



Public Service Association of NSW

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In reply please quote: MW:mb

8 November 2023

Ms Suzanne Jenner
A/Executive Director
Court Services (Courts, Tribunals and Service Delivery)
Department of Communities and Justice
Level 17, 66 Goulburn Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

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Dear Ms Jenner,

Re: Proposed assistance to be provided by Goulburn Registry staff to Nowra

We write in relation to the proposed 2024 sitting arrangements for the Goulburn circuit, as detailed by Her Honour Magistrate Beattie on 24 August 2023. Given the nature of the proposal, I have included the Regional Director, Hub Registrar, and Local Registrar in this correspondence.

While we understand discussions between management and staff about the proposal are ongoing, I note the PSA is yet to be consulted.

We are concerned by two aspects of the proposed schedule which we expect will adversely impact the working conditions of staff based at the Goulburn Registry:

1. That the Goulburn registry has been asked to provide assistance to Magistrate Beattie at Nowra for three sitting weeks next year (29/1–2/2, 29/7–2/8, and 20/9–4/10). This would require Goulburn to arrange travel to Nowra for at least two members of staff for these periods.
2. That Goulburn has been asked to provide assistance to Nowra on one Tuesday each month (except April, when Magistrate Beattie is on leave). This would require staff to travel to Nowra for these days each month.

While we acknowledge that regional staff undertake travel to other courts in their circuit as part of their role, the PSA submits the proposed changes represent an unreasonable and unnecessary amendment to the reasonable expectations of staff employed at the Goulburn Registry.

Our concerns include:

- a) When providing monthly assistance to Nowra, staff driving to and from Goulburn may be required to drive a considerable distance after working an extended day (the Tuesday in Nowra preceding the criminal matters list on Wednesdays). This could prove unsafe and present an ongoing WHS risk. The limited and circuitous routes between Goulburn and Nowra present a similar WHS risk, which could be hazardous to navigate at the times and under the conditions the proposal would require;
- b) The proposed schedule would reduce the availability of opportunities for incidental leave, as the Registry would need to ensure staff are available for regular extended travel and overnight stays. This would be compounded by anticipated vacancies at Goulburn, further stretching existing Registry resources;
- c) Many staff owe carer's responsibilities to others in their household, which staff would need to arrange privately while on overnight or extended stays to Nowra. Staff with children would incur additional costs arranging after-hours care when assigned to Nowra. This reduced flexibility for parents and caregivers may promote unequal treatment of those with caring responsibilities, and potentially undermine protections provided under state and federal anti-discrimination law;
- d) The proposal would provide for less time for administrative and out-of-court duties, given an increased time away from the Goulburn Registry Office. Under this proposal, Goulburn's small registry would not have circuit travel commitments for only one week of each sitting month (including five-week months).

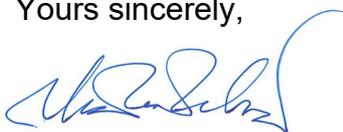
Staff have suggested arrangements that may not have been considered as alternatives to the current proposal. These include sourcing assistance from registries near Nowra, the use of Goulburn AVL facilities, or the engagement of relief staff, such as those in the Illawarra Development Relief Pool (or recruitment of ongoing relief roles).

We are aware of occasions where the Department has advocated for circuit arrangements that minimise adverse and irregular impacts on staff. We would welcome the extension of these efforts to the current Goulburn proposal.

The PSA opposes the proposed schedule in its current form. We would appreciate a meeting with relevant managers to discuss the factors detailed above and explore alternatives to the current proposal.

Should you wish to discuss further, please contact me on 1300 772 679 or via email.

Yours sincerely,



Monika Wunderlin
for **STEWART LITTLE**
GENERAL SECRETARY