

# WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (WHSC) MEETING 4 – RECORD OF MEETING

**Friday 25 August 2023**  
**GovTEAMS**

Meeting opened: 14:05  
Meeting closed: 15:09

**Meeting Chair: Amanda Bruce** – Department of Finance, Assistant Secretary,  
HR Frameworks Branch

Attendee	Office
Lisa Banyard*	Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Leanne Coleman*	Hon Kristy McBain
Tamsin Anspach*	Office of Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Kate Sutherland*	Ms Lisa Chesters MP
Chantal D'Argaville*	Hon Peter Dutton MP
Mary Von-Marburg*	Office of Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash
Simon Kelly*	Office of Mr Llew O'Brien MP
Emma Garbutt*	Mr Adam Bandt MP
Stella Weston-Smith*	Mr Andrew Wilkie, MP
HSR	Dr Helen Haines, MP
Emma Groube	CPSU
Jess Stone	CPSU
Joshua Polak	USU
Jill Flinders	Finance, Director, HR Policy and Assurance
Ellen Laenen	Finance, Asst. Director, HR Policy and Assurance
Belinda Miners	Finance, Asst. Director HR Advice and Support
Jess Morris	PWSS (observer)
Lachlan Bayliss	Finance, HR Policy and Assurance (observer)
Taylah Yacob	Finance, HR Advice and Support (observer)
Simon Bartholomew	Finance (Secretariat)

\* Health and Safety Representative

## Apologies:

Bryce Wilson, representing ASU.

## Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

- The Chair opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of country.
- Apologies were noted.
- Jess Morris was welcomed to the meeting as an observer, representing the PWSS (noting the transfer of the WHSC to PWSS from 1 October 2023, subject to the passage of legislation).
- Stella-Weston Smith is undertaking long leave and will be replaced by the Deputy HSR.

## Agenda Item 2 - Action Items

- An updated Action Item Register for Meetings 1-3 was distributed to the Committee prior to the meeting.
- The Chair addressed Action Items arising from Meeting 3.

### *3.1(b) Psychosocial hazards – plain English tip sheet to report psychosocial hazards via Skytrust.*

- The CPSU (Emma Groube) noted that the one-page draft addressed the issues raised with Finance.
- Members sought clarification and updates on some issues [refer Action Item 4.1)].

### *3.2 Benestar client service*

- Feedback from distributing the contact cards was positive. The Chair advised that distribution of the Benestar cards will be regularly refreshed and on demand.
- The CPSU advised that there had been some queries seeking an explanation as to what to do with the cards. An accompanying flyer/explanation would be helpful (see Action Item 4.2).

### *3.3 Family Friendly working hours*

- There was discussion regarding specification of working hours and whether these were family friendly.
- The Chair noted that she had conversations with the Senate who had confirmed a broad commitment to family friendly hours but that the chamber timing is not within their control and they are aware of specific circumstances arising where the chamber sat through to early morning.
- As a Senate matter, MaPS has no ability to control this. Any concerns regarding family friendly working hours in the Senate should be raised with the employing Parliamentarian or the Senate.
- The Chair suggested that this could remain as a standing agenda item, noting our limitations on influencing the business of the Senate.

### *3.4 WHS Review (Set the Standard, r.25)*

- The Chair advised that feedback regarding the WHS Review should be provided directly to the PLT.

- The CPSU advised that it has provided feedback directly to the PLT and will continue to address issues that are raised, noting that there had been a gap in process for workers to participate in the review.

#### *Action Item 2.5 from Meeting 2 – HSR Travel*

- The CPSU sought clarification regarding the process for HSR travel.
- Concern was also expressed by a Committee member that this action item was marked ‘completed’ when specific advice had not been provided regarding travel arrangements. HSRs should be able to travel to areas that needed them. A need to explain the different roles of HSRs and WHS Site Officers was highlighted.
- The Chair provided the following links during the meeting, referred to Comcare information and confirmed that training was available:
  - <https://maps.finance.gov.au/support/training>
  - <https://pwss.gov.au/making-a-report/anonymous-reporting>
- CPSU advised that it has raised the issue of WHS Work Groups and HSR representation with the WHS Review.
- The Chair noted the unique circumstances of CPOs and EOs which are geographically dispersed, whereas offices generally would have HSRs walking the floor. Members were encouraged to contact MOPSWHS if they had questions or concerns regarding HSR travel. Comcare was also available to provide strategies to assist HSRs.
- HR Advice and Support (MOPSWHS) welcomed any enquiries regarding travel arrangements and the Chair committed to providing updated communications on this matter (refer Action Item 4.3).

#### **Action Item 4.1**

**Psychosocial hazards – Plain English tip sheet to assist staff to report psychosocial hazards via Skytrust.** [Also refer Meeting 3, Action Item 3.1(b)].

