. Subsequently, the ability to formalise representative structures has been somewhat complicated by the Administrative changes and the work from home arrangements.

In previous bulletins to members, the PSA highlighted the need to develop more comprehensive delegates structures within DRNSW that provided for proper representation of our members and your interests.

The PSA is reliant on our members to provide the substance of the issues and goings on in DRNSW at the coal face in order to properly represent those interests.

These representative structures are being finalised now and a call for delegates to the new PSA DRNSW Departmental Committee will be made once they are approved by the PSA Executive.

Regional Hubs - Voluntary Relocations of Sydney Based Roles & DRNSW Accommodation Strategy

It was reported that there are staff who have already provided some tentative interest in relocation and the DRNSW Secretary has already made his relocation intentions clear. However, for members there is a rather large sticking point – that of compensation.

It is argued by DRNSW that as the relocations on offer to Sydney based staff are voluntary, the Transferred Employees Compensation Award (TECA) does not apply. DRNSW has provided the PSA with their first constructions of the compensation package on offer to staff who relocate and there continue to be discussions between the parties on those elements.

The PSA was interested to understand what, if any, changes to the DRNSW accommodation strategy would take place as consequence of the Regional Hubs decision. The PSA was informed that DRNSW was more interested in the potential rationalisation of office accommodation in regional areas rather than any closure. However, the concern is that with the work from home working well, there is further scope to reduce the number of office locations into the future.

Staff Survey On Working Arrangement Due to the COVID-19 Response

The PSA has asked for and DRNSW have advised the intention to survey DRNSW staff on the working arrangements during the COVID-19 response. The questions of workplace flexibility post COVID-19 will require input from our members. We want to know from you what worked what didn't. This is part of a bigger piece of work that looks at flexibility arrangements for staff in DRNSW and the greater public service.

New FLEXibility Pilot

The PSA had a number of discussions previously with DPIE about the adoption of a system of compressed working hours. This was primarily for members with caring responsibilities but also



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those individuals who were working in a manner that required long hours often in regional settings that included considerable travel. DPIE at the time was reluctant to entertain because of the changes required in systems to accommodate those work practices i.e. leave accruals etc. Without agreement from DPIE for Local Arrangements, there was an effective stalemate.

However, DRNSW has teamed up with the Public Service Commission to pilot a program of flexibility named the Time Sheet & Flex Reform Pilot. An important distinction between compressed hours and this pilot is that there are no changes in the accruals of leave (sick and annual) and only the ability to accrue more flex days (or hours) over the period. The pilot is to be trialled in several DRNSW branches including DPI Fisheries and Public Works Advisory over a 12-week period 3 August to 23 October.

Whilst there are a number of benefits to members associated to the pilot, there are also some concerns which will need to be monitored.

What's Good?

The ability to input hours into a timesheet that actually reflects the times worked by individual staff members.

- » The ability to accrue extra days' flex and effectively work a pattern of a 4-day week.
- » The ability to accommodate some caring responsibilities into the working day i.e. pick-up and drop off of school aged children whilst a number of staff members are working from home.

- » The ability to accommodate regional travel and long work days to accommodate certain programs.

What's Not So Good?

- » The concern that this continues the process of blurring the lines between what is work and what is outside of work - especially so at this point in time when work is often just one room away.
- » The fatigue concern that to obtain extra flex days, staff members must work on average at least 8.75hr/day.
- » The potential decreased access to other entitlements for working unsociable hours i.e overtime, shift penalties or travel time.
- » The need to be available for more hours in the day and the artificial expansion of business hours.
- » Flex is at the discretion of the Manager, so a 4-day week is not guaranteed.

Inclusion into the pilot is purely voluntary and the PSA will continue to monitor and discuss the particular controls with DRNSW as it progresses.

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<https://www.psa.asn.au/join>

