

PSA Request to EPA

A number of these issues below were raised at our meeting ,10 August 2026. However, the PSA is continually receiving feedback and information from our EPA members with respect to the restructure and the negative impact it is having on them.

As you will see from the list number

1. Severe resourcing shortages and unsustainable workloads

Across multiple teams — Field Ops, Licensing, Technical, Policy, Legal, and specialist regulatory units — staff consistently describe **not having enough people to do the work**, with vacancies unfilled, part-time backfills, and acting arrangements stretching teams even thinner.

Cited examples include:

- “There really isn’t enough people to cover all the work.”
 - “Our licensing backlog and other work queues continue to grow.”
 - “Technical teams are picking up some of the slack with Policy people gone.”
- The cumulative effect is **burnout, stress, and declining wellbeing**.

2. Impacts of the restructure — confusion, loss of roles, and lack of transparency

Many staff feel the restructure has:

- Removed critical roles without consultation (e.g., a Team Leader position).
- Increased workload for remaining staff.
- Displaced experienced employees while new roles are now being advertised.
- Created uncertainty and anxiety due to unclear decision-making.

Comments highlight a desire for **greater transparency, empathy, and clarity** about why certain roles were removed and why recruitment is occurring now.

3. CORE system issues compounding workload pressures

CORE is repeatedly described as **slow, inefficient, unreliable, and worse than PALMS**, with major impacts on:

- Licensing
- FOI searches
- Historical site/complaint information
- General productivity

Staff emphasise that launching CORE during a restructure has intensified and compounded stress

- “CORE is significantly impacting my workload and efficiency.”
- “I don’t understand why the EPA chose to do this systems upgrade at the same time as the restructure.”

4. Work being pushed down to lower classifications

There are concerns that EO4 and EO6 staff are being asked to perform duties aligned with EO11 roles, without:

- Appropriate support
- Consideration of classification boundaries

This raises questions about **fairness, sustainability, and role clarity**.

5. Day duty pressures in Field Ops

Field Ops staff report:

- Being rostered on day duty at least once a week — sharing the rostered duty with the broader cohort.
- Difficulty managing other work due to needing to remain available for incidents. This is creating **operational strain and personal stress**.

6. Leadership gaps and instability

Several comments describe:

- Long periods with acting Unit Heads or managers.
- Leaders being disengaged or absent.
- Acting leaders causing demoralisation.

This instability is leaving staff without direction, support, or continuity.

7. Lack of clear priorities, guidance, and realistic expectations

Staff repeatedly ask for:

- Clear direction on what work can be paused or deprioritised.
- Adjusted performance expectations that reflect current resourcing.
- Defined acceptable service levels.

Without this, people feel they are **set up to fail**.

Due to ongoing concerns raised by members, the PSA requests in writing, a formal response from the EPA.

EPA Response to Public Service Association Member concerns

Thank you for your correspondence and for continuing to share the feedback and concerns of members regarding the recent organisational restructure and its impacts. We acknowledge that several of the matters outlined in your letter were discussed at our meeting on 10 August 2026. We also recognise that employees are continuing to experience uncertainty and pressure as they adapt to organisational and operational change. We appreciate the PSA bringing these concerns to our attention and welcome the opportunity to respond.

As I mentioned at the 10 August meeting, we do not see organisational change or restructuring as a time limited process; we know that this is a long-term process requiring sustained effort and attention. Equally, many of the concerns raised below are not unique post-restructure but are consistent across NSW Government agencies.

Resourcing and workloads

The EPA acknowledges concerns regarding workload pressures and resourcing across a number of business areas. We recognise that vacancies, acting arrangements and increased operational demands have impacted some teams more significantly than others.

We actively monitor workforce capacity, priorities and critical business risks. Recruitment activity has now finalised for all vacancies that remained post-restructure and we have been filling vacancies as they arise.

As we committed during the restructure process, we have implemented a streamlined recruitment approval process which means that approvals to commence recruiting are occurring faster and with more transparency around decisions. As you would be aware though, bringing onboard new starters can take time and filling gaps from within the agency can create other pressures.

We have taken steps to make sure priorities are clear across the organisation through our strategic priorities, targeted compliance programs, divisional plans and workplans. We have also established a service catalogue to support clear responsibilities. We continue to encourage staff to raise with their supervisors, managers and senior leadership teams any concerns they have around workload pressures and prioritisation.

Sustainability continues to be a focus for us, and we are confident in the range of wellbeing measures and conditions in place to support our workforce. We believe we model and encourage the use of flexible work arrangements, part-time work, working from home or other locations, and leave usage. We also encourage our employees to seek support through the EAP or our own resources if they are feeling challenged or overwhelmed.

Restructure impacts

I think it is important that the EPA state that no changes were undertaken without extensive consultation and support. We commenced consultation in September 2025 (and were forecasting changes since July) for a structure implementation that occurred in late April 2026. This was buttressed by significant support, communication and union engagement, as well as meeting or exceeding all industrial requirements.

