

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing—October 2016

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: Enterprise bargaining

Question: 24

Written: Senator Wong

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 2 December 2016

1. Does the Department of Parliamentary Services consider itself to be a family-friendly employer?
2. Does the current enterprise agreement contain references to a family-friendly workplace?
3. Will the proposed agreement retain such references?

Answer

1. Yes. The Department has a number of family-friendly arrangements in place for employees (see response to Question 2). These arrangements are in place while the Department runs a twenty-four hour business operation to support the functions of the Australian Parliament and the work of parliamentarians.
2. Yes. Clause 32 of the *DPS Enterprise Agreement 2011* states:

32 DPS is mindful of the needs of employees to balance their work and family responsibilities and shall, where consistent with both operational arrangements and the employee's family and other responsibilities, extend assistance to employees. In circumstances where DPS is unable to approve an application:

- (a) for leave;*
- (b) to vary working hours or work part-time; or*
- (c) to purchase additional leave;*

the relevant supervisor will provide the employee with reasons in writing within 14 days of receipt of the application. The response should include evidence that DPS has considered alternative arrangements or options that might address the requirement of the employee.

The agreement also provides a range of provisions to enable and assist employees in meeting their family and work commitments including:

- paid and unpaid personal leave to provide care and support for an ill, injured or recently bereaved family or household member (clauses 127–138);
- access for employees and their families to a confidential and professional employee assistance program for work-related or personal problems (clause 53);
- paid maternity leave and unpaid parental leave for birth or adoptive parents (clauses 162-170);
- paid supporting partners leave for birth, foster or adoptive parents (clause 167);
- access to regular part-time employment for employees returning from maternity or parental leave (clause 104);
- the ability to purchase additional leave (clauses 158–161); and
- access to flexible working hours arrangements and the ability to vary their working hours and patterns with their supervisor's agreement (clauses 68–80) for employees at PSL 1-6 classification levels who do not work shifts or rosters.

3. While the proposed draft enterprise agreement does not contain an equivalent provision to clause 32, all of the family-friendly enabling provisions in the current EA which are identified in the dot points above are incorporated in the proposed draft agreement. Additionally, the replacement enterprise agreement will:
- include the obligation to consult with employees about the impact on their family or caring responsibilities when regular or rostered hours of work are changed, and
 - extend the 14 weeks paid parental leave to foster parents who are permanent foster carers of a child under 16 years of age.