



Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021
ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE
Monday, 21 February 2022

Asked by Michael Pettersson MLA on 21 February 2022: Emma Davidson MLA took on notice the following question(s):

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In relation to: Union encouragement policy

MR PETTERSSON: Whilst we are talking about wellbeing in the workplace, I was hoping that all the different entities could talk the committee through how they are implementing the government's union encouragement policy. CHS, Justice Health and the Office of Mental Health and Wellbeing would be wonderful.

Ms Davidson: Sorry, implementing which policy?

MR PETTERSSON: The ACT government's union encouragement policy.

Ms Davidson: I might pass to Rebecca Cross to speak first.

Ms Cross: I can take on notice the detail of what we have been doing, but we have recently engaged with another directorate that has had a very successful union encouragement policy. We are looking at the strategies that they have put in place to see whether there is anything more that we need to do in the directorate.

In general, it is part of our induction of staff. It is part of encouraging people, if there are meetings, to take time to attend those meetings. As I said, we are currently looking to see if there is more that we should be doing.

Mr Pfeffer: From a CHS perspective, I guess, it is a similar answer. Recently we did re-design our induction process in terms of structuring out people's day—they have joined the organisation—and the various modules that they work through during the day. We did that in collaboration with union partners in designing it, and our unions do participate in that induction process.

MR PETTERSSON: In the context of Justice Health specifically and in the case of the Office of Mental Health and Wellbeing, that would be great too.

Mr Pfeffer: In terms of Justice Health, that is obviously one of the teams that are within CHS. So our induction process applies to all team members who are joining, irrespective of which particular stream they may end up working in. In CHS they still do go through the same mandatory training at the same time as we provide, I guess, the mass induction each month. We are onboarding in the order of 700 to 800 team members a year.

It has been the case that COVID has disrupted to some degree the process that we previously followed. We have not been able to have hundreds of people in auditoriums, as we used to, in terms of presentations and then structured stalls outside the auditorium. So, we have had to get a little bit creative about how we do that month to month with the induction process.

Certainly, Justice Health is covered under the umbrella of Canberra Health Services and experiences the same induction process. In the organisation and within the various streams there would be induction processes particular to a ward, or a workplace, or a stream of service delivery.

Ms Davidson: I think you will find that, for the Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing, that would be covered by the same processes as ACT Health.

MINISTER DAVIDSON: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) is undertaking a number of measures to promote the union encouragement policy within the Directorate.

ACTHD will facilitate a workshop with representatives from across the ACT Health system and union representatives. This workshop will seek to enhance the health systems application of the encouragement policy drawing on the experience and knowledge of unions, managers and staff.

In preparation for this workshop ACTHD has:

- Invited feedback from multiple unions on the principles that underpin best practice consultation.
- Invited the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) to present an example of best-case consultation at the February system wide HR matters working group.
- Consulted representatives from the Community Services Directorate (CSD) to prepare a case study on how CSD implemented the Union Encouragement Policy. It is proposed this case study be considered in the workshop to stimulate discussion on refined solution for Health recognising our differing operating environment.

It is anticipated this workshop will lay the foundations for a further workshop dedicated solely to system wide consultation, with a view to co-designing guidance for managers to implement in the workplace.

At a Directorate level, CPSU has recently been invited to present at a new online induction course. There are plans to broaden the invitation to other unions based on the agreement governing new starters employment terms and conditions.

HR representatives and a number of union organisers regularly meet to facilitate a productive working relationship. In addition, ACTHD also recently supported CPSU's request to hold monthly paid time meetings. To raise awareness of the meeting, ACTHD published access details on the intranet for members and new employees to join.

ACTHD has circulated new terms of reference for the Directorate Consultative Committee, including a proposed increase in the frequency of meetings to enable greater engagement with unions and its employees on workplace matters. This forum is responsible for discussing the operations of all ACTHD Enterprise Agreements and is the peak body for consultation between the ACTHD and unions about broader issues pertaining to the employment relationship.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Signature: 

Date: 6 March 2022

By the Minister for Mental Health, Emma Davidson MLA