

Feedback: Departmental Bargaining Chamber (DBC) meeting – Review of policies and procedures: 19 February 2024

Business Continuity Management Policy

The Business Continuity Management (BCM) policy was presented to the PSA for consultation. The employer intends to review some provisions for the policy as required in terms of the *Disaster Management Act* to have the necessary policies and strategies that will ensure that business continuity is maintained. The new changes made to the policy are in paragraph 1.3 wherein the BCM vision of the DTIC was added. The BCM lifecycle in paragraph 4 was amended to reflect the current BCM good practice from the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) and the Business Continuity Institute (BCI). The disaster funding arrangement was added in paragraph 6, and newly defined roles and responsibilities were added to the policy in paragraph 8 and Addendum A. In terms of the BCM strategy, some of the amendments were the detailing of six professional practices from BCI as points 4.1 to 4.6 of the strategy document. Addition of a section on communication in paragraph 6; and contingency strategies and plans were moved to Addendum C. The PSA acknowledges that some of the proposed amendments are to line up the policy with international standards. However, the PSA is of the view that policies of this nature should not be developed only for compliance with legislation but should be practical enough for implementation, and system and process testing should be conducted and improved. The PSA further submitted to the employer that as the BCM policy was key in 2020 during the national lockdown to ensure that the Department continues to function while employees are at the home, that experience should serve as a basis to develop a work-for-home policy that can be implemented on improved principles and processes.

Ethics pop-up messages

The PSA raised a concern regarding the employer's decision to place pop-up ethics messages on all departmental computers without prior consultation for employees to understand the potential consequences of these messages to employees. The PSA subscribes to high ethical standards and always advises its members to conduct themselves ethically. However, it was submitted to the employer that when measures are put in place that require employees to give some consent to having read or been made aware of any information, such measures should be consulted for members to understand the potential implications of their consent. The employer noted the concerns raised by the PSA and indicated that the pop-up messages will be implemented to raise awareness and assist employees with information

on what they should do when confronted with an ethical dilemma. The employer indicated that the pop-up messages have not been in full use and requested labour to consult members and provide feedback. Members are requested to make comments and raise concerns, if any, on the employer's intention to implement pop-up messages when they switch on their computers that will display information on ethical conduct in the workplace and after reading the message, the employee will have to confirm to have read the message.

Fraud Prevention Policy and Fraud Strategy Amendments

The Department is required by the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) to develop methods of preventing fraud and corruption in the Department. Several clauses have been amended, including clause 3.1 wherein the statement on the purpose of the policy has been amplified to include that the policy has to maintain an ethical culture and establish procedures as well as assign responsibilities for investigation of fraud, corruption, malpractice, and other related crimes. The Fraud Prevention Strategy guides processes to be followed when fraud and corruption are detected. The PSA views this policy as an extremely critical policy and members are urged to familiarise themselves to assist in combating fraud and corruption in government. Members are encouraged to make inputs to the proposed amendments to the policy and ensure that it is user-friendly.

Implementation: PSCBC Resolution 3/2009 and GPSSBC Resolution 5/2014

Subsequent to the PSA tabling this matter as an agenda item at the DBC, demanding that the employer should pay all employees eligible for payment in terms of the PSCBC Resolution 3/2009, the employer continued to delay payments. PSCBC Resolution 3/2009 provides for pay progression of employees who have been in the employment of government at the same level for a continued period of 15 years to progress to the next level. When the employer delays such progression for qualifying employees, it delays their well-deserved increase in remuneration and attracts high tax deductions when paid with payback. However, after several follow-ups by the PSA in December 2023, the employer reported at the Chamber meeting that out of 26 qualifying employees, ten were paid in December 2023 and the remaining 16 employees will be paid on 1 April 2024 when they fully complete the required period. The PSA demanded that the employer should act with more efficiency going forward and implement progression of employees timeously. This is another victory for PSA members who brought this matter to the PSA to table it on their behalf. It adds to other victories that the PSA attained for members in 2023, including the lengthy battle with the employer to implement GPSSBC Resolution 5/2014, which provides for the payment of recognition rewards for employees who obtain improved qualifications at their own cost. Since the conclusion of this agreement in 2014, the employer dragged its feet in giving effect. The PSA persisted in pushing the employer to conclude the list of relevant qualifications and have it approved by the Department of Public Service and Administration and for applications to be received and processed. The PSA remains committed to keeping the employer accountable in awarding employees what is due to them.

Members are urged to read the Business Continuity Management Policy and the Fraud Prevention Policy and send inputs on the two policies to the PSA on joseph.mashigo@psa.co.za on or before **26 February 2024**.

Employees who want to join the PSA can visit the PSA website at www.psa.co.za or send an email to ask@psa.co.za, alternatively contact the nearest PSA Provincial Office.

Reuben Maleka
GENERAL MANAGER