

Policy

PWSS Local Resolution Policy for Commonwealth parliamentary workplace participants

This policy provides guidance to Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace participants on resolving workplace issues at the earliest opportunity for better outcomes.

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1. Purpose and authority

The Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS) is committed to supporting safe, respectful, and healthy working environments for all Commonwealth parliamentary workplace (CPW) participants and recognises that early intervention in workplace issues is more likely to result in better outcomes for all parties.

This policy provides guidance to all CPW participants on how the PWSS can support all parties to resolve workplace issues.

What is local resolution?

Local resolution is a range of strategies taken to assist in de-escalation and resolution of a concern, conflict or complaint at the earliest opportunity. This can include exploring, clarifying and/or negotiating the matter between the parties and helping them move forward.

Where appropriate, PWSS will encourage the parties to the workplace issue to reach an agreed outcome. This could include:

- acknowledging behaviour and/or impacts
- stopping the behaviour and undertaking to do things differently
- engaging in training and/or coaching
- making reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

2. Key principles

PWSS adopts an independent, trauma-informed approach to local resolution that focuses on the needs of the parties, acknowledges the diverse ways in which conflict can impact an individual and empowers them to make decisions.

Local resolution is a voluntary process of working with the parties to:

- explore the issues and sources of workplace conflict
- identify options to resolve the workplace conflict, and
- where practicable, reach an agreed outcome.

The pathways for facilitating a local resolution are informal, flexible and voluntary and undertaken with the consent of the parties. All parties can bring a support person to any meetings with the PWSS. This could be a colleague, friend, family member, partner, PWSS employee or a union representative.

A person can use a pseudonym or remain anonymous and access support from PWSS. However, if PWSS is unable to identify a person, it may limit the ability for the PWSS to offer or provide some local resolution options.

It is not a function of the PWSS to:

- investigate a complaint
- make a finding of fact
- arbitrate any matter.

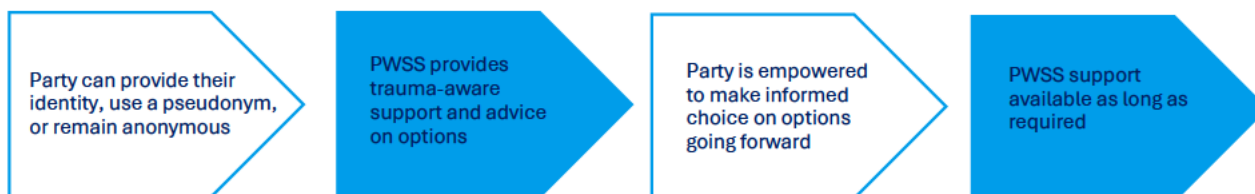
3. Approaches to resolving workplace issues

The most effective approach for resolving a workplace issue will depend on the specific circumstances of the concern, conflict or complaint, the wishes of the parties involved and an assessment of work health and safety risks.

PWSS strategies for local resolution are categorised by:

- Providing support, including education, counselling and referral
- Engaging with all parties to the issue including the respondent, the employer and the broader team
- Facilitating a conversation between the parties.

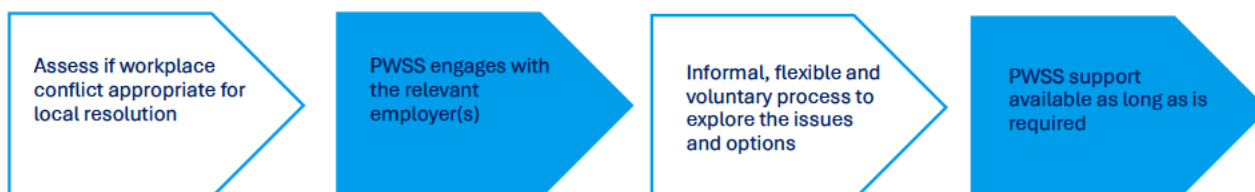
Resolving workplace conflict through providing support



The PWSS will provide immediate and ongoing support and work with the person to understand their wishes and options going forward, so they can make an informed choice on how to proceed. This may include providing the person with support to:

- manage the impacts of what has happened in the workplace through counselling and support
- access professional development or coaching through the PWSS Academy
- connect with other services, such as specialised health services
- access information about alternative conflict resolution options and complaint mechanisms
- raise the issue with the other party, such as assisting the person to prepare talking points for the conversation
- raise the issue with their employing Parliamentarian/authorised officer or manager and seek their assistance to raise the issues on their behalf or resolve the conflict
- engage with relevant HR processes, including attending as a support person
- make a report to police, if the matter is potentially criminal and the person wants to make a report
- make a complaint to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission.

