Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee — Budget Estimates Hearing—May 2017

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Enterprise bargaining**

Question: **120**

Written: **Senator Wong**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 7 July 2017

Can copies of the enterprise bargaining survey results and any focus group reports be provided?

What was the cost of conducting the survey and any focus groups?

Were any outside contractors involved in conducting or facilitating the survey and, if applicable, the focus groups?

If so, who was engaged?

Answer

1. A copy of the survey results as provided to all staff is attached.
2. The survey was run internally through an existing subscription to the "SurveyMonkey" service.
3. There were no outside contractors involved in conducting or facilitating the survey.

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

DPS ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

1. Enterprise Agreement Survey participation

The enterprise agreement (EA) survey invite link was sent to 957 non-SES DPS staff and in total, 37 per cent of staff (353 employees) participated and the survey had a 91 per cent completion rate.

The survey period opened at midday on Wednesday 15 March and closed at midnight on Thursday 6 April. New starters were also invited to participate in the survey.

The Parliamentary Library had the highest staff participation in the survey, followed by the Information Services Division.
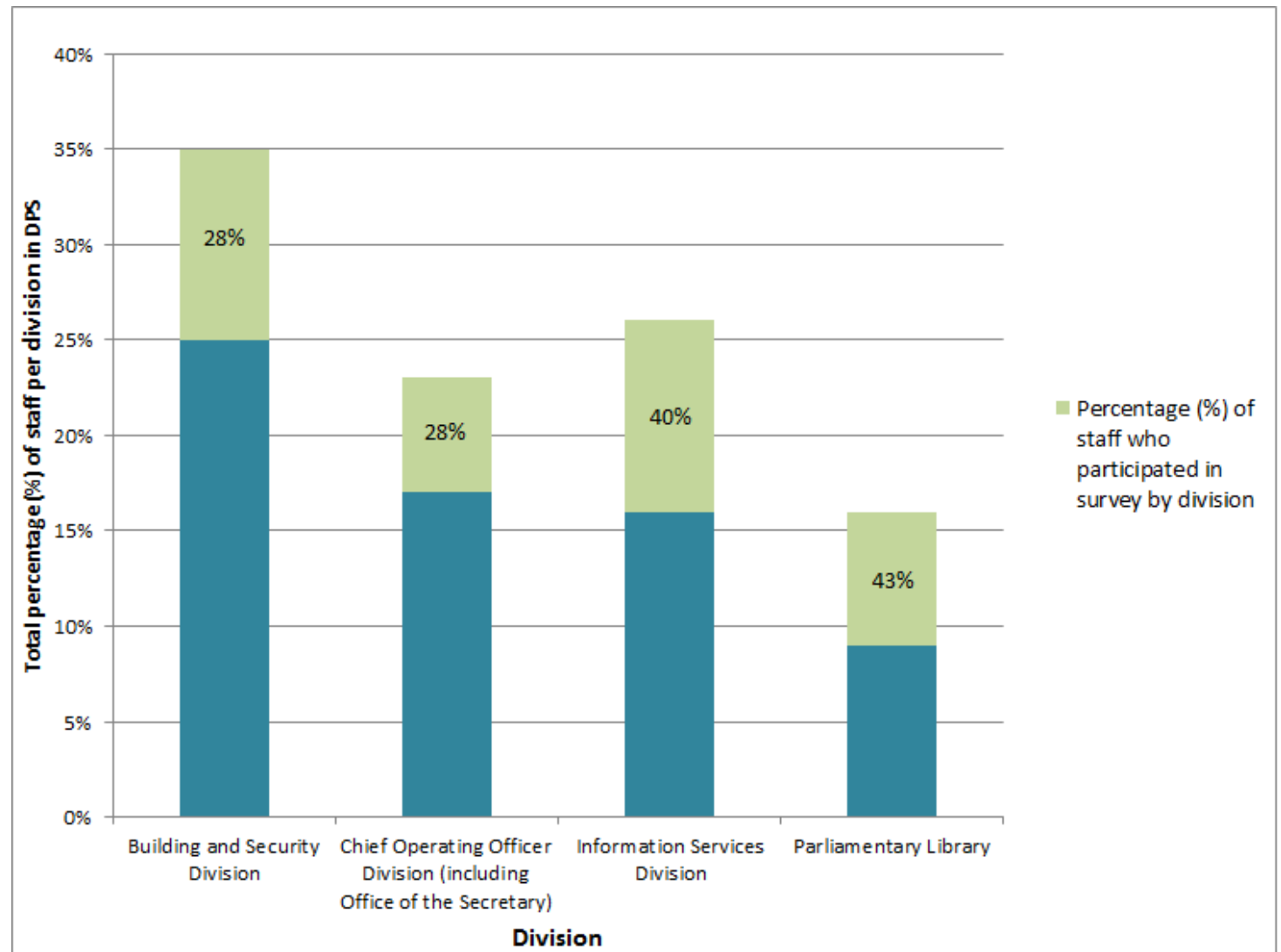
2. Participation and substantive classification

