

## **MEDICARE AUSTRALIA'S 2008 to 2011 COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT PACKAGE**

### **Our pay offer**

In developing our pay offer, consideration was given to:

- Medicare Australia's current pay rates relative to other DHS agencies and the broader APS;
- the total package of changes and enhancements that are proposed for inclusion in the new agreement; and
- Government policy which requires improvements to pay and conditions to be offset by genuine quantifiable productivity initiatives.

Medicare Australia is proposing the following improvements to the pay outcomes for most staff:

- the number of pay points in the APS 1 to APS 4, and the APS 6 pay structure will be reduced by one providing for more rapid progression through the pay ranges at each of these levels;
- the pay rates for EL1 and EL 2 staff will be adjusted, to ensure that we maintain the relativity of this group with the APS median. All other classifications in Medicare Australia are already at this median;
- current Service Officers will translate to the nearest appropriate pay point (equivalent or higher) within the new broadband structure from the date of commencement of the Agreement; and
- age rates will no longer be applied to current or future staff. Staff currently being paid age rates will translate to the appropriate adult rate.

In addition, all staff will receive a pay increase of 4.3% from the date of effect of the agreement (ie seven days after it is approved by the Workplace Authority), and a further 4.3% increase in December 2009 and December 2010. The existing principles regarding eligibility will be maintained.

### **Enhancements to the broadband structure**

We propose to extend the current Service Officer broadband to include the APS 4 classification. In doing so, all current APS 4 service officer type positions will be transferred to the new broadband, including Assistant Branch Managers, Technical Program Advisors and Subject Matter Experts, as well as Compliance Officers at the APS 3 and APS 4 level from the date of effect of the new agreement. Staff currently occupying these positions will be automatically transferred into the expanded broadband structure. (Existing classification structures will be maintained for work of a less complex nature.)

These enhancements will support increased flexibility and competitiveness in the market and provide the platform for future service delivery. Some of the enhancements will be affected as part of the CA and some outside of it.

The key features and benefits of the proposed new broadband structure include:

- changes to the service officer program structure and streamlined advancement arrangements;

- use of the existing log book for probationary assessment;
- faster advancement arrangements (with fewer pay points to progress through), linked to annual pay point advancement on 1 August each year;
- use of the Performance Support Program (PSP) as the primary assessment tool for pay point advancement;
- removal of the application process to attain the APS3.5 pay point (to be replaced with advancement based on a PSA rating of 4 or 5);
- strengthening of the PSP to provide managers and staff with greater support for development and performance assessment, to be in place for the commencement of the new cycle on 1 July 2009; and
- advancement to the broadband APS4 positions with an internal selection process, subject to work availability and capability.

### **Changes to Personal Leave**

The current high level of absenteeism in Medicare Australia has significant financial and service delivery implications, therefore we are seeking to make some changes to the personal leave provisions to both reduce absenteeism and, when combined with improved work/life initiatives below, will encourage enhanced wellbeing.

The current agreement provides for 18 days personal leave on commencement and a further 18 days per year which then accrues fortnightly.

We did receive considerable feedback to our initial proposal, and in response have put forward an alternative proposal as part of the total package of conditions for the replacement agreement. The proposed new leave arrangements are:

- 15 days personal leave per year, cumulative, for use when you are ill or injured, or for the purpose of caring for family (with 5 days credited on commencement);
- 3 days special leave per year, non-cumulative, for situations including household emergencies, care for extended family members, moving house and other special circumstances;
- a reduction to the number of days without a certificate;
- a new leave type of 3 days of compassionate leave for each occasion that a staff member is required to support or provide comfort to a critically ill or injured family member, or on their death.

A number of staff suggested that we should allow for the cashing out of personal leave as an incentive to reduce leave usage. Such a proposal is inconsistent with government policy and with the rationale for personal leave which is to assist staff when they are ill or injured or have short term caring responsibilities. This is therefore not an option available for Medicare Australia to consider.

### **Enhancements to conditions which support a better work and life balance and health and wellbeing**

Medicare Australia wants to build on its reputation as being a good place to work. We will continue to support our staff to balance their work and non-work responsibilities. Within our planning context we will develop initiatives which support the retention of knowledge and experience of our mature aged workers.

It is for this reason that we are proposing to introduce the following changes:

- introduction of 2 weeks purchased recreation leave per year;

- an additional 2 weeks of maternity leave;
- a separate leave type to accommodate paternity leave (without deduction from personal leave credits);
- not opening Medicare Branch offices on Saturdays that fall between Christmas Day and New Year's Day;
- introduction of an allowance for health and safety representatives, modelled on the current first aid allowance; and
- increase in the Healthy Lifestyle Subsidy by \$10.

#### **Rostering and scheduling arrangements, including for Saturday work**

To ensure that we are able to meet our present and future business needs in public and provider contact areas, considerable work is being undertaken in relation to workforce management, including the use of the queue management system and the eWFM system currently being trialled. These tools will complement enhanced rostering arrangements that will provide greater certainty to staff in relation to the number of hours and the pattern of attendance expected of them, particularly in branch offices and contact centre environments.

Every effort will be made to provide as much notice as possible to changes to established rosters, if changes are needed.

The 50% loading for working ordinary hours on Saturday will also be included in the new agreement. Rostering arrangements currently causing concern in some areas are being reviewed by staff who understand our operational environment.

#### **Other changes being sought by Medicare Australia**

We need to continually modernise our employment conditions and seek areas of improvement. The following changes are proposed:

- limiting eligibility of remote locality provisions to staff employed prior to the new agreement coming into effect; and
- increasing the First Aid Allowance, the Community Language Allowance and the proposed Health and Safety Representatives Allowance in line with the percentage increases of the pay offer.