



22 March 2023

Committee Secretary  
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

### **Proposed Fit-out of Existing Leased Premises at 200 Collins Street, Hobart, Tasmania**

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is the primary union representing APS and Commonwealth Government employees and have significant membership in the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) Hobart. The CPSU welcomes the opportunity to provide input and convey member feedback to the Standing Committee, on the proposed fit-out of the premises at 200 Collins Street, Hobart.

CPSU members have raised concerns through their union about the proposed fit-out based on the floorplans and information they have been provided by the ATO. Supplementary to this, CPSU members have concerns based on issues raised by staff in other ATO offices which have recently been relocated or refurbished – including Sydney and Townsville.

While staff welcome an upgrade and refresh of the Hobart office, CPSU members' primary concern continues to be a lack of genuine consultation on the designs and direction of their working environment. Additionally, CPSU members are somewhat frustrated by the ATO's perceived reluctance to acknowledge legitimate problems that staff have encountered in recent office designs at other sites.

In relation to the proposed floorplans, CPSU members raise the following concerns:

#### **Workstation design and noise pollution**

- Workers are concerned about customer privacy and request that the ATO commit to installing higher desk partitions to reduce visibility across desks.
- Significant dissatisfaction with the partition height and design introduced in the Sydney and Townsville offices has been reported to the ATO, and so members request that these not been used in the Hobart office.
- Staff have further concerns about noise pollution that may result from the proposed desk design and layout. Staff believe that the proposed workstations are smaller than what they use currently and place staff in greater proximity to each other, which will cause increased noise across the office.

- While members appreciate office etiquette is an important component of managing noise levels, reports from staff at other locations suggests that additional soundproofing measures will be beneficial in the Hobart office.
- Noise pollution, staff comfortability and privacy when completing their work is a legitimate concern, and heeding the feedback from staff in relation to workstation design and soundproofing will be a positive step by the ATO to ensure the new fit-out is fit for purpose.

### **Reduced breakout spaces and meeting rooms**

- CPSU members note that the proposed design has a reduced number of breakout spaces, and are concerned that this may not meet the needs of staff.
- It has been reported, particularly in the Sydney office (which we note is a new building), that the number of meeting rooms does not meet demand, and it is difficult to secure a meeting room with adequate teleconference facilities or capacity for multiple staff.
- The CPSU has also received anecdotal reports that meeting rooms or quiet rooms are being booked for the whole day, due to staff finding the noise levels in the new office to be too high to work productively.
- To avoid these issues arising in the Hobart office, members believe the design should incorporate additional meeting and break-out spaces where possible.

### **Accessibility, unallocated seating and lockers**

- The move to hot-desking, referred to by the ATO as ‘unallocated seating’, has been an ongoing concern for people with limited mobility and those with disabilities.
- CPSU members in Hobart appreciate that the proposed design will comply with legislative requirements and accessibility standards, however the experience of staff at other offices indicates that more work may be needed in this space. Some concerns include staff’s capacity to have an anchored desk near amenities, adequate storage for ergonomic and assistive equipment.
- The floor plan provided indicates a reduction in car parking spaces, and there is concern around the number of accessible parking bays available to staff who need them. The ATO must ensure that the availability of accessible parking can meet current and future demand.
- A move to unallocated seating and a personal locker system also disadvantages those with limited mobility, presenting challenges in transporting their belongings to and from a locker each day. And so, anchored desks should be made available for these staff.
- The CPSU has received additional reports that the locker system does not include an allocated locker, but that staff receive a locker for a week and then must remove their belongings before Friday. Clarification on the policy for the use of lockers would be welcomed.

### **Toilets**

- Recent office refits have resulted in a reduction in toilets. The proposed floor plan indicates the same number of toilets on level 1 and 2, despite increased staffing levels due to the loss of the ground floor. This is likely to result in more traffic and is potentially not able to meet the needs of the staff in the office on a full day.
- The CPSU has received additional reports from the Sydney site that some of the new toilet cubicles are not large enough, and are uncomfortable for pregnant employees and not size-

inclusive. Members therefore request that the ATO compare the designs of the Sydney and Hobart offices, and if they are intended to be the same, request that larger cubicles be incorporated where possible.

### **Consultation**

- Members feel there has been limited consultation with affected staff in the Hobart office thus far to allow input into the design process and the implementation of hotdesking.
- Members find that often, by the time staff and representatives have been included in the consultation process and working groups, many decisions have already been finalised and there is little capacity for designs to be altered.
- Crucially, staff have also had little say in the ATO's strategic decision to transition to a hot-desking environment.
- The CPSU is concerned that the ATO's apparent decision to pursue an occupational density rate of 12m<sup>2</sup> of usable office area per occupied work-point across all new office designs, rather than the Commonwealth target of 14m<sup>2</sup>, is a decision that staff were not consulted on and the ATO have provided little information on the reasons for this decision.
- The CPSU question whether this decision, which appears to rely on a move to hot-desking, is truly in the best interest of staff and the ATO. The ATO has previously referenced improvements in reduction of Net Lettable Area (NLA), but it is unclear as to how this is of benefit to the ATO, community or staff in the Hobart office.

The CPSU welcomes the ATO's commitment to consultation throughout the coming stages of this project, noting that CPSU members and staff in Hobart feel the consultation to-date has been lacking. Consultation with staff is fundamental in ensuring that this project is fit-for-purpose, delivering value for money, and truly in the public interest.

The CPSU appreciates the Committee's consideration of this submission and the feedback of our members. By raising their own concerns and some of the reported experience of staff in other offices, CPSU members hope to contribute to a best-practice decision making process.

Regards,

Jen Fitzgerald

CPSU Organiser