The union is also aware that we did not seek to displace experienced employees – that we undertook a process aligned with the whole of Government mobility and transition guidelines and afforded choice wherever we could. All but two of the employees who exited were satisfied with their outcomes, and both these employees were found roles, so we think this is an unfair characterisation.

During the organisational changes, we paused most external recruitment and made all vacant roles available to impacted employees. Some of those roles were not filled at that time and have been progressively advertised since the organisational changes commenced based on business needs. It is not correct to suggest those roles are new roles or inappropriate to advertise.

We also need to advertise roles as they become vacant through attrition.

As implementation continues, we remain committed to communicating openly about recruitment activity, organisational priorities and the rationale for resourcing decisions wherever possible.

CORE System

CORE is a significant organisational investment designed to deliver long-term improvements in regulatory information management and service delivery. We recognise that there have been issues relating to system performance, functionality and user experience, and work continues to address these matters through system enhancements, training, support and ongoing engagement with end users.

Feedback from staff and working groups remains critical in helping to drive these improvements and directing priorities.

A number of significant milestones have been achieved with the CORE rollout in the past few weeks which we will present at the next JCC meeting (and we will add CORE as a standing item at JCC while we transition). These were also communicated to staff in the email I forwarded last week.

While there are teething issues with every new system, the outcomes that will be achieved through CORE will significantly improve the day-to-day experience of our Ops officers in particular. They will also ensure we meet required security and accessibility obligations and reduce overhead costs brought about by maintaining multiple systems.

Classification and role clarity

The EPA takes concerns regarding role classification and duties seriously. Significant emphasis has been placed on the Performance Development Plan (PDP) process and the importance of ensuring role clarity and expectations.

We assert that employees are performing duties that are commensurate with their grade and responsibilities.

Employees who believe they are regularly undertaking duties outside the scope of their classification are encouraged to raise these concerns through their supervisor so we can review and address any issues.

We are aware there was a recent period when an EO 11 in the Legal, Governance and People division took unexpected leave for personal reasons. She was supported in taking that leave, as was appropriate. The Executive Director of that division is currently meeting with divisional coordination staff to understand any concerns and discuss expectations.

Field Operations Day Duty Arrangements

The day duty roster has been assigned based on role descriptions and current required training in place. The roster development is transparent and guided by a documented procedure, and we also have exemption protocols in place based on hardship. The standard roster requires no more than 1 week in a 12 week period (on average) and attracts an allowance. It is a reasonable expectation that BAU is managed while on rostered duty, noting that there are not always incidents to respond to. If staff feel they cannot fulfil these requirements due to the creation of strain and stress, they can seek a hardship exemption from the roster (noting that being on the roster is part of their inherent role requirements) or discuss transfer to other roles.

Leadership Stability

The EPA believes in the strength of our leadership cohort and are consistent with our leadership expectations. We invest heavily in our leaders through development opportunities and networking events such as People Leaders.

Acting arrangements are sometimes necessary to maintain business continuity and because of the continuous changes that apply to any workforce. Acting opportunities also provide professional development opportunities for selected employees and help us build bench strength and enable succession.

Where we have a substantive vacancy, we move to fill the role; however, we cannot fill a role in an ongoing capacity where it has a substantive occupant who may be absent long-term for a number of reasons (leave, transfer opportunities etc).

We welcome any specific concerns on leaders on this point, but we do not believe this is a systemic or pronounced issue in the EPA.

Prioritisation and Performance Expectations

The Executive has communicated via a number of channels our strategic and targeted compliance priorities for the year. This has also been cascaded down into divisional plans, branch plans, work programs and individual performance development plans, which are mandatory for all staff in the agency, and we are closely monitoring compliance. Performance expectations are outlined in PDPs and these are adjusted for current resources and priorities, but, as above, expectations will always be at the commensurate level of the staff member.

Employees should not feel that they are required to manage unsustainable workloads without support or guidance. In all divisions, conversations have taken place around resourcing and prioritisation, but the expectation that we will specifically state which work we will pause or deprioritise is unrealistic.

By nature, a government context, especially one that responds to incidents and events, must be agile and pivot to changing priorities and demands. We recognise that this kind of (often reactive) work does not suit everyone and we are supportive of those who feel other workplaces will suit them better.

What we do commit to is being clear about how to best use the time and resources we have in a realistic and sustainable way. Our ongoing discussions will be about how to direct effort (time and resources), what “success” looks like, and how to better support the outcomes of the agency and the NSW citizens.

Ongoing Consultation

As always, we encourage an open dialogue on change, recognising that this is a process and not an end state. We have various communications channels and provide opportunities for feedback.

We look forward to continuing these discussions and working collaboratively to support employees.