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Australian Public Service Commission

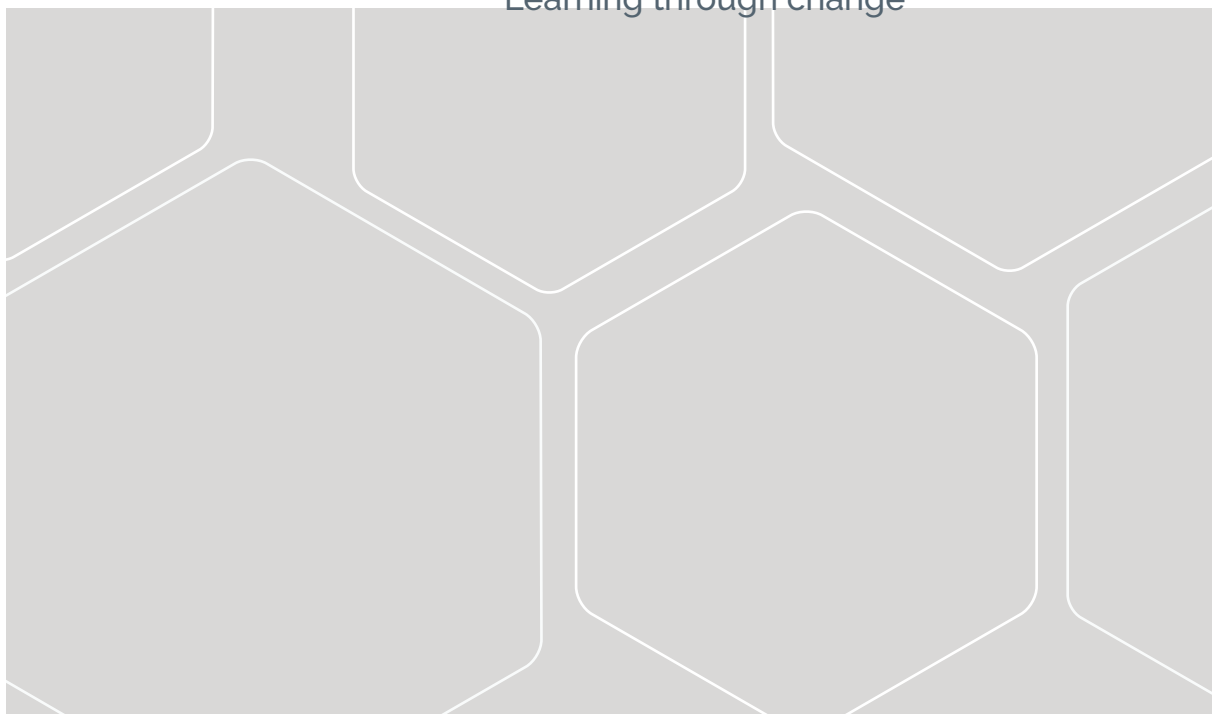


Learning through change

State of the Service Report 2019–20

State
of the
Service
Report
2019–20

Learning through change



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This document must be attributed as the State of the Service Report 2019–20



Australian Government
Australian Public Service Commission

The Hon Ben Morton MP
Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Assistant Minister

In accordance with Section 44(1) of the *Public Service Act 1999*, I present you with my report on the state of the Australian Public Service for 2019–20.

Section 44(3) of the *Public Service Act 1999* requires that this report is laid before each House of Parliament by 30 November 2020.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Woolcott'.

Peter Woolcott AO
Australian Public Service Commissioner
30 November 2020

Preface

Section 44 of the *Public Service Act 1999* (Cth) stipulates that the Australian Public Service Commissioner issue a report each year to the agency's Minister for presentation to the Australian Parliament. It is required to report on the state of the Australian Public Service (APS) during the past year.

The *State of the Service Report 2019–20* identifies the year-to-year trends in workforce participation and capability across the APS.

This is the 23rd annual report on the state of the APS presented to Parliament.

This State of the Service Report differs from previous years' reports as it does not contain APS employee census data. The annual APS census was delayed to prioritise APS effort toward the COVID-19 pandemic response. The census data was therefore not available in time for publication by the legislated timeframe for the report. The report draws on the APS Employee Database, the APSC's annual Agency Survey and other data collections and research undertaken to evaluate the APS during the past year.

The report highlights the work of the APS, its challenges and how the APS has responded. It contains an overview of how the APS workforce has adapted to and accelerated change, overcoming barriers to deliver for Government and Australians during a time of crisis and into recovery.

The report also provides a statistical overview of the APS workforce and how this has changed over time.