The highest participation rate came from PEL1's, with 55 per cent participating in the survey.

The lowest participation rate was from the PSL 1-2 classification, with 14 per cent participating.
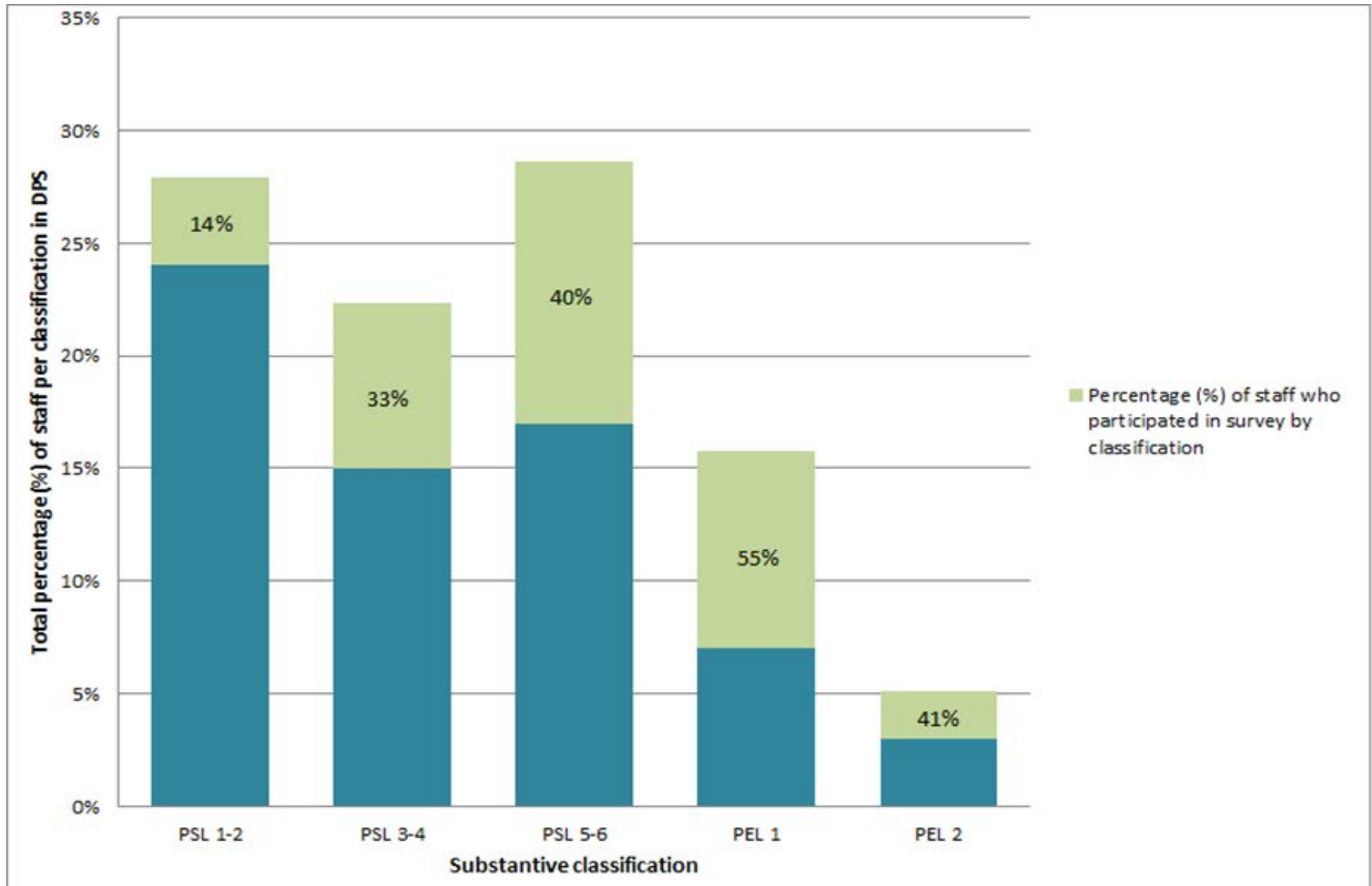
3. Factors that influenced the way employees voted

The proposed changes to employment conditions was the main influence on how respondents voted at the 2016 ballot.

