



ACT
Government

ACT Health

Dear Secretary Health Services Union

Consultation - Accommodation for ACT Health Directorate Employees 2-6 Bowes Street Woden – Spring Check-in 4-month review

ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) is committed to effective consultation with employees and their representatives, and participation in decisions in matters that affect their employment.

I am writing in accordance with the consultation provisions within ACT Public Sector Enterprise Agreements on the next phase of revised accommodation arrangements at for staff who are working hybrid in ACT Health Directorate.

As you are aware, the staff who have been working hybrid moved to a working two days a week under a three-day roster per division in Bowes Street on 1 May 2023 after consultation with staff and unions. Other staff who have also been working hybrid in the directorate but are not located at Bowes Street, have also been working two days a week at their nominated workplace. We promised the staff that after four months we would check back in and consult on options moving forward.

Feedback from last Consultation

We heard feedback from some people not based in Bowes Street that communication of the changes in May 2023 were confusing as it was primarily targeted to staff who worked in Bowes Street. We were sorry to hear this as it was not our intent.

To clarify the messaging:

1. All Health Directorate staff are welcome at Bowes and can come in on their division rostered days or use the bookable desks.
2. The principles of hybrid working apply across the whole directorate. We encourage staff to work in the office at least 2 days a week at their normal place of work, Bowes Street, Holder, Canberra Hospital or even an ACTPS flexi-space.

However, **important to note** both of these principles are subject to staff member's role in the directorate and operational requirements. We are a very diverse workforce with different roles and responsibilities.

For example, there are some teams in Population Health Division (eg. ACTGAL and HPS reception) and Digital Solutions Division (eg. critical support) who can't do their job at home or away from the designated workplace and/or who may be needed in

the office 3 to 5 days a week. Work arrangements need to be discussed within divisions. However, wherever possible, we encourage everyone to adopt the hybrid approach to work: come in at least two days a week, and more if it suits them.

What has happened so far in Bowes Street to make it better for staff?

Here is a summary of key feedback and some actions we have taken:

- Bowes Street utilisation is around 40% each day (and much lower for the bookable desks).
- We've received positive feedback with many people really enjoying face-to-face interactions with teams and colleagues, combined with the flexibility of hybrid working.
- Availability of meeting rooms is improving, and bigger spaces are now available (including 2:08 which can be combined with 2:09 to be an extra-large space, or the two rooms can be booked separately) – but people are still keen for more meeting and collaboration spaces.
- Some divisions are rostered on different floors on different days and finding this to be a real pain (we have heard this and will work to address this as part of this process).
- The general tidy-up in Bowes Street has been very well received – including carpet and furniture cleaning and replacement of some older furniture and task chairs.
- Stationery areas have been tidied up, replenished and a paper ordering roster is in place for most divisions.
- The kitchens have been refreshed including new seating layout, new sandwich presses, microwaves, crockery and cutlery and additional cleaning (and addition of plants thanks to the Wellbeing fund).
- We've refreshed our multipurpose/wellbeing rooms in Bowes Street.
- We have started a trial of alternative lighting and diffusers to the hot desk area on Level 2.
- We've allocated cupboards for divisions engaging in hybrid working to put items they wish to leave in Bowes Street.

- Under desk draws have been left with keys for single day use to keep your valuables safe.

Here is a summary of more things in the pipeline:

- Ongoing adjustments to floor space with the view to provide more collaboration options.
- Consideration of centralising ordering and distribution of stationery.
- Improvements to end of trip and change room facilities in Bowes Street (more information coming).
- More information and assistance about how to harness the ICT guru that lives in us all (so meeting room Teams/Webex boards work every time) – and consideration of a ‘help’ line if it just won’t work.
- More information and guidance tools to help us get the most out of hybrid working.

Where are we at now?

As we are learning more about our work patterns and preferences there are some challenges and opportunities.

We would be pleased to see more people come into the office on a more regular basis (and conversely people working 5 days who don’t need to, to have the option of working from home).

We also need to continue to create a work environment, so people experience the value of working in the office, and continually modify our ways of working to reap the rewards of hybrid working.

Compliance with Flexible Work Arrangements

If staff are not able to routinely come into the office, or are working from interstate, they are required to have a Flexible Working Arrangement in place (with the exception of staff who have another arrangement in place such as a return-to-work agreement or to address specific medical needs). This arrangement is mandatory for anybody working remotely interstate or overseas.

Anecdotally, and taking account of our 40% utilisation rate, compliance with this requirement seems low.

What are we consulting on?

Ideas for next steps

We now have the opportunity to review the three-day roster for Bowes Street and consider a different approach, this can include (and is canvassed through the survey to staff):

1. **Option A - Status quo+** this would mean continuing with the roster system but with small changes to make sure divisions are allocated to the same floor on all of their days in the office.
2. **Option B - 5 day neighbourhoods** this would mean divisions are allocated a 'neighbourhood' - a designated area in Bowes Street where team members can come in on any day that suits. Being in neighbourhoods presents the advantage of having their things nearby, increasing pride in their space and strengthening informal collaboration within divisions.
3. **Option C - 5 day open access** this would mean anybody can come in to Bowes Street, any day and sit in any space. This has the advantage of maximum flexibility, strengthening informal collaboration across the whole directorate and is most closely aligned with how things work in most other ACTPS flexi spaces and work sites.