The appendixes to the *State of the Service Report 2019–20* comprise:

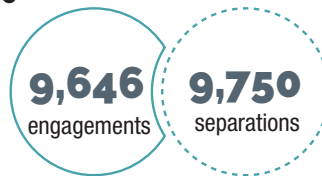
- APS workforce information sources
- APS agencies
- APS workforce trends
- supporting statistics to the report
- unscheduled absence data.

APS at a glance

Employee headcount

150,474
▲ **+2.5%** from 30 June 2019

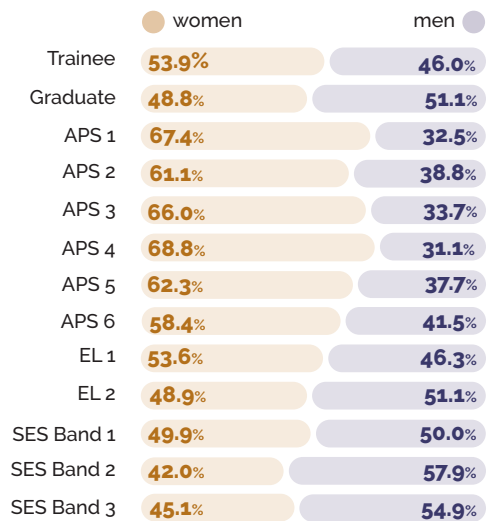
2019–20



2020 Ongoing & non-ongoing employees



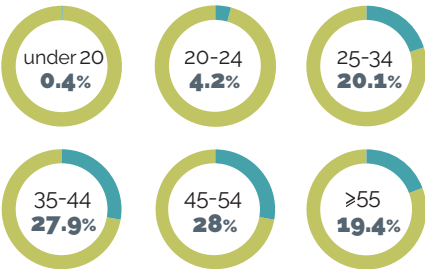
Gender by classification



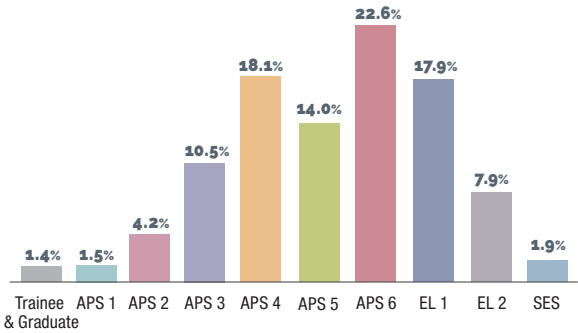
Diversity



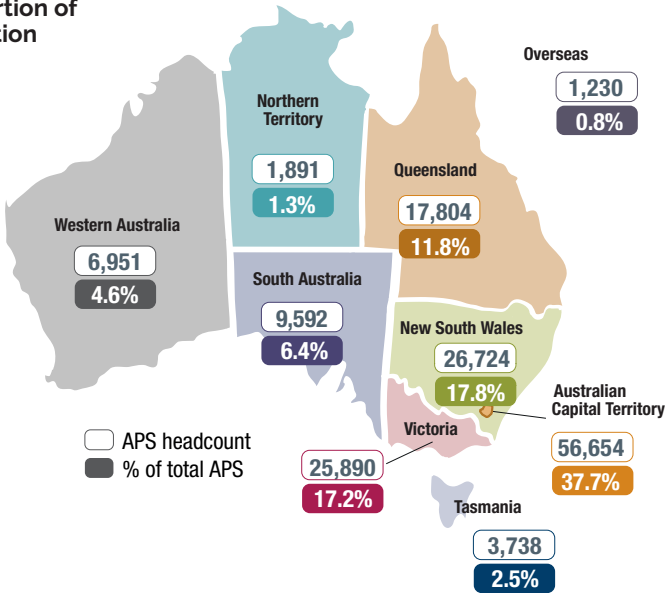
Proportion of employees by age



Proportion of employees by classification



Number and proportion of employees by location



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Commissioner's overview

The events of the past year have changed the Australian Public Service (APS) at pace. They have driven the APS to coalesce around a singular uniting purpose: **to support the people of Australia.**

In 2019, the APS was readying for a future anticipated to be one with more complex policy challenges, continued technological acceleration, and increasing uncertainty. Implementation planning for the Government's APS reform agenda, *Delivering for Australians*, had begun following receipt of the largest review of the APS in 40 years.

In December 2019, the Prime Minister announced a new consolidated structure for government departments to improve decision-making and deliver better services for the Australian people. The Machinery of Government changes, which took effect on 1 February 2020, reduced the number of government departments from 18 to 14 and saw more than 8,000 APS employees move agencies.

By year's end, the future had arrived.

The 2019–20 bushfire season saw lives lost, homes destroyed and millions of hectares of land burnt across the country. The National Bushfire Recovery Agency was established on 6 January 2020 to connect bushfire-affected

communities with the assistance they needed, supplementing other APS agencies delivering urgent, essential services.

