

Joint Consultative Committee update – Secretary’s update, flexible working hours and overtime meal allowances

The PSA attended the peak Department of Customer Service (DCS) consultative committee on 16 November 2020. The following is a report back to members:

Secretary’s update

Emma Hogan, DCS Secretary, made comment on the last Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) where she had just completed the roadshow with the future strategy and work that the Department had been doing around mental health.

Ms Hogan further referenced the recent announcement by the Premier and Treasurer with regards to ‘Return to Office’ (RTO) and what that may look like for DCS as a whole. From the recent culture amp survey put out to staff, the Secretary was very aware that many staff had adapted quite happily to the greater flexibility afforded since the COVID-19 pandemic.

There was a general discussion as to the current RTO with the acknowledgement that they wanted to continue with flexible work practices moving forward.

At this time the focus was on the Christmas shutdown and an encouragement to staff to make use of the two-week shutdown, particularly if they have started to accrue significant leave balances.

The Secretary spoke about the upcoming Secretary’s Award and made mention of two DCS staff who were recipients of the Premier’s Award.

With regard to staff communications she has committed to doing a 30-minute morning tea live monthly post with staff and going forward looking for it to be a two-way process.

Following on from the last JCC, the Secretary again emphasised that she was very keen to make improvements to the recruitment process and thought of anyone coming through DCS doors as a customer and were using ‘My Experience’ to seek feedback which will be shared at a future meeting.

Contingent labour update

The Department reported that its current contingent labour workforce is at 8.2 per cent of overall staffing. Most of these roles were currently in Service NSW, ICT and Digital and were mostly project based.

Flexible Working Hours Agreement

The Department will be extending current COVID-19 flexibility arrangements through to the next flex period. That is the extended bandwidth, no core hours and not placing restrictions on accrued leave balances.

The PSA has been given advance notice the Department will be seeking to enter into negotiations with the PSA regarding changing the FWHA with a view of permanently incorporating the temporary extended bandwidth and no-core hours’ provisions. The PSA is aware that many members have enjoyed the



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greater flexibility that this allows, however we are also mindful that we need to ensure that it is not open to abuse, and that members are being expected to work at all hours without compensation. The PSA will engage with full consultation with all members once negotiations with the Department begin proper.

While the current arrangements on excess recreation leave have been relaxed it is expected that there will be a resumption of BAU and staff with leave balances in excess of 30 days will be expected to reduce them within the appropriate notice periods.

The PSA will provide further guidance to members at that time in respect of this.

The lack of access to FWHA within WCC was raised specifically with the Secretary. We expect to have feedback for members in this area in due course.

Flexible Working Policy

In addition to the proposed changes to the FWHA, the Department also signalled its intent to review the Flexible Working Policy and discuss the parameters around this.

Again, the PSA will ensure further member engagement as FWAs are an important issue for many members and any improvement to the access of those agreements will be welcomed by the PSA.

Consultation

The PSA is negotiating with the Department in relation to a consultation framework where areas of the Department can raise matters of concern beyond the current Realignment Joint Consultative Committee framework.

The PSA reminded the Secretary of the need for business areas to consult with the union over matters that involved change for employees. We made specific reference to an area in Revenue. The Secretary agreed that Departmental Secs will be reminded to push the requirement for consultation message.

Overtime meal allowances

Issues in relation to GovConnect not paying meal allowances for staff on overtime were also raised and we were advised that the Department has raised the matter with PSIR as this appears to be an issue with the way systems have been inputted by GovConnect.

WHS incident reports

There was a discussion about electronic reporting of WH&S incidents across the Department. Management advised that only two areas had previously had electronic systems and these were no longer available in those areas. They had returned to paper in the interim while the Department selects an online system which should be approved soon.





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The next JCC will be in early 2021. Please talk with your delegates and/or Organiser if you want to draw attention to further issues that can be raised with the Secretary at this forum.

