

## Department of Customer Service: Peak Joint Consultative Committee update

Your local delegates and union officials met with the Department on 21 August for the quarterly Joint Consultative Committee.

At the meeting the following matters were discussed:

### COVID-19 & Mental Health

The Secretary provided an update on COVID-19 and the Department's approach to mental health during this difficult time. The Department is running roadshows to introduce the DCS Connect Strategy. Quarterly pulse surveys are being implemented to encourage staff to feel they have more input into what the Department is doing. The Department spoke about the #helpingyoubalance campaign and advised the PSA that EAPs utilisation rates have increased from approximately 5 per cent to 8.1 per cent. In its view, this is in line with a preventative, rather than reactive, strategy to mental health.

The PSA would like to remind members that with the current working arrangements, it is vitally important to maintain your mental health. Physical isolation and remote work can be difficult. Traditional working arrangements allow a degree of separation between the stressors of work and home life. However, there is an increased risk of these work stressors affecting members in their own home due to consistent remote work. The PSA would encourage members to talk to their managers if they are feeling mentally fatigued. You can also contact the PSA if you feel you are not receiving adequate support. We encourage you to seek the assistance of a confidential consultation with a counsellor from the Employee's Assistant Program (EAP), as well as seeing your doctor if you feel your mental health is being impacted.

### Contingent Labour and Recruitment

The Department advised that it is making efforts to reduce contingent labour. The current rate of contingent labour is 8.8 per cent, much of which was due to temporary increases of work in Service NSW, in digital space transitions and in bushfire recovery. The PSA will continue to monitor these levels.

The PSA raised member concerns about fairness in recent hiring processes, particularly in the People & Culture section. If you have concerns over fairness in any recruitment, feel free to contact the PSA at [membersupport@psa.asn.au](mailto:membersupport@psa.asn.au) or 1300 772 679.

### Working from home

The PSA asked whether the Department had a timeline for returning to the office. The Department replied it intended for workers to be working from home for the foreseeable future and that all workers were encouraged to work from home. In cases where people are unable or unwilling to work from home, they can apply to their manager to work from the office.

### PPE and temperature checks

The PSA asked about the Department's approach to PPE. The Department responded that its approach is two-fold and based on NSW Health guidelines. Firstly, frontline workers who have direct contact with the public will have access to masks and protective equipment. Secondly, non-frontline workers will be encouraged to social distance when they are in the office to avoid the discomfort of constantly wearing masks. Work spaces, such as those in 4





25 August 2020

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Parramatta Square, are being adapted to enforce social distancing and wipes, hand sanitiser and other necessary provisions will be provided.

The PSA inquired about the use of temperature checks in government offices as a way of protecting workers. The Department is currently running a trial on the effectiveness of temperature checks in Service NSW and will update the union on its effectiveness while continuing to adjust procedures in line with the recommendations of NSW Health.

### Bandwidth and core hours

In May 2020, the PSA and the Department agreed to suspend core hours and daily bandwidths. This was a temporary agreement between the union and the Department which expires in November. The Department informed the PSA that they are considering extending these arrangements and raised the possibility of making them permanent. The PSA clarified that these arrangements can only be extended or made permanent with the PSA's agreement, and we would only agree to do so after an extensive consultation process with members.

While there are clearly benefits to these arrangements, the PSA does hold concerns that the line between the home and work is increasingly blurred, and that the arrangements have the potential to be misused by management.

We will keep you updated on developments in this area, and commit to full consultation with our members on this important issue.

### Not yet a member and want to be involved?

Join the PSA today at [www.psa.asn.au](http://www.psa.asn.au).

