Rostering at MCEC

Background

Over the years, the MCEC has been a great place to work and workers have found it easy to be engaged in the workplace and to feel a sense of pride for the venue. We have enjoyed working here and have enjoyed generally strong working conditions. It has been important to us to contribute to MCEC being a world leader in the events industry.

The EBA has traditionally contained excellent clauses around rostering, and workers here have had a positive experience of rostering at MCEC. Our union, the MEAA have even used the MCEC as a model workplace in terms of rostering when asked by other employers how rostering could be done better.

2016

During mid 2016, for really the first time we began to hear concerns about rostering raised by our colleagues. Concerns were raised in various departments, and at that stage we as delegates were not aware that it was happening in other areas as well.

Separately, concerns were raised from union members in Kitchen Logistics, Retail, Customer Service, Food and Bev, Tech Services, and the Kitchen. Some of these concerns were raised with management as individual issues and some were resolved satisfactorily, however many of the members did not want to be singled out because they had a fear of adverse action for raising issues.

Our union representative, Anthony Hack, raised these concerns broadly with Steve Bryson to bring the trend to the attention of MCEC, however we could not be satisfied that it was acted upon as Steve had requested specific details to be able to investigate it properly.

Technical Services Department

The major rostering issues in TSD in recent times are well known. There have been issues with rosters being released on time and then there have regularly been many errors in the rosters that need to be fixed during the week, resulting in unprecedented shift changes, as well as a huge amount of duties not assigned to any particular worker and also too much work being assigned to too few workers. This has led to significant health and safety concerns, especially for those workers having short breaks between shifts and those working shifts in excess of 20 hours, however the issues have also resulted in morale dropping and increased stress within the team. More details of the impact will be outlined later.

Seeking resolution

As acknowledged by Peter King in his response to our letter, various meetings have occurred across all levels of the organisation, born from workers attempting to resolve the issues. Individuals have raised concerns with managers, the workplace consultative committee has discussed the issues and also set up a separate rostering sub-committee, specific regular meetings have been set up with MEAA representatives in TSD and our union rep, Anthony Hack has met with Steve Bryson as previously outlined. Other concerns have been raised with Samantha Viney as they have occurred.

We met as union delegates in late September and realised that many of our concerns are the same as what workers in other departments have been experiencing. We were not confident that the issues were being addressed satisfactorily and we were not sure that senior management, such as the CEO and COO, were even aware of the issues. We decided to run a survey with the aim of bringing the issues to the attention of the CEO, Peter King. As you know, we wrote to Peter on October 24th requesting a meeting and he replied on October 26 suggesting we meet with COO Leighton Wood. We appreciate the opportunity to meet today to discuss these issues.

Survey

We conducted a survey in the workplace and will present to you some of the key findings.

95 surveys were completed by MCEC employees. We found it difficult to find time to conduct the surveys during our breaks however we are very pleased to have 95 completed in the end.
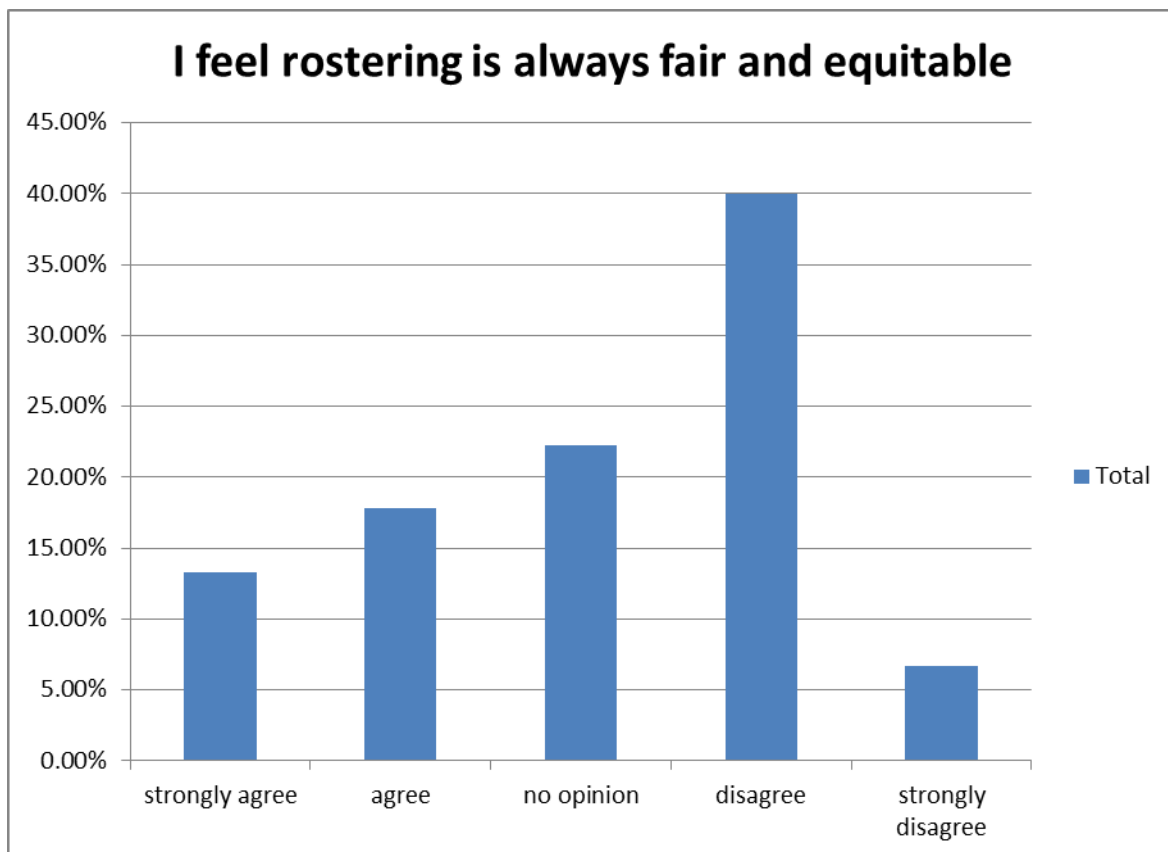
Demographics

