

FOR PSA MEMBERS: **HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL (HSRC)**

25-03-2024

Feedback: Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Consultative Forum Meeting – 19 March 2024

Funeral Fund rebroke feedback

Members may still be aware that the PSA sponsored this item during the 2023/24 wage negotiations, demanding an increase to the Fund. The employer announced that the Funeral benefit has increased as of 1 February 2024 for:

- Employee (Principal insured) R20,000 to R30,000
- Qualifying Spouse R20,000 to R30,000
- Qualifying child aged 14 to 21 years * R20,000 to R30,000
- Qualifying children aged 6 and over but younger than 14 R10,000 to R20,000
- Qualifying child younger than age 6 R5,000 to R20,000
- Stillborn child (28 weeks) R5,000 to R20,000
- Premium per employee per month R22.53 to R33.50

The Cover is extended to a child of 26 years of age provided he/she is a full-time student, and the HSRC will continue to pay the funeral cover premium of R33.50 per employee per month on behalf of permanent and long-term (12 months or longer) contract employees. This excludes staff on the ring-fenced internship programs. The PSA is excited that the employer acceded to its demand.

Pension Fund audit feedback

The PSA requested an update on the Pension Fund audit that has been conducted by an external audit firm. The employer reported the verification of pension contributions, tax opinion, and pension calculation was assigned to *Deloitte*, to conduct an audit as HSRC has been moving from one fund to another in the past. *Deloitte* has not completed the audit yet and the employer after following up was informed that the audit findings might be received by mid-April 2024. The employer reported that each employee will be receiving an individual letter once the findings have been received.

Wage increase negotiations

The PSA reminded the employer that it was now the time of the year when employees were expecting an increase in their salaries due to rising financial costs. The employer was requested to advise whether an allocation letter had been received from the National Treasury. The employer reported that the allocation letter with considerable budget cuts for 3 years is as follows:

- 2024/24 R 259,6 million
- 2025/26 R 268,8 million
- 2026/27 R 381,4 million

They further advised that the employer's finance section is currently doing a budgeting process to ascertain what can be offered to increase salaries. The PSA reminded the employer that there are other income streams that HSRC should consider tapping into to determine the salary increases and the employer agreed. The employer reported that their budgeting processing and board meeting will be completed by the end of May 2024 and that is when the employer will be able to place an offer on the table. The PSA requested that once the budgeting process is done, the board convene an urgent meeting just for this matter to be discussed and finalised before May 2024. It was then agreed that the employer would request that the CEO engage the Board to convene a special meeting on this matter once the budgeting process has been completed.

Once-off cash bonus

It was also agreed that the once-off bonus will also be discussed in the next meeting, once the board has sat, as the employer is currently not aware if there is any surplus and the information may change once the financial year closes. Parties can re-engage on the matter in mid-May 2024.

Durban office restructuring

The employer reported that the Durban office restructuring and the decision to close the office is also reliant on the organisation's financial status. The PSA implored the employer to consider approaching other entities or departments within Durban like the Medical Research Council who may have a space for the staff members. The PSA argued that the employer was not negotiating in good faith as the board is reported to have decided to close the Durban office without proper consultation. The PSA also proposed that HSRC investigate the possibility of procuring or renting a small satellite office that may cost the organisation less which employees can use when a need arises, rather than relocating them.

It was agreed that weekly consultations on the issue would be conducted with employees as well as the PSA as the sole representative union. The PSA will make sure that no employee is affected negatively by this process.

Employees who want to join the PSA can visit the PSA's website (www.psa.co.za), send an email to ask@psa.co.za, or contact PSA Provincial Offices

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