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**Civil Service Division
National Secretary
Andy Pike**

Mr Kevin Duffy
Chair
Public Service Pay Commission,
3rd Floor,
St. Stephen's Green House,
Earlsfort Terrace,
Dublin 2

29th November 2017

Dear Mr Duffy,

Please find enclosed a brief submission from IMPACT in respect of recruitment and retention problems affecting various grades and groups within the Civil Service. We have also submitted this information on the template supplied.

Civil Service Cleaners

There is increasing difficulty in recruiting Cleaners in the Civil Service specifically within Garda Civilian services. A competition held in October 2017 to form a panel for permanent established posts within Dublin Garda Stations attracted so few applicants that the competition is to be repeated. The competition was advertised through Jobs Ireland. Competitions for cleaners to work in the Garda Training College in Templemore have also proved difficult with candidates well placed on panels refusing offers of employment due to the fact that the starting salary is €393.61 per week. This equates to €9.10 on the Civil Service 43.25 working week and is below the current Contract Cleaning Employment Regulation Order which set pay rates for contract cleaning at a minimum of €10.05 per hour rising to €10.40 on 1st December 2017. Further difficulties have been reported recruiting cleaning staff for the Department of the Taoiseach. The pay rates for Cleaning staff in the civil service have to be adjusted each time the minimum wage is increased as the hourly rate of pay is calculated using the 43.25 working week. The low starting salary is not competitive with pay rates in the private sector.

Solicitor Grade III - Legal Aid Board

Solicitors Grade 3 are employed in the Legal Aid Board and work in approximately 50 Law Centres throughout the country, dealing with applicants, who are eligible for Legal Aid, (65% of the population), on all aspects of Civil Law as defined in the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995.

Responsibility for the conduct of each file rests solely with the assigned Solicitor, "primary responsibility for the provision of a professional and timely service lies with the individual solicitor to whom the case is assigned" and "primary responsibility for managing the risk of providing an inadequate and unprofessional service lies with the solicitor to whom the case is assigned."

Solicitors act completely autonomously in respect of each client and deal with each case without any input from a managing solicitor. Grade 3 Solicitors are responsible for directing clerical staff, law clerks, and legal clerks in the assistance and management of their caseload.

Though much of the work is in the area of Family Law, (Divorce, Judicial Separation) the Civil Legal Aid Scheme covers many other matters such as Judicial Review, Child Abduction, Child Care Public law proceedings, Cohabitees. Conveyancing, refugee Law, immigration, representation of Rape victims in Circuit Criminal Courts, employment issues, debt, (but not attending tribunals except for the Refugee Appeals Tribunal). This is in contrast to their colleagues in the broader civil service who are allocated to a particular area of law.

Triage of all applicants takes place in Law Centres, where the waiting list for applicants exceeded 4 months. This involves Solicitors in Law Centres interviewing all applicants, providing them with some preliminary advice and determining if a particular applicant should be risk managed and given priority, for example : if there was a question of a claim being defeated because the Statute of Limitations for personal injury or breach the time limit in cohabitant relief. Grade 3 Solicitors are fully responsible for and settle their own cases on behalf of clients, often without the benefit of Counsel or other support structures unlike colleagues elsewhere in the Civil Service. Case Loads: Due to the downturn in the economy in the period from 2006 to 2011. The number of Applicants rose from 8,900 in 2006 to 18,657 in 2011 (Source Annual Report).

The LAB reports significant difficulty in attracting suitable candidates for posts. In 2015 a competition attracted over 40 qualified applicants. In 2017 competition for the same posts attracted only 10 external candidates with 6 being deemed suitable for employment.

The LAB is competing in the same labour market as private sector law firms and critically the Chief States Solicitors Office, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Attorney General's Office. The LAB can only offer candidates a starting salary at the bottom of the scale - €37,000 whereas the CSSO, DPP and AGs Offices are able to offer appointment on the scale up to point 10 - €54,000 with over 90% of current State Solicitors qualifying for this incremental progression following assessment of their post qualification experience.

Meteorologists in Met Éireann

There is ongoing difficulty recruiting Meteorologists. The most recent panel for Forecasters attracted sufficient applicants to fill only 3 posts. Following discussion in relation to starting salaries 8 candidates refused posts. Difficulties reported also in the recruitment of Post Doctoral Fellowship staff as the Third Level Sector offers salaries of €40,000 to €55,000 whereas Met Éireann can only offer appointment at the scale minimum of €31,000.

