



CENTRAL GIPPSLAND HEALTH
INDEPENDENT WORKPLACE CULTURE REVIEW
REPORT SUMMARY

20 November 2017

Introduction

Since July 2017, concerns about the workplace culture at Central Gippsland Health (**CGH**) and the overall strategy for the service have featured in the local Gippsland media. Justitia understands that one of the catalysts for this media interest was a letter published in *The Gippsland Times* on 18 July 2017 by a former CGH employee.

On 7 August 2017, Justitia was engaged by the Department of Health and Human Services (**the Department**) to conduct an independent workplace culture review (**the Review**) at CGH. This summary provides a high-level overview of the confidential Central Gippsland Health Independent Workplace Culture Review Report.

Methodology

The Terms of Reference required Justitia to consider and evaluate the workplace culture at CGH. The methodology set out in the Terms of Reference included the following tasks:

- review the relevant CGH policies and procedures to assess their adequacy
- consider CGH's internal complaint-handling policies and procedures by reviewing a sample of files involving complaints at CGH relating to staff or culture to measure whether these procedures are applied consistently
- conduct a desktop review of data including People Matters Surveys, staff retention and turnover rates, Workcover claims, Fair Work Commission decisions, sick leave rates and exit interview data
- review the circumstances related to a sample of recent staff departures (including departures in aged care and surgical units) and check that relevant CGH policies and procedures were followed
- review the content and regularity of training and education programs currently available to managers and employees on CGH workplace values, conduct, bullying and harassment, performance management, equal employment opportunity and complaint handling
- interview employees and former employees on an anonymous basis to consider whether there are consistent themes in the information provided that may warrant further inquiry by CGH or the Department
- consult with CGH leadership on their effectiveness in setting a positive workplace culture.

Findings

Overall, Justitia has concluded that the Review has not revealed any systemic issues suggestive of a poor workplace culture at CGH. Where the Review identified workplace behaviour issues, they were not of a nature or frequency in excess of other similar organisations.

Justitia found that members of the executive and senior leadership are aware of a variety of challenges that exist within the organisation and have been taking steps to address them. With respect to workplace culture, CGH has implemented initiatives such as the Healthy Together Framework and the Health and Wellbeing Framework, facilitated the training of managers in a coaching approach to supervision, set up the Health and Wellbeing

Committee, been proactive with regard to complaint resolution, engaged an external facilitator to assist with staff forums, and sought input from staff during its strategic planning. If staff wish to become involved, there are opportunities for them to do so. With regard to criticism about the levels of communication, CGH has sought to utilise staff forums, newsletters and the Moodle platform to increase the flow of information.

Justitia has however also identified a number of areas which could be improved to support a positive workplace culture at CGH. The following observations are made in respect to each of the tasks outlined in the Terms of Reference:

Review of CGH policies and procedures

Overall, the CGH policies are sound and with some relatively minor amendments could be improved to more effectively support the workplace culture at CGH.

Review of CGH complaints-handling processes

CGH has generally complied with relevant policies while investigating complaints, but Justitia has noted two areas where CGH could have complied more thoroughly with its policies. Based on the Review, Justitia identified some areas for improvement in the complaint-handling system.

Review of workforce data

Overall, this data does not support a view that there is an unusually high bullying and harassment risk or experience at CGH. CGH appears to generally be on par with comparator organisations in areas such as complaints of Workplace Bullying and the use of Personal leave.

The data does indicate that workplace morale could be improved by further refining how communication from management occurs and how it reaches the staff at lower levels of CGH. CGH could also increase access to training and formal performance review processes.

Review of sample of staff departures

Justitia considered whether the sample of terminations of employment followed CGH policies, and, more generally, whether the reasons for termination could provide any further information about workplace culture at CGH. Justitia is satisfied that there was nothing in the material presented regarding each of the terminations in the sample to suggest that the dismissals were unfair or that CGH policies were otherwise not followed.

Review of content and regularity of training and education programs

The CGH training and education framework is sound overall but could be improved to better support the CGH workplace culture. Justitia recommends in particular that training on Equal Employment Opportunity and the Prevention of Workplace Bullying be provided more frequently and that this training be complemented with a program on how to make a complaint using CGH's complaints process.

