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FOR PSA MEMBERS: **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (DALRRD)**

14-06-2024

Feedback: DALRRD Departmental Bargaining Chamber meeting

Ethics and risk survey

The employer previously reported that a survey regarding the organisational culture was conducted by the Ethics Institute. The employer raised a concern that there was poor participation by employees in the survey. The final report was submitted to the Director-General, and it would be shared with EXCO and the comprehensive report to be submitted to labour. The PSA noted the report and urged the employer to submit the survey report through the secretariat of the Chamber.

OHS matters

The employer reported that a process to appoint OHS representatives and the determination of the term of office was ongoing. The employer committed to convene a meeting with labour to provide a progress report regarding the appointment of OHS representatives. The PSA noted the request and urged the employer to further provide a comprehensive report regarding OHS compliances in all offices. The employer indicated that such a report will be submitted by 14 June 2024.

GPSSBC Resolution 5/2014 (Recognition of improved qualification)

The employer reported that it could not implement the recognition of improved qualifications post the process of merging with other departments owing to administrative challenges. The employer committed to issuing a circular to encourage employees who qualified for improved qualifications to apply accordingly. Employees would be advised to apply for recognition of improved qualifications before they start their studies. The employer committed to pay 10% of the minimum of salary level 8 as a cash bonus to those who qualified previously. The cash bonus will only be paid for one qualification. The employer will provide a progress report at the next chamber meeting.

Issues at GADI (Agricultural College)

The employer reported that complaints were received from employees at GADI regarding unfair treatment. The team from national, which included labour, met with affected members to resolve issues. The investigation report indicated that some of the issues were resolved but the national team would go back to the College to finalise outstanding matters. Parties agreed that the national team would visit the College from 1 to 3 July 2024.

Training for DBC members

Parties requested the Council to provide refresher training on governance rules to assist new Chamber members in participating in the meeting. Parties further requested the employer to provide a supplement course on collective bargaining to Chamber members. The employer requested to engage its principals on the matter and give feedback at the next meeting.

Pay progression implementation

The PSA raised a concern that the employer failed to implement pay progression for employees who were transferred to the BMA. It was further reported that some employees were penalised for submitting their reports late. The PSA urged the employer to rectify the omission and implement payments of outstanding pay progression. The employer noted the concerns and requested to seek a mandate from its principals. The employer will report back at the next meeting.

Fit-for-purpose organisational structure

The employer reported that the Department is still operating with a start-up structure, which was used after the merging of departments process. It reported that the process to finalise a fit-for-purpose structure was ongoing and internal engagement with EXCO would be completed soon. The employer further reported that since the contract of the service provider was terminated, it decided to proceed to develop the organisational structure internally with the assistance of the Organisational Development Section. A project plan and draft terms of reference for a task team will be shared with labour for input. The PSA noted the report and urged the employer to share proposed dates for the task team to sit and deliberate on the terms of reference first.

Interim organisational structure for restitution

It was previously reported to members that the employer decided to remove the Restitution Directorate from the Department so that it could operate independently. The process was put on hold and the employer failed to provide clear reasons in that regard. The employer indicated that it engaged the DPSA and was advised that it could not remove the Restitution Directorate from the Department without any declaration by the President of the Republic. The PSA noted the report and raised concerns that the matter was long outstanding, and the employer should put prior procedures in place to finalise the matter. The matter was removed from the agenda until there are developments reported.

Decentralisation of certain functions to provinces

It was previously reported that the employer intended to decentralise some of functions to provinces. There were some agriculture functions that were duplicated by the Department. The employer has already identified those functions to be transferred to provinces and the progress report will be shared with labour. The PSA noted the report and urged the employer to consult the envisaged process with labour before any implementation. The employer noted the concerns and committed to establishing various workstreams, which would include labour. The employer indicated that the implementation process would start as soon as the 7th Administration is inaugurated. The PSA noted the update and requested the employer to report the matter as soon as there is progress.

Relocation to new DALRRD building and relocation of Western Cape DALRRD Office

The employer was not ready to report on the matter and requested that it be deferred to a special Chamber meeting to be held in the next two weeks.

Cleaners

It was previously reported that Cleaners who were working at the old DALRRD building have now been displaced since the move to the new building. The employer reported that Cleaners who could not be placed at the new building will be re-purposed in other areas for development. They were further allocated new supervisors and signed new performance agreements. The PSA urged the employer to implement the placement of Cleaners properly and not treat them unfairly. The PSA will continue to monitor the process.

Freezing and filling of vacant posts

The employer reported that under the period in review, it filled critical posts. It submitted motivations to the DPSA to fill those posts, taking into consideration cost-cutting measures. The employer further indicated that it would fill posts on a bigger scale once the process to implement the fit-for-purpose structure is finalised. The PSA noted the report and urged the employer to fast-track the filling of posts since members are overloaded with work.

Employee-satisfaction survey

It was previously reported that the employer intended to conduct an employee-satisfaction survey. The survey was intended to receive views from employees about treatment at the Department. Participation by employees was low. The employer will share the outcome of the survey with labour at the next chamber meeting. The PSA noted the report and raised concern about the low participation by employees.

DEEDS quota

The employer reported that it aimed to develop a quota to establish a workload to be done during normal working hours and overtime. Parties agreed to establish a task team to facilitate the process and report to the Chamber on an ongoing basis. The task team will develop terms of reference to start with its responsibilities. The progress report will be tabled at the next Chamber meeting.

E-Recruitment and E-Leave system

It was previously reported that the employer intended to introduce an E-Recruitment and E-Leave system. The employer reported that it has already started to assess the E-recruitment system. The E-Leave will follow. The project plan will be shared with labour at the task team. The progress report will be submitted at the next Chamber meeting.

Reassignment of employees dealing with land acquisition and land development support

The employer reported that after the merger process was finalised and some of the posts for Land Acquisition and Land Development support were abolished. As a result, some of senior employees were reassigned to help in that directorate. Members complained that they are expected to perform additional work and are overloaded with work. They requested the PSA to urge the employer to remove them from the directorate. The PSA urged the employer to appoint project temporary project coordinators to perform the functions at the directorate whilst waiting to finalise the fit-for-purpose structure. The PSA will continue to engage the employer on the matter and requested that, in the meantime, the extension letters to be re-assigned must not be issued. Members will be informed of developments.

Finalisation: Inspections at Mozambique and Komati Poort

The employer reported that the inspection process conducted at Kruger National Park, Phalaborwa, and Punda was not completed. The team will revisit the site to complete the inspections. The dates of the visits will be shared with labour in due course.

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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GENERAL MANAGER