29 were from Food & Bev, 20 from Customer Service, 20 from Technical Services, 10 from Kitchen, 10 from Retail, 5 from Loading Dock and 1 undefined, showing there is a good distribution across all departments, except for obviously Kitchen Logistics and Set Up.

There was also a good distribution of respondents experience working at MCEC, with 11 having more than 10 years' experience, 16 with 5-9 years, 19 with 3 or 4 years, 14 with 2 years and 32 with 1 year or less experience at MCEC, whilst 3 were undefined.

All respondents were casual except for 1 permanent staff member.

It should be acknowledged that the people most likely to be able to complete surveys were those getting shifts, and this was reflected in the average hours per week of respondents: 24 people worked 40 hours or more on average per week, 38 worked 20-39 hours per week, 18 worked 10-19 hours per week, whilst 6 worked less than 10 hours per week on average and 9 were undefined.

Key findings

I feel rostering is always fair and equitable

A bar chart titled "I feel rostering is always fair and equitable" showing percentages (Total) for response categories:
- strongly agree: ~13.3%
- agree: ~17.8%
- no opinion: ~22.2%
- disagree: 40.00%
- strongly disagree: ~6.7%

Only **31.1%** of union members felt rostering at MCEC is always fair and reasonable, with **46.7%** stating they did not and the remainder having no opinion either way.

A majority of respondents from both F&B and Customer Service felt that rostering was fair and reasonable, however all other departments surveyed indicated otherwise.

When asked to rate whether they were happy with rostering overall on a scale of 1 to 10, the average score of members with more than 1 years' experience was **5.1**, right in the middle. Some were happy and some were not.

When asked to rate how they felt about rostering at the same time a year ago, the same workers had an average rating of **6.7**. This is a drop of 2.5 across 1 year, or a quarter of the maximum rating of 10.

48.9% of members indicated they felt they had not been provided adequate training opportunities, whilst just **24.4%** indicated they had been. Fairly even amounts of members felt their skills or areas of interest and specialty were and were not recognised by management and rostering.

Impact on workers

Survey respondents were asked how rostering issues affected them directly. There were 73 impacts raised:

- **26%** of those related to financial pressures such as difficulty predicting income and loss of income.
- **24.7%** were around difficulties making plans/juggling work and private life (eg missing out on social events from not knowing finishing time/missing out on time with family).
- **21.9%** indicated impacts on morale such as not feeling valued/respected/listened to/recognised by MCEC, with some specifying low morale and general feelings of insecurity (eg feeling of being exploited by MCEC/it is difficult to remain committed to MCEC).
- **15%** raised health issues, such as stress/burnout/pressured/tired/mental health/poor sleep/general health/effects on hormones.
- **5.4%** were related to staff issues (eg lack of trust among staff/division of staff/friction/turnover of staff is problematic).
- The remaining **6.8%** were related to various other impacts such as time being wasted, and impacts on other employment.
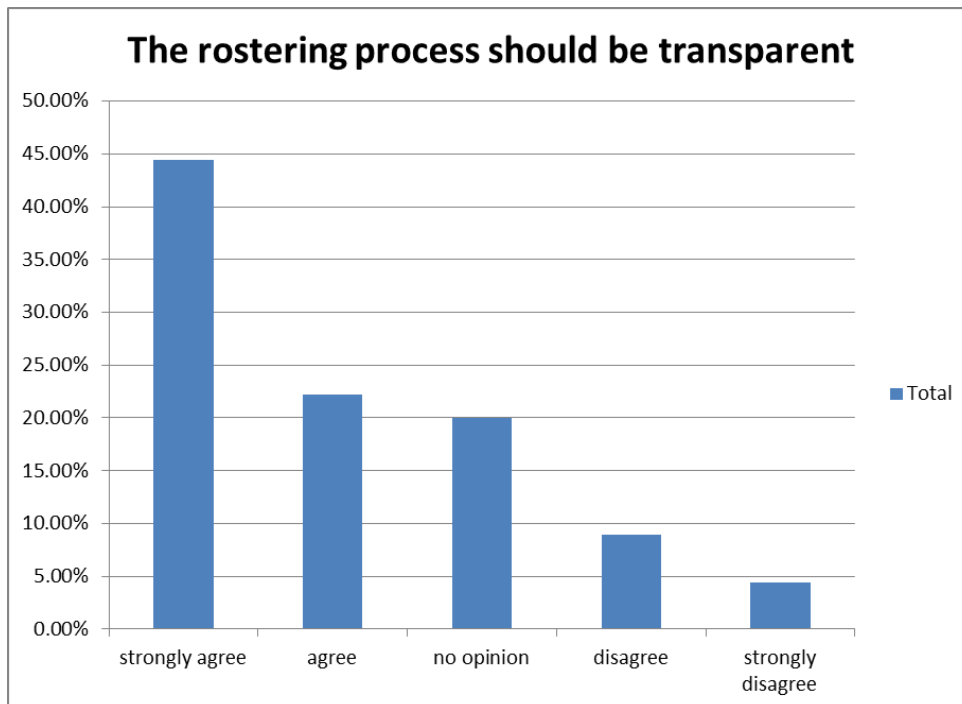

Proposals

Workers were asked what would be the 1 thing they could change about rostering if they could. Only the first mentioned response on each survey was considered for this data. There were 55 respondents who suggested a change.
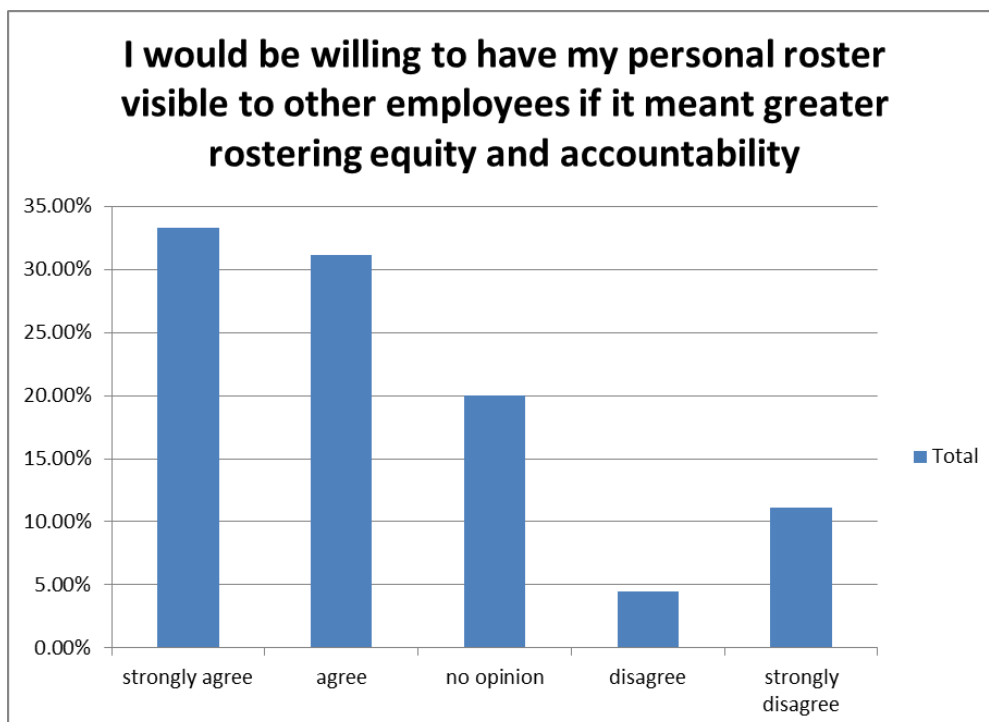
- **20%** suggested a better rostering process (eg transparency/further in advance/rostering should work on weekend/ one more extra day to provide availability/efficiency and reliability via phone and tablet)
- **16.3%** suggested a better estimate of finish time /no last minute changes to start time/length of shift not to change/consistency
- **14.5%** suggested fair rosters based on availability (eg make sure everyone gets shifts)
- **12.7%** suggested a better skills in rostering/ that they need to know about the jobs they are rostering (eg rostering staff to have experience in industry)
- **9%** suggested staffing issues, such as less agency staff/more staff
- **5.4%** suggested more consultation with staff
- **5.4%** suggested more consistency
- The remaining **16.3%** were made up of answers provided by just 1 or 2 people each, such as more training shifts, less shifts to those who cancel all the time, new management and to go back to previous system

Transparent rosters

Respondents were asked two questions regarding transparent rosters.