Other factors that influenced respondents' vote were:

- the timing of the vote;

- that more consultation and clearer explanation of changes were required;

- that DPS is a diverse department which requires specialisation in certain areas;

- that the pay rise offered was not enough;

- that there was a desire for a sign on bonus or back pay; and

- disagreement against the changes to employment conditions.

1 Changes to employment conditions

2 The pay increases on offer

3 The time taken so far in EA bargaining

4 Streamlining of content (i.e. consistency of conditions, simplifying and removing repetition of legislation)

5 Belief that voting no will result in an improved offer

6 Belief that voting no will mean that management will not continue to adhere to the APS bargaining policy

7 Whether unions and bargaining representatives support the agreement

8

4. Top four sources of information that influenced how voting occurred

1 Conversations with colleagues

2 Management information sessions

3 Management emails and announcements

4 Intranet information on the replacement EA page

Respondents stated that their conversations with colleagues were the most influential when deciding how to vote on the replacement EA.

Other sources of information included reading the proposed EA, respondents' own observations and comparing DPS with other Commonwealth departments.

5. Effects of replacement EA and other DPS colleagues

The majority of respondents stated that the changes of conditions of employment for their colleagues working in other areas of DPS influenced how they voted, even if their own conditions were not affected.

No, 37%

Yes, 63%
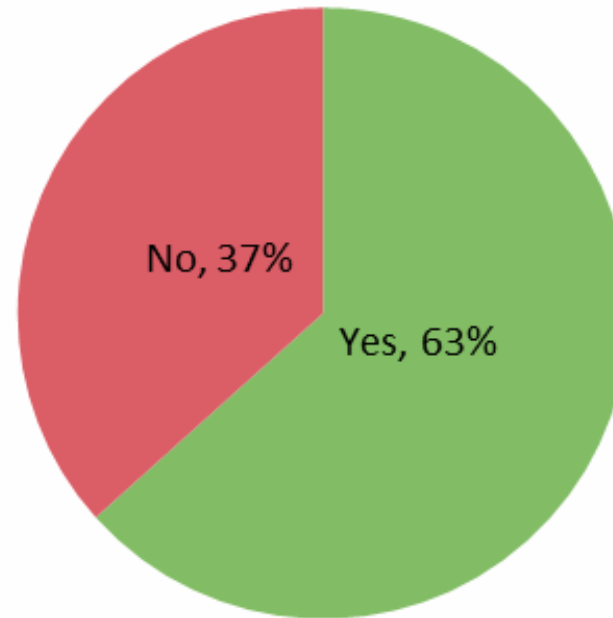
6. Australian Government Workplace Bargaining Policy

A large proportion of respondents stated that the principles of the government's Workplace Bargaining Policy influenced their vote (or non-vote).
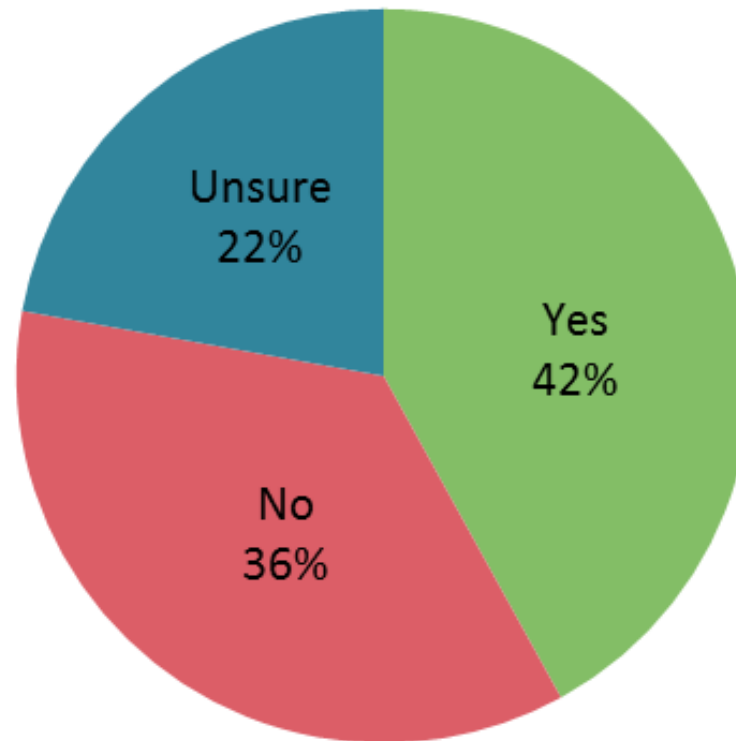
****We note that the bargaining policy was incorrectly referred to as the 'APS Workplace Bargaining Policy' in the survey. It should have been the Australian Government's 'Workplace Bargaining Policy 2015'.