Some things for staff to think about:

- Under options B and C (both moving to 5 days): we would essentially cater for 7 out of 10 people (currently based at Bowes Street) coming into the office each day. This is above the ACTPS requirement for 6 out of 10 people.
- To make Option B work (the neighbourhood approach): divisions would work out how to manage the (low) risk of more than 70% of people coming in on a particular day. We would adopt 'soft borders' between neighbourhoods to manage overflow (or adopt 'way-finding' discussed below).
- To Option C work (open access): we would invest in 'way-finding' technology that is used in other directorates. This is an easy-to-use web/app web system where staff can book a desk for themselves, their colleagues, whole team or even their entire division. It means staff can sit close when needed and avoids the (unlikely) situation of coming to Bowes Street and not being able to find a desk. Staff can also use it to find where their teammates are sitting, and we get very useful (aggregate) data about working patterns and locations.

*Please note that DSD will remain on Level 4 for now (but staff are welcome to book a desk to sit elsewhere). Following DHR go-live, and the arrangements described below being more settled, we will explore the option to integrate level 4 into the broader arrangement.

Impacts from Canberra Health Services accommodation changes.

What is happening?

You may be aware that the next stage of the Canberra Hospital (CH) Master Plan involves construction of a new Pathology and Clinical Support Building. Consultation is underway with CHS on the impact of this which will see over 400 non-clinical staff moving to hybrid working from 1 November 2023.

Affected CHS staff will access flexible office locations across the ACT combined with home-based work. There are some teams with a demonstrated need to remain together in the office. It has been decided that spaces at Village Creek, Kambah and G.03 in 2 Bowes Street (the former ground floor DHR training room) will be used for this purpose. Other spaces across government continue to be explored.

This means the changes at CHS will impact ACTHD staff at Bowes Street. We are seeking input on any concerns staff may have about how this decision might impact their work. This is also the opportunity to ask questions, seek clarification and raise any issues that we may have overlooked in order to implement the changes well.

What is proposed?

- DSD staff currently located at CH will return to Bowes Street, onto Level 4 with the rest of the division (DSD will see greater adoption of hybrid working, taking account of operational requirements).
- Bowes Street G.03.2 will be refitted as a Canberra Health Services flexi-space including addition of desks, provision of meeting room spaces, and access to kitchen and bathroom amenities on the ground floor.
- These CHS staff will have access to bathrooms on the ground floor. Access to other areas in Bowes Street such as wellbeing/multi-purpose rooms, end of trip facilities and any collaboration spaces will be on a case-by-case basis.
- Carparking and pool vehicles will not be offered to Canberra Health Services staff – pool vehicles will still be located at CH.
- These CHS staff will be able to book Bowes Street meeting rooms, but as a courtesy asked to book in any of the meeting rooms in G.03.2 first.

- These staff will be inducted into Bowes for WHS purposes and share in our management responses for first aid and fire safety.

The G.03.2 space will no longer be available as meeting room space. However, the large meeting room on Level 2 (2.08) that has been occupied by DSD for DHR training is now available for all staff.

Staff views on vending machines, tea, coffee and milk

There has been quite a bit of chatter and feedback about this. We have also been discussing it more formally at the Corporate Governance and Finance Committee.

Briefly, some people have concerns about the vending machines in Bowes Street and questions about whether they comply with the government's [Healthy Food and Drinks Policy](#) (because of their appearance and unbalanced contents). Also, the directorate does not make any profit from the machines which may be a missed opportunity. (See below, there is another option that has been suggested, a Social Club.)

We do understand introduction of the machines made sense during Covid (with less ability or desire to venture out for drinks and snacks) and they are quite convenient! And yes, there is a vending machine at the Health Protection Service in Holder (that has been there many years and takes account of distance to the nearest shop).

If the vending machines are retained, as a minimum we need to work with the vendor to reskin the machines and ensure the correct balance of red, amber and green offerings.

Also, provision of tea, coffee and milk – again, all sorts of questions here! Regardless, if we continue provision of these supplies, we will continue to work to ensure stock is available and replenished.

There are some questions in the survey that will inform decision making on these issues.

Consideration of a Social club

We are canvassing interest in reviving the directorate's social club. Social clubs are lots of fun and can contribute to raising funds for things like cheap drinks and snacks (yes, including healthy ones), milk, tea and coffee, fun events and fruit baskets.

A social club could solve some of the issues above while playing a role in further strengthening our culture, fun at work and collaboration.

Again, the survey canvasses staff interest in a social club and an indication of how many people might be interested in lending a hand.

This consultation will provide staff an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposal, make suggestions, identify issues and raise concerns. The consultation period will commence on Tuesday 24 October 2023 and close on Friday 10 November 2023. Following due consideration of the feedback received the new arrangements will be introduced as soon as possible.

The accommodation arrangements implemented will be reviewed by the executive team on a bi-monthly basis.

If you wish to provide feedback on the proposed accommodation plan please do so via email to HDHR@act.gov.au by close of business Friday 10 November 2023.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "FBarbaro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fiona Barbaro
Executive Group Manager, Corporate and Governance

24 October 2023