On 20 January, Australia's National Incident Room in the Department of Health—already dealing with bushfires, the White Island volcano eruption and Australia's response to the Samoan measles outbreak—was activated for the global COVID-19 pandemic.

By the end of March, the country was grappling with the health, economic, social and geopolitical implications of COVID-19, including increasing numbers of infections, new physical distancing requirements, job losses, border closures and disruptions to supply chains and many industries.

These short 8 months have reinforced that the APS must continue to act as one enterprise. These crises have tested Australia and the APS like never before in working memory. By working together, with clarity of purpose, the APS has been able to effectively support Australians and the Government.

The APS will need to be adaptable and continue to respond to changing circumstances.

As a nation, we are facing myriad challenges and the APS is at the centre of assisting Government to navigate a path to long-term recovery and to keep Australia safe and prosperous. This report outlines



just some of the ways in which the APS, as an institution, has responded during 2019–20.

This State of the Service Report differs to those of previous years. Past reports have been typically informed by the results of the annual APS employee census. In light of COVID-19 and its impacts on the APS workforce, the 2020 APS employee census was postponed and results were not available for analysis within the timeframe for publishing this report.

The sources used to evaluate the state of the service in 2019–20 include insights from in-depth interviews undertaken with Chief Operating Officers within the APS, the annual APS Agency Survey, internal APS agency employee surveys, human resources data, and case studies. The data available paints a picture of an APS workforce that is collaborative, committed to service and that has continued to deliver for the Australian people and the Government, throughout a rapid shift to remote work at scale.

Commitment to service

In response to the surge in demand for support and services from the Australian public, APS employees worked hard to deliver the services Australians need—when and where they were needed the most.

Every agency adjusted their priorities and workload as a result of COVID-19. This was particularly true of those involved in frontline service delivery.

Between March and May 2020, Services Australia processed more claims in a 6 week period than it would usually process in a year, and in just over 3 months, 960,000 organisations and more than 3.5 million individuals received JobKeeper payments worth over \$30 billion. By early May, the ATO had approved 1.3 million applications for the early release of superannuation.

To support this surge in demand, the APS implemented a large-scale mobility program. Within weeks, agencies had mapped critical functions across the service and deployed employees internally and externally to support the crisis response.

More than 2,300 employees moved agency temporarily and more than 8,900 employees moved to priority tasks within their own portfolios or agencies. This often involved putting down familiar roles and stepping out of usual teams while demonstrating agility and a willingness to act as one APS.

Many moved to process JobSeeker claims or administer JobKeeper payments, to ensure Australians could access vital support. Others used their expertise in crisis management teams, to support the procurement of personal protective equipment or conduct policy analysis to inform crisis decision-making.

Many others worked to maintain the health and safety of our workforce, and business continuity of Government. For example, ICT teams scaled up digital infrastructure to support a rapid shift to working from home, HR teams moved to proactive service models to check the wellbeing of employees, and learning and development teams rolled out programs to up-skill managers new to managing physically-dispersed teams.

To respond to the pandemic crisis, the APS collaborated closely with state and territory governments, including supporting the Government through National Cabinet and the National Federation Reform Council. Recognising the significant impacts of COVID-19 on all aspects of the Australian economy, the APS has worked in partnership with the private sector through the National Coordination Mechanism at the Department of Home Affairs, and the cross-sector National COVID-19 Commission (Advisory Board).

At the peak of national COVID-19 restrictions, more than half of APS employees worked from home. While many employees continued at their usual workplaces to meet operational requirements, one-in-five agencies report moving their entire workforce out of the office for a period of time.

The pandemic response has changed the nature of flexible work. Previously, flexible arrangements were most often used by women working part-time or accessing flexible hours. Throughout the pandemic, flexibility has become synonymous with the health and safety of our workforce, and business continuity of Government. Whether working remotely, over split shifts or rotating teams through the office, flexible work was widely embraced as a necessary measure to ensure employees could remain productive and focused on critical service delivery.

Supporting recovery

In 2019, the Government responded to the recommendations of the *Independent Review of the APS*, commissioned to ensure the APS is fit-for-purpose for the coming decades. *Delivering for Australians* set in motion APS reforms to enhance services and deliver clear priorities, better connect the APS to all Australians, and foster an adaptive workforce which acts with integrity.

The arrival of COVID-19 prompted significant shifts in the APS operating model. Changes that might otherwise have taken years were implemented in a matter of weeks. The Secretaries Board, the principal service-wide governance group of the APS, met 27 times from February to July 2020 to coordinate the role of the APS in the Government's response to COVID-19.

The Chief Operating Officers (COO) Committee, established in February 2020 to assist progressing APS reform, quickly refocused to support the crisis response. Supporting the Secretaries Board, it became a critical leadership group focused on an integrated approach to APS operations and workforce management. This new body has been integral to working with the Commission to embed the collaborative behaviours required for navigating complex challenges and uncertain environments.

