

Feedback: Departmental Bargaining Chamber - 17 May 2022

Vacancy report

The employer reported that 73 vacant posts were advertised since 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. The posts were derived from natural attrition posts and national early retirement strategy. Only 42 posts were filled and 31 are still in a process to be filled. The employer further reported that a business case was submitted to Treasury and 761 posts were approved. The employer envisaged to fill the majority of these posts by the end of July 2022. A total of 68% of these posts will be allocated to civic services and 32% to immigration services, funded by Treasury for the 2022/23-financial year. The PSA raised a concern about the shortage of staff in the Department. The PSA maintained that employees were overworked and overloaded owing to understaffing. The morale of employees is very low owing to the current situation. The PSA urged the Department to prioritise posts at frontline offices and ports of entry. The meeting resolved to establish a task team to develop an implementation plan to reduce the staff shortage at critical service-delivery points. Members will be informed of developments.

Amendments to *Refugee Asylum Act*

The employer reported that a circular was issued to all refugee asylum centres to stop implementing amendments of the *Act* until further notice. The KwaZulu-Natal refugee asylum centre management was reprimanded for acting against the instruction. The PSA welcomed the decision and committed to monitor developments and advise members accordingly.

OHS compliance and COVID-19 regulations

A facilitation meeting held on 23 February 2022 recommended that the employer should consult labour on intervention measures and risk assessment plan. A COVID-19 steerco meeting was held on 3 May 2022 and a follow-up multi-lateral meeting was held on 9 May 2022. There were no COVID-19 positive cases reported in this quarter. The PSA noted the report and urged the employer to continue to implement appropriate safety measures in the workplace.

Recalling of staff from banks

The employer reported that there were 91 employees deployed at banks to assist with civic services applications. Employees will work at the banks until the public-private partnership (PPP) between banks and the Department is approved. The partnership agreement intends to render civic services functions at banks. The employer committed not to recall any employees from banks without consultation with labour.

The PSA noted the report and requested the employer to table the matter of PPP at the PSCBC for noting.

Departmental policies

The PSA received reports that the employer approved and published the Immigration Uniform Policy on the website, whilst the matter was still discussed at the DBC. The PSA condemned the conduct of the employer and demanded that the Policy be withdrawn immediately. The PSA refused to engage further on other draft departmental policies until the uniform policy is withdrawn. The employer requested to consult its principals and provide feedback at the special DBC meeting.

Modernisation process

The employer reported that progress reports regarding the E-gating, ICT plan, E-visa, and ABIS projects were presented to labour during the multi-lateral on 13 May 2022. The employer committed to consult labour about improvements of information systems in the Department. Members will be informed of developments.

Home Affairs qualification

The employer reported that there were 134 employees registered on this qualification. The qualification is equivalent to NQF-level 5 with 20 credits. A total of 114 employees completed the course. The employer committed to include this qualification as one of the requirements in the advertisement of civic and immigration services posts. The qualification will serve as an added advantage. The PSA urged the employer to enroll more employees for the course to acquire such qualification.

Supply of uniform

The task team distributed the immigration uniform to various ports of entries. The process is still on-going. The task team will submit a closed-up report after the allocation process is completed. The members will be kept informed of the development.

Border Management Agency

The matter was tabled at the PSCBC. Members will be informed of developments.

DHA deployment to foreign missions

The employer reported that a draft policy on deployment to foreign mission will be developed and tabled at the next DBC meeting for discussion.

The PSA wants to take this opportunity to wish all employees who are unwell owing to COVID-19 a safe and speedy recovery.

GENERAL MANAGER