

Feedback: Special NCF meeting

Head Office consolidation

The employer indicated that EXCO approved the Head Office consolidation and rationalisation project that will result in the relocation of staff from six buildings to a single physical work environment at the SARS primary owned building and other alternate workspaces. The scope of the project includes:

- Termination of leases
- Implementation of alternative workplace strategies aligned to new ways of working based on a pilot project as follows:
 - Hoteling/hot-desking and/or free addressing
 - Work from home/remote working practices
 - Agile office designs, where appropriate.

The Work-From-Home Policy is currently being formulated and is with management for comment. The employer reiterated that despite the decommissioning of rented buildings, a challenge in respect of finances would still be experienced owing to cost implications of the decommissioning of buildings and therefore money will not be freed up immediately as a result of this project.

Withdrawal: Travel Allowance

Before the presentation was made, the employer stated that despite the proposal being made formal in the Forum, discussions will continue and that multi-lateral meetings will be held to constructively resolve the matter.

Phasing out of Travel Allowance

Pursuant to the discussions on 5 November 2018, wherein SARS gave notice of the intention to withdraw the travel allowance, and subsequent discussions held on 5 December 2018, where labour was requested to submit input to the process of withdrawal, SARS gave notice to withdraw the travel allowance for remaining employees with effect from 1 April 2021. The current travel allowance is R5 900 per month. The employer proposed that the withdrawal will be phased out using the soft-landing approach, which is meant to allow employees to get out of any financial obligations they may have towards their current vehicles based on the travel allowance:

- 25% reduction on the current travel allowance on 1 April 2021 (payment of 75%)
- 25% reduction on the current travel allowance on 1 April 2022 (payment of 50%)
- 25% reduction on the current travel allowance on 1 April 2023 (payment of 25%)
- 25% reduction on the current travel allowance on 1 April 2024 (payment of 0%)

During the phase-out period and beyond, employees may use their own vehicles and claim reimbursement for business travel from the first kilometer, or alternatively request the use of a pool car. Current recipients of the travel allowance will receive a letter notifying them of the phasing out process. The PSA clearly stated that it is our view that the employer is not at liberty to withdraw the financial benefit to employees and will provide the employer with our legal position in due course.

Illicit Trade Unit/Customs Border Operations

The Illicit Trade Unit is one of the units making up the Criminal and Illicit Economy activities. It is a new outfit aimed at addressing strategic objective 3 of the organisation by making it difficult and costly for those that do not want to comply. The Unit is a highly specialised trade and operational unit with the primary operational thrust on dismantling illicit trade schemes through project managed, and risk led operations.

People Placement

The Unit should consist of people with different skillsets, e.g. a legal background, investigative skills and analytical skills. Managers must be able to coordinate and control investigations along project management principles. This is based on individuals who have worked in the previous TIU that was conducting investigations and audits on specific cases from detection to finalisation. The selection criteria used by the employer was not only based on the job title but also on the type of work they were doing. Managers were requested to engage with their teams. The employer confirmed that with regards to the Conditions of Service (employment), impacted employees have been consulted in relation to their current circumstances and such discussions will continue.

The PSA requested the employer to provide insight as to whether there will be an alternative for those employees who opt not to move or cannot move to which the employer advised that alternative accommodation for impacted employees will be identified, should the need arise. The PSA further queried that considering the current capacity constraints being experienced by the Customs division, does the employer have sufficient capacity to deploy staff to the Ports of Entry (Land Border Posts). The employer advised that it will continue to engage with affected employees and that the process will be transparent and voluntary. It was emphasised that care and concern will be displayed by the employer and that it commits to be flexible and agile. The employer made an appeal to labour to assist in encouraging members to continue with engagements.

Feedback: Debt Management job evaluation process

The employer reiterated that despite the presentation of the outcome of the job evaluation process for Debt Management being done, this does not mean that even though the process has been finalised, implementation will take place. It must be noted that all job evaluation procedures remain on hold until the Organisational Transition has been concluded, which will be communicated to labour in due course. The outcome of the Debt Management job evaluation process has been noted by the PSA.

Debt Grades Pre-Job Optimisation

4A Team Member: Debt Management

5A Team Member: Legal Collections

Optimisation Outcome

4A Team Member: Debt Collections

5A Functional Specialist: Debt Collections (Tax)

5A NEW ROLE Functional Specialist: Debt Collections (Customs & Excise)

Members will be informed of developments.

GENERAL MANAGER