7. Acceptability of proposed elements in the replacement EA

Legend: ■ Acceptable ■ Tolerable ■ N/A ■ Unacceptable

Categories (top to bottom):
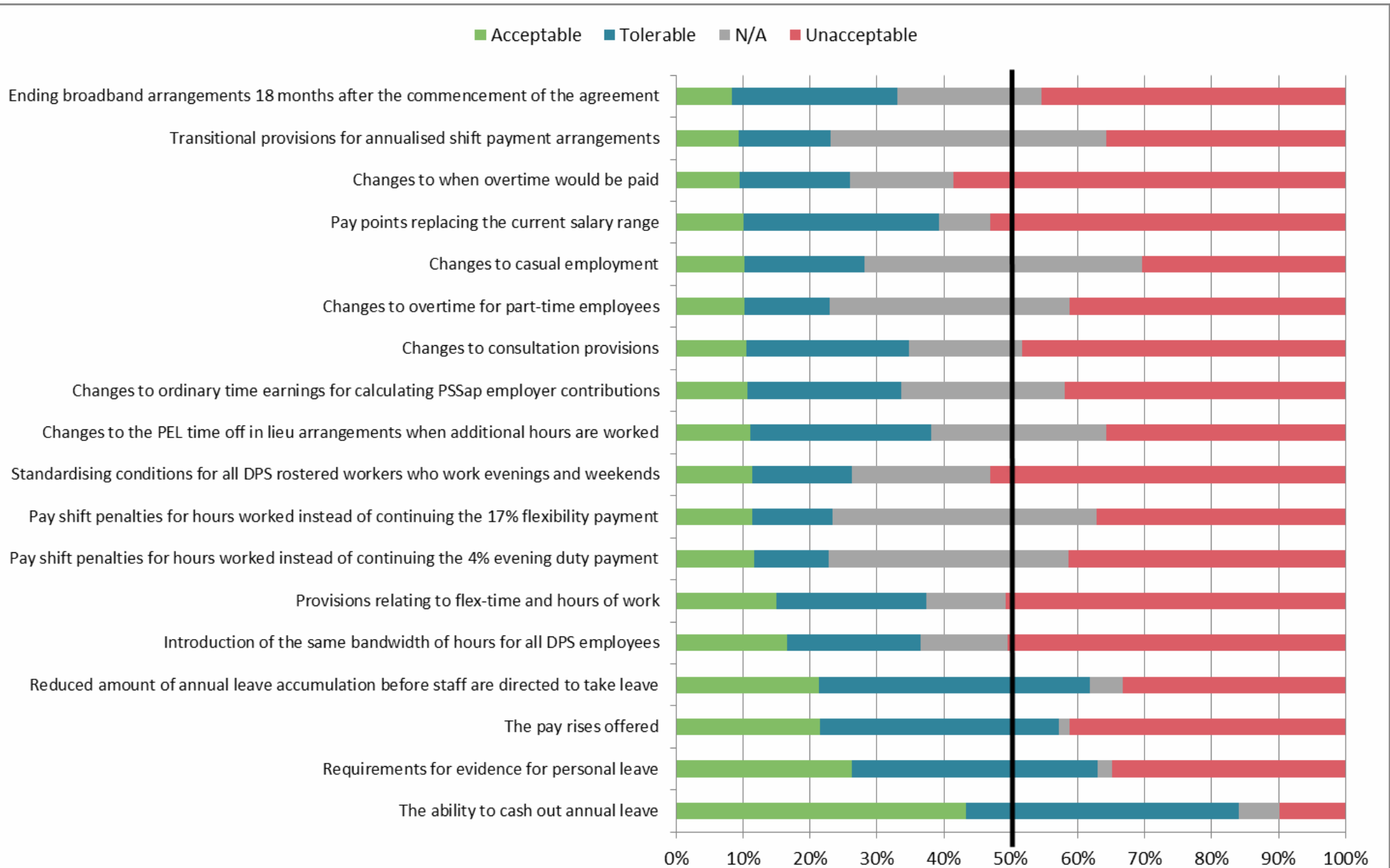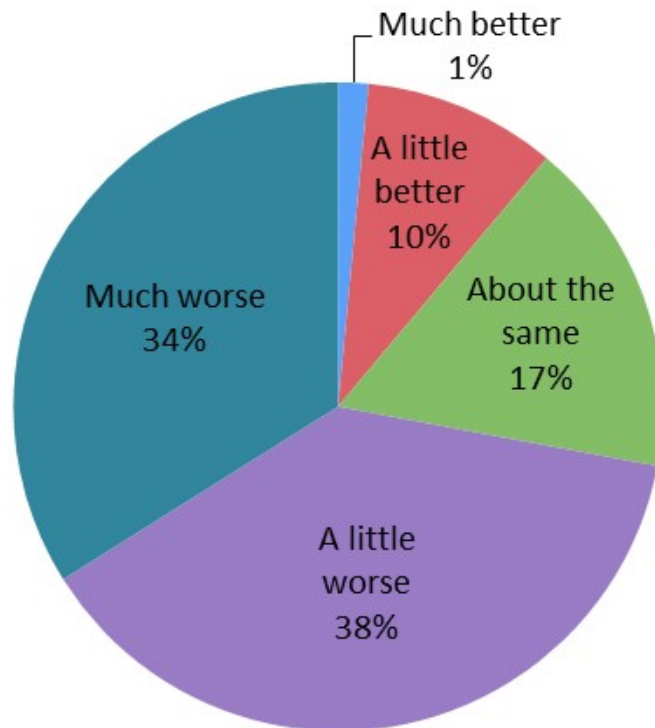- Ending broadband arrangements 18 months after the commencement of the agreement
- Transitional provisions for annualised shift payment arrangements
- Changes to when overtime would be paid
- Pay points replacing the current salary range
- Changes to casual employment
- Changes to overtime for part-time employees
- Changes to consultation provisions
- Changes to ordinary time earnings for calculating PSSap employer contributions
- Changes to the PEL time off in lieu arrangements when additional hours are worked
- Standardising conditions for all DPS rostered workers who work evenings and weekends
- Pay shift penalties for hours worked instead of continuing the 17% flexibility payment
- Pay shift penalties for hours worked instead of continuing the 4% evening duty payment
- Provisions relating to flex-time and hours of work
- Introduction of the same bandwidth of hours for all DPS employees
- Reduced amount of annual leave accumulation before staff are directed to take leave
- The pay rises offered
- Requirements for evidence for personal leave
- The ability to cash out annual leave