Consultation with current and former staff

Justitia conducted 95 interviews and received 13 written submissions as part of the consultation process. As some participants (current and former employees) attended interviews in groups of two or three, the total number of participants in the consultation process was higher than the number of interviews. Justitia has calculated that 130 participants contributed information to the Review during the consultation process. This includes members of the Executive and senior leadership group.

Justitia is satisfied that the participants interviewed as part of the consultation process were representative of a cross-section of departments and levels of seniority at CGH.

Justitia has identified some consistent themes in the information provided by participants during the consultation process regarding the workplace culture at CGH. Some participants came forward with positive comments regarding workplace culture (32%), some came forward with negative comments (54%), and 14% provided a mixed response.

Justitia was not instructed to formally investigate any allegations or matters of concern raised during the consultation process. The themes should be read as the untested observations of a self-selected group of participants, not as substantiated findings.

The following themes emerged during the consultation process:

- a need for improvement in the method and frequency of communication between lower-level staff and senior management, particularly with regards to the strategic direction of CGH and the consequent impact on jobs
- concerns about ongoing issues with the surgical team
- the need for improvements in incident and risk reporting
- concerns about pay miscalculations
- concerns about recruitment and management processes involving family members
- a need for improvement in the availability of staff support in relation to patient complaints
- a need for better access to staff training during work hours and a more consistent approach to professional development
- concerns about the resourcing of nursing staff
- concerns about the resourcing of the Emergency Department
- feedback for some senior managers regarding overall management style.

Consultation with CGH leadership

Justitia conducted interviews with each member of the Executive and the senior management team at CGH. The views of the CGH Leadership Team with respect to the CGH workplace culture were generally positive.

Summary of Recommendations

Policy and Procedure

Justitia recommends minor amendments to the following CGH policies and procedures to facilitate best practice:

- Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment Prevention and Complaint Resolution Procedure
- Workplace Bullying Policy
- Workplace Bullying Procedure
- Grievance Resolution Procedure
- Staff and Supervision Departmental Process
- Protected Disclosure Procedure

Complaints-handling

Justitia makes the following recommendations and observations with respect to the complaints-handling process at CGH:

- Correspondence with parties to a complaint should include information that clarifies how those parties can access the Employee Assistance Program directly.
- To maintain independence, where required, investigations should be conducted by an appropriately qualified member of human resources or an external investigator.
- Outcome letters should contain information with respect to whether the allegations were substantiated or not. Outcome letters should not contain information regarding the evidence that was put to and accepted by the investigator, and should not divulge information regarding the disciplinary outcome for the respondent.
- Complaints should be investigated within a reasonable timeframe. Some of the reviewed complaints experienced unreasonable delays.

Staff training

Justitia makes the following recommendations regarding staff training at CGH:

- As part of the planned introduction of the automatic email process to remind staff and managers each month of outstanding training, update the Mandatory Competencies Procedure to require managers to follow up on outstanding competencies amongst direct reports on a monthly basis.
- To relate the VPS Code of Conduct back to CGHS values, consider making reference to CGH Values in the Code of Conduct orientation program and provide a link to the VPS Code of Conduct on the mandatory competencies Moodle page,
- Revise the content of the Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination program on Moodle to make clear that engaging in this conduct in the workplace is unlawful. Consider including examples of direct and indirect discrimination and case studies on bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

- The Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination program should be a mandatory competency to be completed at least every two years, rather than every three years. Consider rolling out the existing, more targeted face-to-face training on this content across the whole organisation on a scheduled, rotating basis to increase exposure to the material and ensure all employees have access to face-to-face training. Attendance at a face-to-face session should be a mandatory requirement for managers.
- Consider introducing training for all employees on how to make a complaint regarding workplace conduct and how to lodge a grievance regarding employment conditions in accordance with CGH policies. This training should be included in the orientation program.
- All managers should be required to complete a dedicated manager's training program. Introduce mandatory training for all managers on commencement that covers modules such as performance management, complaint handling, dealing with misconduct, dealing with interpersonal conflict and applying the CGH values to decision making. Consider developing a Managers' Toolkit as a resource for managers with guidance on each of these areas.

Overall recommendation

Justitia recommends that a comprehensive debrief be provided to all staff at CGH regarding the outcome of the Review.

This report was prepared by:

JUSTITIA

JUSTITIA LAWYERS AND CONSULTANTS ABN 71 605 641 950

GPO BOX 4522, Melbourne VIC 3001

Level 10, 45 William Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

P: 03 8621 4500 F: 03 8621 4599

justitia.com.au