



Public Service Association of NSW

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Rachel Ward,
Children's Guardian, Office of the Children's Guardian,
Cleveland Street
Redfern NSW 2016

By email: Rachel.Ward@ocg.nsw.gov.au

Dear Rachel,

We provide feedback on the *Flexible Working Policy* for the *Office of Children's Guardian* with a full understanding of the *Premiers Circular C2024-03* and how it has been implemented across multiple NSW Public Sector Agencies.

The Circular is clear in its intent, that agencies are to consider opportunities for staff to 'work from home' and have a starting position of 'work principally in an approved workplace in NSW'. The Circular goes on to state that the agencies are responsible for their flexible working policies to ensure effective delivery of services. The Circular does not prescribe patterns or terms of agency policies.

Many public sector agencies have a large 'client facing' cohort of employees where the work performed can only be performed in the workplace. For example, Education, Health and Corrective Services.

Some other agencies have more ability to support flexible work practices, including remote working, as the inherent requirements of the work does not require face-to-face interactions. For example, the Child Protection Helpline, The Housing Contact Centre and The Ministry of Health.

While many agencies may have a mix of client facing and non-client facing staff, a common starting point is a 50% average over 2 or 4 weeks. This includes staff attending worksites for team building or training and prescribed meetings, then flexible practices based on team needs or requirements while maintaining an equitable spread across the week.

Further, flexible working is not just working remotely. It entails a vast range of options including compressed hours, changed start/finish times, job share or part time arrangements and so on.

With the above in mind, please see our feedback below,

- Members have raised concerns around the findings of the Ministerial Inquiry, in particular the statement that the workplace is not psychosocially safe.
 - o How will staff safety be prioritised within the Flexible Work Policy?
- Members have asked why the change now?
 - o While the Circular was published in 2024, the OCG continued with its flexible working practices. While the Circular seeks to have agencies attend the office 'principally' it also leaves it open for agencies to implement to best fit their operational needs. There has been no significant change to the operational requirements of the OCG for the past 6 years.

- Evidence may support that current flexible working practices benefit the OCG by reduced unplanned leave, increased output due to less interruptions to workflow and reduced office space requirements
- Recent PMES Surveys have highlighted that flexible working within the OCG is one of its core strengths as an employer
- What does a return to office look like?
 - Is there sufficient desk/seating space?
 - Hot desking can create additional workload for setting up and clearing or finding a suitable workspace
 - Unstable workspace arrangements can lead to increased division or separation of teams due to not being able to work together
 - Is there sufficient parking for those who require for disability or health concerns as well as work vehicles?
 - Are there sufficient amenities?
 - Emergency processes, are there sufficient Fire Wardens or Evacuation plans and capabilities?
 - Is there sufficient storage for staff and their belongings within the office?
- Impact on carers responsibility and current flexible working arrangements for health and/or disability
 - Will the review be based on their current arrangement and needs?
 - Will existing carer and workplace adjustment arrangements
- Starting point for remote working or work from home should be a 50% average over 2 or 4 weeks.
 - This abides by the Premier's Circular, supports an equitable spread across the week/s and allows maximum flexibility
 - If staff are seeking more flexibility than 50%, they can seek approval on an individual basis
 - DCJ and Transport are examples of agencies who have taken this stance
- As a predominantly female workforce, how is the policy supporting carers responsibilities?
- If an employee is wanting to maintain privacy and confidentiality about any of their personal circumstances, is there an option for HR to review their request while maintaining privacy?
- Will a change of core hours be considered within this policy?
- A leading reason for return to the office is to support and encourage collaboration.
 - Members have raised that collaboration between teams has been missing for a long time.
 - A return to the office may support intra-team collaboration, how will it support cross-team collaboration?

Some suggestions to assist in supporting flexible working arrangements,

- Have team based 'Anchor Days' to support collaboration and forward planning for staff. This is a great means to maintain equity across the days for staffing level

- Managers should have the delegation around WFH not Directors. While Directors should have input, along with People and Culture, it is the direct managers who have the best understanding of the work being performed and how best to manage staff.
- Investigate better systems to support and streamline the work.
- Communicate and plan a set review time post implementation to discuss what has worked and what has not to assess the impact on service delivery and staff
- Provide information on other approved work locations to support staff in requesting remote working options.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, I can be contacted on 0409 741 071 or by email gwelsh@psa.asn.au

Kind regards,



Graydon Welsh
for **Stewart Little**
GENERAL SECRETARY