## 8. Personal terms and conditions under the replacement EA

The majority of respondents felt their personal terms and conditions would be worse off overall.

Those who felt they would be much worse off commented that their concerns related to the proposed changes to penalty rates, impact on take home pay, remuneration (including pay rise and broad banding) and changes to the span of hours and rostering.

Other comments related to non-family friendly shifts, inability to stockpile annual leave, changes to personal leave arrangements such as evidence requirements and provisions being in policy rather than in the EA.

9. Consistent employment conditions and payments for all employees
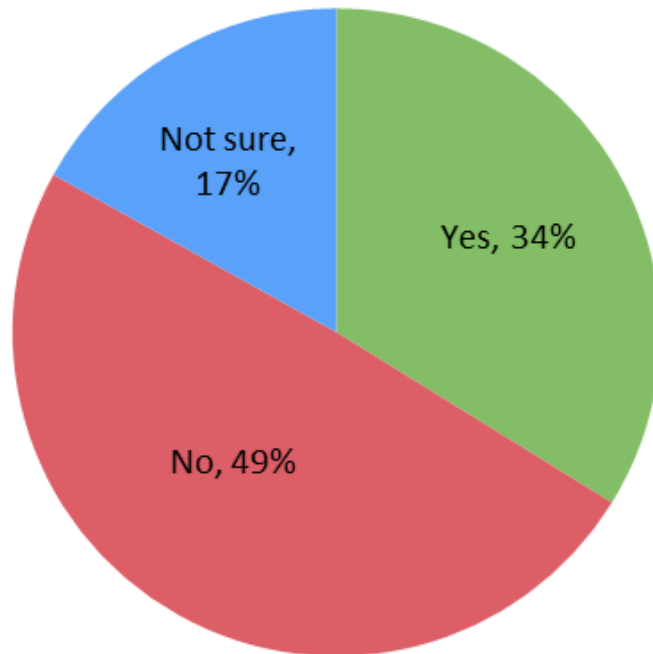
Almost half of the respondents stated their disagreement for the introduction of consistent employment conditions across DPS.

