



## PSA BARGAINING PRIORITIES 2009-2011

### **Introduction**

The bargaining priorities of the PSA for the period 2009 to 2011 are shaped by the political and economic environment created by a change of government in 2008 and the fall out from the global financial crisis. The National-led government is overseeing cuts to jobs and services. We recognise that our employers are working within constrained budgets and that this has implications for bargaining. However we also know that tough economic times will result in more work for public services not less. Our members face the twin pressures of increased workloads and the undermining of their job security.

The PSA does not accept that the economic situation is a reason to strip away members' pay and terms and conditions. There is a need for strong public services in tough times and decent pay, decent conditions and decent work for our members are integral to the delivery of quality services to the public.

### **Scope**

These priorities are the overarching priorities of the PSA in bargaining and will govern what we seek to achieve in each of the sectors and enterprises that we cover. Sector specific bargaining strategies, and enterprise bargaining briefs, will incorporate our whole of union objectives through organisers and negotiating teams reflecting on what these objectives mean in the context of their bargaining. The identification of sector, enterprise and workplace specific issues should also be consistent with these priorities.

### **The bargaining priorities**

These bargaining priorities are grouped around key aspects of the democracy at work agenda of the PSA (decent work and worker voice) and the pressing need to provide security for our members in difficult times.

### **Decent work**

Decent work is a social construct. Work is not only an economic transaction but is an essential activity of civil society. Work connects us, it is at heart a social activity. Work provides a sense of purpose and a sense of structure in people's lives. In the state sector in particular work is done for and with other people and with the overall aim of contributing to important social, economic and community outcomes.

Within this context the PSA will maintain and improve upon some of the essential elements of decent work.

*Fair pay*, including equal pay for work of equal value. By this the PSA means the development of fair pay systems, bringing an end to the unjust performance pay systems that dominate much of the public sector, and the inclusion of pay in agreements. It also means a fair pay adjustment to reflect rising costs and the

financial pressures faced by members during difficult economic times. Finally, it means addressing pay inequities, particularly through the implementation of pay and employment equity to overcome the problems identified in PAEE reviews and pay investigations.

*The maintenance of terms and conditions.* In tough times the pressure can come on from employers to reduce members' terms and conditions. Such an approach undermines trust in the workplace and the PSA will resist this, while at the same time we will continue to push for a high trust approach to management in forums outside of bargaining.

*Healthy work environments .* These are workplaces where workload is managed, the need for wellness is respected, there is good work-life balance and health and safety issues in the workplace are addressed.

### **Worker voice**

Decent workplaces and high performing workplaces are ones where workers have a voice, and their views are respected and valued. Individual workers have a sense of being able to speak and to contribute, and workers have a collective voice, through their union organisation. These principles are coming under pressure in the current environment. It is important that the PSA seeks to achieve:

*Better union facilities.* This may consist of codifying existing arrangements into collective agreements or seeking to achieve more time for delegates to do their important work and provide them with better resources in the workplace.

*Better partnership engagement arrangements.* Partnership is becoming more focused on the enterprise and workplace as the opportunities for national or sector agreements diminish. Bargaining is one place where we engage with our employers and can be used to facilitate the creation of other forums and mechanisms where we can deal with complex workplace issues such as value-for-money exercises, expenditure reviews, productivity, improving service delivery and community engagement.

### **Job security**

Secure and interesting jobs are important in the development and maintenance of high performing workplaces. Job security has traditionally been an offset against the better pay and conditions in the private sector. In an environment of cuts our members find this basic need is being undermined. We need:

*Better change provisions.* We need to include comprehensive change and redundancy provisions in agreements where they do not currently exist and improve on those that are already in place. Change provisions need to focus on fair and transparent processes for implementing change, including meaningful union input into the process of change, and minimising the need for redundancy. The full range of possible alternatives to redundancy (such as those contained in the PSA's Change Management Toolkit) need to be available.

*Better commitment to training and career development.* We want our employers to demonstrate commitment to career development through such things as improved training and a more flexible approach to secondments. We are looking for an approach in which the needs of the employee are identified and met, beyond what it takes to fulfil the requirements of their current role.

*Breaking down barriers between agencies.* As pressures on the public sector increase we need to look at ways in which we can break down barriers between agencies. Exploring ways in which redeployment can

occur between agencies and recognising previous service not only provides better security for members but it also supports a whole-of-government approach to problems.

*Flexible working and leave without pay* options can be an effective response to the likelihood of job losses.

The PSA will explore the possibility of these being developed provided that:

- They are employee initiated (not employer imposed)
- The members' jobs are protected, with a right to return to previous working arrangements if desired
- There is a good faith requirement that no employee is to be pressured into accepting these kinds of arrangements.

### **Implementing these priorities**

Until such time as the bargaining strategies are revised, the PSA will apply these priorities through the mechanisms developed under the current bargaining strategies, including the policy on the conduct of negotiations.