Resolving workplace conflict through engaging with the other parties



PWSS may, with the consent of the parties, facilitate resolution of workplace conflict by engaging with the other parties to explore the issues and options to resolve the workplace conflict. For this to occur, it is necessary for the identity of all parties to the workplace matter to be known so that each person has an opportunity to engage in the process.

Where the other party is a CPW participant, other than a parliamentarian, the PWSS will first inform their employer (for example, a parliamentarian or authorised officer) or the person's HR team of the matter and the local resolution process before engaging with the other party. Informing the employer or relevant HR team is important to enable them to meet their WHS obligations and support the party to engage in the process. Options may include:

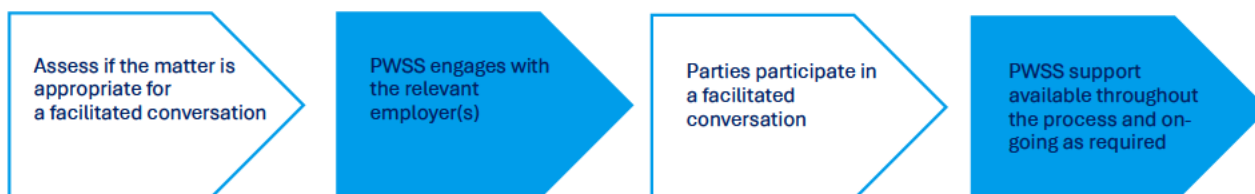
- resolving workplace conflict through providing support to the other party
- support for the parliamentarian to raise concerns with the other party
- PWSS raising concerns with the other party (only with the consent of the employer or relevant HR team).

Where the PWSS has contact with the other party, the PWSS:

- will inform the other party's employer when initial contact is made, and
- may provide information about what, if any, agreement/s were or were not reached as it affects the workplace.

PWSS will only disclose information in accordance with the [Privacy Policy](#).

Resolving workplace conflict through a facilitated conversation



The facilitated conversation is a voluntary process in which the parties to a workplace conflict work together, with the assistance of a neutral person (the facilitator), explore the issues, identify and test the consequences of potential options, and where possible, reach agreement on the way forward. For this to occur, it is necessary for the identity of all parties to the workplace matter to be known so that each person has an opportunity to engage in the process.

Before engaging in a facilitated conversation, the PWSS will attempt to resolve workplace conflict through engaging with the other party.

The PWSS will determine whether it is appropriate to engage in a facilitated conversation having regard to the information provided by the parties, their willingness to engage in the process and the indicators of success. PWSS recognises that a facilitated conversation may not be suitable for every workplace conflict and will offer alternative strategies for resolution.

Before undertaking a facilitated conversation, the PWSS will inform each party's employer (i.e. the parliamentarian, authorised officer or HR team) of the matter and provide information about the process for a facilitated conversation. Informing these parties is important to enable them to meet their WHS obligations and support each party to participate.

At the conclusion of the facilitated conversation, the PWSS:

- will inform each party's employer that the facilitated conversation was conducted, and
- may provide information about what, if any, agreement/s were or were not reached as it affects the workplace.

Further information is available in the Facilitated Conversation Fact Sheet. The PWSS will only disclose other information in accordance with the Privacy Policy.

4. Other options to address workplace issues

If the workplace conflict can be resolved between the parties, this will be encouraged as addressing matters constructively and as informally as practicable can assist with understanding one another's point of view and building or restoring a functional, productive working relationship.

However, local resolution strategies are not guaranteed to fix the issue/s, resolve or eliminate conflict altogether. In these cases and depending on the nature, duration and impact of the conflict, the PWSS will provide support to explore alternative strategies including workplace adjustments, performance management or external complaint avenues.

Where a workplace conflict cannot be resolved, parties may make a complaint to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission (IPSC), or their complaint may be referred to the IPSC by their employer or the CEO of the PWSS. The IPSC is an independent workplace investigatory body for Australian Commonwealth parliamentary workplace participants. They can investigate alleged breaches of the Behaviour Codes and Standards by Australian parliamentarians, their staff and people that work in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces across Australia – not limited by location. Further information about the IPSC is available at www.ipsc.gov.au