



11 June 2021

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**By email: [mwunderlin@psa.asn.au](mailto:mwunderlin@psa.asn.au)**

Dear Ms Wunderlin

### **PSA Response Regarding CSO Recruitment Policy**

I refer to your email dated 19 May 2021 regarding the PSA response to the CSO Recruitment Policy.

By way of background, the CSO piloted bulk recruitment programs for Senior Solicitor Grade V and Principal Solicitor Grade VI roles with the view to establishing talent pools (which are in force for 18 months) to meet long and short term needs of the office. Candidates were assessed on their legal knowledge and expertise relevant to the practice area to which they had applied, as well as the focus capabilities for the role. As part of our commitment to applying the merit principles, the written assessments undertaken by candidates were de-identified when returned for review and rating. As part of the interview process, candidates were also asked to prepare and present on a recent legal development and were asked behavioural questions relevant to the focus capabilities of the role.

It is acknowledged that there may be current talent pools in place nearing expiration and in this regard it is intended to exhaust the talent pool before drawing on the new talent pools. Staff are notified of this as part of the commencement of the new program and encouraged to apply for the new program if they wish to remain on a talent pool.

As part of our continuous improvement program CSO has committed to reviewing the piloted programs to look at what worked well and identify areas for improvement. It is acknowledged that there were delays to the programs and that the latter part of the year is not ideal time to run bulk recruitment programs, particularly give Christmas closure and the January holiday period.

Having considered the comments and suggestions I have provided a response against the broad categories;

#### 1. Workforce Planning Issues

It is intended that a workforce planning guide be annexed to the policy. The guide is currently under development and will be circulated when approved.

It is acknowledged that the COVID-19 Pandemic had an impact on employment decisions at the CSO in 2020. Whilst it has been a practice at the CSO to assess temporary employment arrangements following the completion of 2 years temporary employment, it is not always possible to convert within that time period, however extensions are arranged consistent with the *Government Sector Employment Rules 2014*.

With regard to preparation for recruitment decisions, resourcing discussions are currently underway within the Legal Practice Groups to align with the 2021/2022 budget. In determining the filling of roles on an ongoing or temporary basis, the following factors are taken into consideration;

- Anticipated volume and certainty of work
- Team billable hours and team budget

#### 2. Criteria for a role changed during a recruitment process.

The essential criteria for the role of Senior Solicitor was not changed during the recruitment process. Due to the competitive nature of the Grade IV bulk recruitment program and the large volume of applications received, the assessing panel shortlisted candidates based on experience. Candidates who did not progress to interview were not as competitive.

#### 3. Temporary Assignment Procedure

The CSO Temporary Assignment Procedure was implemented in July 2020 following consultation with the PSA consistent with consultative arrangements policy guidelines. You will see that the temporary assignment arrangements raised in the PSA correspondence is consistent with the procedure. In order to increase awareness about the Procedure and Guide, it is proposed that the People & Culture team conduct training information sessions.

#### 4. Assessment Panels

It is CSO's practice to invite nominations from ACS and Directors to participate in recruitment assessment panels and more recently, nominations have also been sought from Principal and Senior Solicitors consistent with the feedback from PSA.

CSO recognises that there needs to be further training provided to hiring managers and assessing panels and this is currently under review as part of the bulk recruitment review. Furthermore it is also acknowledged that training on applying for roles in the Public Sector would be beneficial for staff at the CSO.

- Restructures

The CSO is committed to communicating and consulting with the PSA on any changes to structure through the Joint Consultative Committee. Consistent with the Resource Management Plan for the Finance team, it is intended that open merit recruitment be undertaken for roles not filled through the matching process. With respect to the grades assigned to the roles for the Finance and Enterprise Business Systems teams, the CSO has used the Mercer Methodology as part of the job evaluation process and staff in the People & Culture team are trained job analyst and evaluators.

I am always happy to work with the PSA in an endeavour to improve on communication/training gaps and trust that the information provided addresses the members concerns. Should you wish to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



Pat Imbert  
Senior People & Culture Partner  
**for Crown Solicitor**