



DPS ref: 14/4519/26

Response to the submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee's inquiry into the performance of the Department of Parliamentary Services, regarding the proposed Visitor Services staffing model.

Proposed model and rationale

The visitor services model at Parliament House is unusual in that there are no full time permanent Visitor Services Officers (VSOs); instead all VSOs work part days and are either permanent part time or casual. Currently the mix is 17 permanent part time and 18 casual staff, all of whom work 4.25hr shifts. This is out of step with other institutions that operate visitor service models which have a mix of permanent full and part time staff working full and part days with limited reliance on casual staff. By way of example, comparative models include:

- The Australian War Memorial's (AWM) Visitor Services team includes 14 full-time staff who are rostered for full-dayshifts, casuals also work full-days;
- The National Museum of Australia's (NMA) Visitor Services team includes nine full-time Visitor Services staff with another eight part-timers who work full days; and
- The Museum of Australian Democracy's Visitor Service team consists of eight part-time staff who all work full-day shifts, casuals also work full days;

The AWM and NMA also supplement full day shifts with part-day roster lines.

Due to the additional funding received in the May 2014 Budget to cover this financial year and the following three financial years, DPS is now in a position to look at reinstating services that were reduced in the 2008/09 budget cuts, including expanding our tour offerings to schools and visitors. DPS is therefore also considering expanding its range of employment options for VSOs to include a core of permanent full time staff supported by permanent part time staff and some casual staff, with the majority of staff working full days. This initiative also supports the Parliamentary Service Employment Principles (within the Parliamentary Service Act) which state that the usual basis for engagement is as an ongoing Parliamentary Service employee. Further, DPS is aware that some VSOs have a number of part time jobs with different employers, and may welcome the opportunity to obtain permanent full time employment with DPS.

DPS is currently consulting with staff on a proposed staffing model. The proposed model creates a core of full time staff supported by permanent part time staff and reduces our reliance on casual staff. Full time staff would work 37.5 hours per week consistent with all DPS full time employees. DPS believes that if there is a core of full time positions, career opportunities will be enhanced through access to increased training opportunities. The proposed model also involves staff working full days as this will enhance efficiency of operations, as well as continuing our commitment to enhancing the visitor experience at Parliament House by offering more tours and programs.

DPS' proposal allows a mix of employment arrangements and provides staff with flexibility and choice including full time permanent employment, something not currently available to VSOs. DPS is aware that some VSOs have a number of part time jobs with different employers, and may welcome the opportunity to obtain permanent full time employment with DPS. There will, however, always be a need for part time and casual staff given the fluctuation in the demand for visitor services over the course of a year.

In addition to expanding the range of employment opportunities for VSOs, the proposed model would achieve the following efficiencies:

- currently in order to cover a full day of operations, two VSOs each work a shift of 4.25 hours, totalling 8.5 paid hours. The proposed 7.5 hour full-time shift would achieve a 11.76% productivity in comparison to current model;
- improved operations through less changeover of staff on a daily basis, providing continuity in service delivery and enhanced communication within the team;
- increased learning and development opportunities to give sufficient time for VSOs to learn new tour products.
- reduction in overtime expenditure; and
- streamlined staff management and work practices through the reduced duplication in administration and training.

Consultation on the proposed staffing model is ongoing; no final model has been decided upon and staff will be engaged in accordance with DPS Enterprise Agreement and the requirement to consult in relation to major change in the workplace. DPS is keen to allow a transition period for those staff that want to work full time and full days but who will need time to make changes to their personal arrangements to enable them to do so.

A group of 13 casual VSOs are currently trialling full day work, and this trial will inform consultation with staff, and any final decision on a staffing model.

Consultation process to date

On 18 September 2014 consultation commenced when management met with VSOs to outline the proposed model and seek feedback on it. The initial feedback period was for 2 weeks and closed on 2 October 2014.

At that initial meeting DPS provided VSOs with documents, including a proposed staffing model, an indicative daily roster and discussion paper.

On 30 September 2014 a further meeting was held where all VSOs were invited to give feedback and input regarding the proposed model and to offer ideas that will contribute to an effective and efficient model.

At the end of the 2 week consultation period on 2 October 2014, 23 written responses had been received. Responses were mixed and covered a range of issues. Some staff welcomed the opportunity to obtain full time work; some had concerns that working full days would affect their personal arrangements, others had concerns regarding the physical demands of working a full day.

Due to the variety of responses, DPS extended the consultation period and informed VSOs of this on 14 October 2014. This is to allow for further analysis of staff feedback, and to cost an alternative model proposed by one of the VSOs.

On 22 October 2014 a further consultation meeting was held to hear staff views and questions. At that meeting staff requested more detail regarding the implications of moving to full day shifts and what it would mean for their personal circumstances. As a result of that meeting the next steps in the consultation process will include:

- a representative group of VSOs contributing to a risk assessment of full day shifts;
- developing a typical daily roster so that VSOs could see the range of tasks they would be required to undertake over the course of a full day;
- indicative salary calculations for full-time and part-time positions;
- call for expressions of interest to assess the actual interest in working full time;

- additional development and costing of models or variations of the proposed model and roster; and,
- continue to trial full day shifts by new casuals, with an evaluation to occur at the end of December 2014.

DPS also met with the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) on 30 September and 24 October 2014 to discuss the proposed changes. DPS has agreed to meet with and update the CPSU monthly during the next phase of consultation.