

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Update

Dear Member,

Your HSU representatives met with Guide Dogs management yesterday in relation to the restructure and abolition of the Team Leader roles.

This meeting was the initial notification to the HSU in relation to this major change and further meetings are planned to provide feedback.

We understand that all staff will receive the same or similar information to what was received at the meetings we attended.

A number of concerns have been raised in relation to this change, which include:

Timeframes

As we raised at the meeting, timeframes for staff to make decisions in relation to their preferred options is in our view too tight. Staff should not be required to make decisions in less than a week's time about whether they want to be made redundant or not. As raised, staff need to be given time to consider the options available, get financial advice and consult with family members. We would ask that staff are given more time to consider the options.

Application Process

As raised, the application process appears to be overly onerous, especially in relation to the filling of the Location Lead role. This role is of less responsibility/pay than their current positions and the process as presented would appear to likely result in needless additional anxiety. We would view that the submitting of a CV/Resume and a short interview as the maximum required to fulfil a process to satisfactorily fill these roles in this part of the process.

Leave Accrual

As raised, staff who choose to take up a lower paying role (e.g. Location Lead) should not lose out financially in relation to leave already accrued while working in the higher-level role (e.g. Team Leader). In our view staff should be financially compensated (e.g. a payment) or be able to take that accrued leave at the higher paid rate.

Alternative Employment Opportunities

It was communicated at the meeting that staff could have alternative employment options within Guide Dogs, but only for current vacancies (e.g. Occupational Therapists was mentioned). Following discussions with HSU members, it was identified that there are other vacancies in the Organisation (due to recent resignations) in the Orientation and Mobility Specialist Role. It is our view that those options (either temporary or permanent vacancies) should be made available to affected staff.

We are concerned that Guide Dogs may have breached the consultation requirements in the EBA by not having consulted on the abolition of vacant positions. If this has occurred, it would of course be a great concern to the HSU. We certainly see flexibility and transparency by the organisation as an essential part of a fair and proper consultation process. We ask that the full range of options are made available to affected staff both for their benefit and with a view to retain the huge amount of experience and expertise in this specialist field.

Future Work Options

As discussed at the meeting today, we are seeking information about the length of time that someone would be unable to work for Guide Dogs in the event they take a redundancy. It would be normal practice that that length of time would be the same as the redundancy amount (e.g. if paid 12 weeks then could not work for Guide Dogs until after a 12-week period). The question was also raised with me after the meeting that in the current Team Manager's contract, there is a clause about not working for Vision Australia for a 12-month period in the event the Team Manager leave Guide Dogs. We would presume that in the event that a Team Manager being made redundant, this clause would not apply?

Location Lead Role Classification

In discussions with affected staff, the role and classification of the Location Lead role was a concern. At the initial reading, it would appear that this role would take on management duties in a practical day to day sense when factors such as location, the management load of the Area Manager and work practices are considered. We have a concern that the Location Lead Role may be under classified and believe that this will need to be reviewed as part of this process or a future review of this structure.

It is very important that all HSU members have a chance to ask questions or raise concerns about this change. If you have any questions or concerns, please email disabilities@hsu.asn.au .

It seems likely that this change may be the first of a number of organisational changes that affecting staff. The HSU can only represent HSU members. Please encourage your workmates to join online at www.hsu.asn.au/join or phone 1300 478 679.

In unity,



Gerard Hayes
Secretary, HSU NSW/ACT/QLD