66.7% of union members stated that the rostering process should be transparent, with **20%** stating they had no opinion. Just **13.3%** did not agree.

64.4% of union members stated that they were willing to have their personal rosters visible to other employees, with **20%** stating they had no opinion. Just **15.6%** did not agree.

Conclusion

We are meeting today because we want to see positive change. Rostering had always been great at MCEC in the past and it is disappointing the way things have moved in the later parts of this year.

When raising issues in the past, we have often been asked for specific details or specific instances however these are not always simple to locate. It is clear to us that there has been an increase in the amount of concerns amongst our colleagues, the feelings of problems with rostering, and the impacts it has caused - the survey data has confirmed that.

We also feel that the survey data would likely be even more damning if we were able to survey the workers who do not receive many shifts as that could be a direct result of inequitable rostering.

We wanted to speak directly to the CEO to make sure that those with most responsibility were aware of the issues and to minimise the chance of the buck being passed on. We really appreciate the opportunity to meet and have a frank and open discussion about this.

We hope that from this meeting MCEC will be able to acknowledge that there is a significant overarching problem with rostering. Were there poor decisions made at some point that has caused this downward spiral? This is a common question asked of us however senior management are best placed to know the answer and to put things right.

We need to be respected as MEAA representatives. We are the ones that our colleagues often come to with concerns. It is not always appropriate to pass on specific details to management. Nine survey respondents specifically mentioned occasions where they had raised issues with management and suffered adverse action as a result, whilst others indicated a fear of this occurring if they were to raise an issue. Five of those 9 stated they received less shifts immediately after raising issues, some of those also indicated the length of their shifts decreased. One stated they were met with aggression afterwards and another similarly stated they were treated poorly at work afterwards and another stated they were harassed and unfairly questioned. Two indicated they had responsibility taken away from them and another felt they were unfairly overlooked for more senior roles due to them speaking out, whilst one also said they were forced to change departments after speaking up about an issue. Respondents felt safe to raise these points in the survey due to their responses remaining confidential and it is important the MCEC is aware of this underlying feeling amongst many staff.

The impact on both your staff and the delivery of great events for our customers can not be disputed. As outlined above, there are real impacts on the health and wellbeing of your staff, as well as morale and work/life balance. Again, we should reiterate that it has only been in the later parts of this year that we have seen this trending the wrong way.

We have some proposals that if implemented would go some way to resolving many of the problems that have been identified.

- Transparent rostering
  - This includes both the rostering process, as well as the rosters themselves. Staff want to know how rostering is done, such as which staff are considered for roles and how they are chosen and the trigger points for when agency staff are called in. A majority of staff have also indicated that they are willing for their personal rosters to be made available for all to see. If this was to be done, we feel that it would allay many of the feelings of unfairness. Moreover, when this process is transparent, it will allow for more genuine consultation through the rostering subcommittee of the workplace consultative committee.
- Management accountability
  - What has changed? Why has rostering become such a big issue? Are these questions being asked within senior management?
- Resourcing
  - We welcome the advice Peter King has provided that dedicated resources have been assigned to the workforce planning area. It seems imperative that the rostering team is adequately resourced. A common theme in the survey data was for the rostering staff to be experienced in the roles that they are rostering to ensure they have an understanding of the specific job requirements of the roles.
- Updated capabilities/skills
  - Staff want to feel respected and to be given an opportunity to have some say in the work they are rostered for. There needs to be an audit done for all staff to confirm their skills, capabilities and interests.
- Increased training
  - **48.9%** of members surveyed stated that they were not being provided training opportunities, and another **26.7%** had no opinion, meaning just **24.4%** stated that they had been provided training opportunities. Staff feel that further training should be provided to ensure more workers are skilled to perform more tasks to make it simpler to roster people and ensure shifts are more fairly distributed.

Deadline

We trust that the above solutions will have a positive impact and it would be great if we could see some significant gains made in these areas by COB Friday 24th November. We respectfully request that you respond to us before this date to advise of the progress being made in these 5 key areas.

Thank you again for meeting with us today.