- a. Draft tip sheet to be updated for comments from Meeting 4
  - Include reference to duress alarm and clarify OOO action and contacting other agencies.
  - Ministerial offices – process includes AFP.
  - Include ‘constituent distress’.
  - Training support option.
  - Consistent use of language (1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person).
  - Option to call Marsh for reporting (noting Skytrust issues) (noting reluctance to fill in forms and incident report on each specific occasion but allow for aggregated reporting weekly).
- b. Draft to be re-circulated to WHSC by 1/9/2023.
- c. Working draft to be provided to employees before next sitting period (commencing 4 September).

#### **Action Item 4.2**

**Benestar client service contact cards.** [Also refer to Meeting 3, Action Item 3.2.]

- The future distribution of contact cards to include flyer explaining how they are to be presented.

- To include support material such as the psychosocial tip sheet.

### Action Item 4.3

#### Health and Safety Representatives. [Also refer to Meeting 3, Action Item 2.5]

- Update website and advise WHSC
  - Link to HSR roles.
  - Training available.
  - Clarify WHSC Site Officers and HSR roles and the difference between them.
  - Travel for HSRs.

### Agenda Item 4 - Other Business

#### 4.1 Jill Flinders provided an update regarding the following four items:

- a. *HSR/Committee vacancy for the Liberal Party of Australia Work Group*
  - This was resolved. Helen Lewis will continue in the role for the work group.
- b. *Reflections on the last sitting period and moving forward.*
  - Meeting 3 noted concerns arising
    - from the vigorous debates in Parliament
    - associated psychosocial issues, and
    - more generally, the impact of constituency behaviours.
  - No additional issues were raised by the Committee.
  - Jill encouraged members to email or phone if they do not want to share issues in this forum.
- c. *Referendum update*
  - The MaPS website now includes a tile on the Referendum with advice on duties EO staff can undertake, the use of public resources or claiming expenses for activities related to the referendum and supports available.
  - This information will be updated including to add information on fatigue management for staff (refer Action Item 4.4).
  - The CPSU noted the constant pressure on workers and associated psychosocial factors, including the ramping up of social media and persistent racist commentary.
  - The Chair advised that training courses could be tailored for an office.
  - Jess Morris advised that PWSS has a 24-hour support line which provides individualised support and can provide real time strategies if people need.
- d. *Legislative amendments*
  - The *Members of Parliament (Staff) Amendment Bill 2023* was now before Parliament.
  - An email was sent and MaPS News provided links to the Bill (11/8/2023).
  - Advice regarding support services was available should an employee not feel comfortable discussing any concerns arising from these Bills with their employing parliamentarian or authorised officer.

#### 4.2 PWSS processes

- A member raised concern regarding PWSS processes, in particular where a person asked to remain anonymous, but this did not occur and the person was approached by the other person to whom the matter related with knowledge of their interaction with PWSS. This

was raised to flag concerns regarding PWSS inquiries and process and associated reporting.

- The Chair encouraged members to provide any similar feedback or concerns out of session including via the HelpDesk or anonymously.
- The Chair will discuss the situation with the Committee member out of session.
- The Chair requested that an extraordinary meeting be held to address this matter and PWSS will be invited to attend (refer Action Item 4.5)

#### **Action Item 4.4**

##### **Referendum tile on MaPS website**

- Include link to fatigue management (similar advice to the Federal election) and available training (how to deal with racism etc)

#### **Action Item 4.5**

##### **PWSS processes**

- a. The Chair to discuss the situation with the Committee member out of session.
- b. Arrange extraordinary meeting of the WHSC and invite PWSS to discuss current PWSS processes.
- c. Committee representatives invited to discuss specific issues off-line.

#### **Agenda Item 3 – WHS Quarterly Report**

- Due to meeting time constraints, Cathy Stokes will provide the WHS Quarterly Report out of session. This includes the report provided by Marsh who are no longer required to attend the meeting.

#### **Action Item 4.6**

##### **WHS - Quarterly Report and update**

- Director, HR Advice and Support, to provide update/statistics out of session.

#### **Agenda Item 5 - Next meeting**

- The Chair suggested that future meetings may need to be held more regularly or the duration of the meeting extended to allow the meeting to more easily facilitate the broad range of issues being raised.
- The Chair advised that the next meeting of the WHSC would be facilitated by the PWSS, upon establishment of the statutory body on 1 October 2023 (subject to the passage of legislation).
- The meeting closed at 15:09.

#### **Action Item 4.7**

##### **WHSC meeting time**

- Consider changing meeting frequency or increase the duration of the meeting to allow consideration of broad range of issues raised.