10. Understanding the potential effects of the replacement EA

Almost two thirds of respondents stated that they understood the potential effects of the replacement EA, based on information they received from DPS management.

Not sure 10%

No 26%

Yes 64%
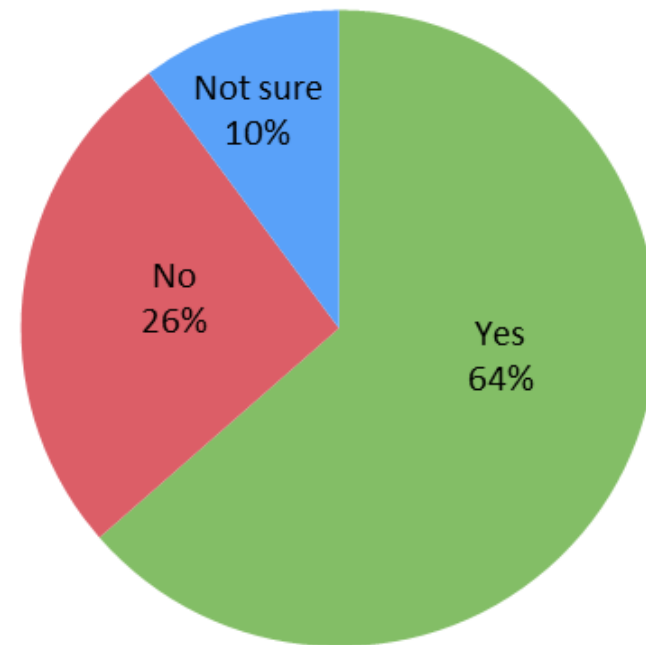
11. Suggested terms and conditions that could be changed to help fund pay rises

There were a number of comments calling for no changes to terms and conditions and to provide a higher pay rise.

Respondents mainly suggested changes to operational arrangements, leave entitlements (e.g. reducing the number of personal leave days), penalty rates (e.g. limiting the number of staff eligible for overtime) and remuneration.

Suggested operational changes included to decrease the number of EL1-2s and SES in DPS, to not salary match when employees come to DPS from another department, to better performance manage, and to remove the fringe benefit tax on car parking.

Other operational suggestions included moving the Library from level 2, adding three minutes to the working day, removing under/non-performing workers, reducing staff numbers in areas, charging corporate rates for venue hire and offering voluntary redundancies.

There also were comments suggesting and requesting that DPS not use the Australian Government's Workplace Bargaining Policy, given the department is unique and serves the parliament.

12. What can be done differently to achieve a successful vote for a new EA?

The main suggested changes that DPS could implement to achieve a successful vote, based on comments from the respondents, were:

To keep terms conditions as is and forgo or lower the pay rise, to not apply a 'one size fits all' approach and to make changes to penalty entitlements.

There were suggestions of fact sheets, comparison tables, more Q&A sessions with the Management Bargaining Team, and more information flowing from managers with increase interaction between staff and managers.

To improve communications, leave the terms and conditions as they are and provide a higher pay rise, back pay and sign on bonus, improve bargaining processes, change leave entitlements and operational changes.

New EA

That more needed to be done in the communication space and outlined a need for DPS to consult more and communicate better.

That employee bargaining representatives needed to be more familiar with EA changes so staff could approach them for information. Other comments suggested that DPS needed to listen to the bargaining representatives more.

Some respondents were happy with the replacement EA.

13. Preferred communication methods

Respondents' mostly preferred management emails and announcements as the communication method to receive progress about the replacement EA. The least preferred method was via the Replacement EA intranet webpage

Ranking	Communication method
1 (most preferred)	Management emails and announcements
2	Management information sessions
3	Branch information sessions
4	Workshops
5	Team meetings
6	Q&A sessions
7	Intranet information on the Replacement EA page