Technical Agricultural Officers in DAFM

DAFM has run two competitions for TAOs since the start of 2016. Overall number of applicants has been satisfactory. Difficulties persist in filling posts in Meat Plants due to the nature of the work and the location of posts. 2 posts are vacant in Kildare, 2 posts in Waterford and 1 post in Cahir.

Candidates from the 2016 and the 2017 TAO panels have turned down offers of employment in these locations. There are two measures that could rectify this situation firstly appointment above the minimum point on the TAO scale in recognition of geographical factors and also the demanding working conditions in Meat Plants and secondly relaxation of the requirement that new staff serve 2 years in their first location before being eligible for transfer. New TAOs not living in such locations may accept such posts if they were able to transfer to different locations after 12 months instead of 24 months as at present. Difficulties are also reported in filling TAO posts in DVOs within DAFM.

Library and Research Staff in the Oireachtas
Debates Office Staff in the Oireachtas
Translators in the Oireachtas

The attached report shows no difficulty in recruitment across grades but demonstrates significant retention problems. The attrition rates for Researchers is exceptionally high at 59% and the attrition rate for Grade III Translators is 22% which is also concerning. The common difficulty reported is the length of the Engineer Grade III payscale and the slow rate of pay progression. The Oireachtas is competing with law firms for the services of experienced Legal Researchers who can command salaries of €40,000 to €50,000. The pay arrangements for this grade appear to be sufficiently competitive to ensure recruitment, but are uncompetitive once staff have accrued experience. Retention is being detrimentally affected by the improving private sector labour market for legal professionals including Researchers.

Special Educational Needs Organisers - National Council for Special Education

SENOs are employed on the Engineer III salary scales and recruit from a labour market comprised exclusively of teachers. In 2016 a national competition resulted in only 1 appointment as all but one of the 20 qualifying candidates refused offers of employment as the terms and conditions in respect of pay, hours of work and annual leave were inferior to those within schools. In 2017 a second national competition produced identical results with only 1 candidate accepting an offer of employment before the panel was exhausted. There are currently 3 sanctioned vacancies unfilled. In addition the key post of Specialist Lead (Head of Visiting Teachers) is vacant and cannot be filled.

Grade III Valuer Posts – Government Valuation Office

The Valuation Office has sanction for 60 Valuers. There are currently 6 vacancies left unfilled at Engineer Grade III level. A competition in 2017 seeking 12 new staff resulted in only 6 candidates being appointed. Candidates declined offers of employment due to the starting salary of €31,000. Over the past 2 years (2015 to 2017) the service has lost 7 Grade III Valuers due to resignation in circumstances whereby they accepted jobs in the private sector and semi state sector. Many of the larger property companies such as Lisneys, Savills Jones Lang Lasalle are in competition for both newly qualified and experienced Surveyors and Valuers as are many Estate Agencies and Property Management Companies. More beneficial pay and conditions of service are also offered by other organisations such as Local Authorities, ESB (Semi State), Rehab and other bodies. Candidates report that the length of the payscale, low starting salary and lack of incremental credit on appointment all contribute to recruitment and retention difficulties.

Radio Officers – Irish Coastguard Service

A recruitment competition in March 2017 sought to fill 5 posts, 3 suitably qualified candidates accepted positions, two candidates declined offers of employment due to the low starting salary and lack of incremental credit on appointment. The Coast Guard recruited four Radio Officers in 2011, of those four new employees two have now left the service. One Officer resigned in 2013, in order to take up employment as a Harbourmaster. Another Officer resigned in 2014, in order to take up employment as a Harbour Pilot. The Coastguard competes in the same labour markets as does the Merchant Marine and other Semi State agencies.

Summary

The information contained within this submission does not represent the totality of the recruitment and retention problems now affecting technical and specialist grades in the Civil Service. Across the State's Laboratories, Law Offices and many specialist Agencies, the current starting salaries are no longer competitive when compared to the private sector labour market for specialist staff. The length of the Engineer pay scales is proving to be a barrier to retaining staff who are no longer prepared to wait for close to two decades to reach the top of their scale.

Low pay levels have long been highlighted by those representing Civil Service Cleaners. The recent ERO for Contract Cleaning pay rates as well as the need to adjust the starting salary for this grade each time the National Minimum wage is increased highlights the reasons for difficulty in recruiting Cleaners within Garda Civilian and other services.

Should you require any further information please contact me directly.

Yours Sincerely,

Andy Pike
National Secretary
Civil Service Division
IMPACT