Strong leadership is a key element of organisational success. This has been heightened in the last 12 months as APS employees faced new personal and professional pressures. The APS is focused on uplifting SES capability to ensure our leaders are prepared for future challenges. We are also developing an APS leadership pipeline to identify and support our future leaders.

The digital capacity of the APS ensured that many could rapidly transition to working from home,

and tools were in place to maintain connections to each other and work productively. For Australians, digital solutions have allowed members of the public to easily access more government services without having to leave their homes. For example, the expansion of Telehealth led to 7.98 million Telehealth services delivered to 4.82 million patients between 13 March and 5 May 2020.

Data also continues to be an enabler of success, allowing us to better understand the needs of Australians and to appropriately respond as a service. Collaborative and innovative use of data has been front and centre in the bushfire and COVID-19 crises. Data from the Bureau of Meteorology was critically important for Australia's bushfire response. Health, social and economic data has played an integral role in addressing COVID-19. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's (PM&C) data analytics team brought together and analysed COVID-19 data from Commonwealth, state and territory sources, as well as from the private sector and overseas. This has been essential in guiding Government decision-making and tracking the effects of measures taken.

In the past 12 months, the APS launched 3 professional streams: Human Resources, Digital, and Data. The professions aim to lift in-house skills and expertise, provide mobility, and foster rewarding public service careers. Informed by international best practice in the UK, NZ and Singapore, we have focused initially on these 3 areas as they are critical capabilities for delivering services and measuring outcomes.

The Secretaries Board has reshaped the focus of the APS reform agenda to build on and embed the best of the APS during the pandemic, with a focus on 3 priorities:

- continuing to support Australia's response to and recovery from the pandemic
- accelerating APS digital transformation
- investing in the skills we need now and in the future.

These initiatives will keep supporting Australia's response to, and recovery from, the COVID-19 crisis, while building long-term APS capability.

Your APS

The core role of the APS—an apolitical public service that is efficient and effective in serving the Government, the Parliament and the Australian public¹—has not changed. We remain committed to providing high-quality advice to the Government and implementing its policies through projects, programs, regulation and services.

To do this, we must attract, develop and retain the best, and through inclusive practices harness the benefits that diverse thinking and backgrounds bring.

Our diversity and inclusion strategies and actions remain integral to continuing to lift APS employment of Indigenous Australians, people with disability and older Australians, and ensure our differences make a positive impact on the work of the APS.

In July 2020, the Government launched the *Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020–24*. Applicable across the entire Commonwealth public sector, the strategy sets ambitious targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee representation. To meet these targets Commonwealth agencies will work in partnership with each other and with communities.

The forthcoming *APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020–25* sets an employment target for

1 s3(a) Public Service Act 1999

people with disability in the APS of 7% by 2025. An accessible and inclusive workplace culture and environment for people with disability remains essential to meet this target. The APS will continue to focus on gender equality in its workforce through the refreshed Gender Equality Strategy. The Commission is also leading work to support mature aged workers.

Through these strategies the APS aims to reflect the diversity of the community it serves, and leverages the benefits different perspectives bring.

Learning through change

Our operating environment has changed over the past year. The effects of the bushfires, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the consequent economic disruption will be felt for many years to come. In order to manage these challenges over the long-term, the APS aims to come out of the crisis stronger than it went in.

To do this, we must critically evaluate our performance over this past year. The APS traditionally operates well in a crisis, but we need to lock in reforms and ensure that our operating models are sustainable.

We must retain a sense of shared purpose and continue to work as one APS, a mobile, flexible and adaptive organisation. We need to invest in our crisis architecture and ensure our digital infrastructure and capabilities are fit-for-purpose. We need to reflect on what worked well and what we can adapt, to successfully lead our teams through future challenges.

The APS has risen to the challenges of 2019–20. We are well-positioned to remain a world-class public service. I am confident that we will look clearly at the lessons of the past, and continue to act with integrity into the future. This will ensure that the APS continues to deliver high-quality results for all Australians.



Chapter one

Commitment to service

‘Your extraordinary efforts are protecting
Australians...Public service has never meant more
than now...the focus of all agencies, departments
and their employees will be on delivering those
critical services that the Australian public
is relying on us for.’

Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon Scott Morrison MP²

Commitment to service

2019–20 profoundly impacted the Australian community and the Australian Public Service.

Following a long and devastating bushfire season, a global pandemic with severe health, social and economic impacts arrived. To support Australians through crisis the APS was able to adjust rapidly, at scale, reforming in real-time to help deliver through crisis, and into recovery.

In a changed world the essential role of the APS was reinforced to ensure a mobile, flexible and adaptive workforce, dedicated to serving the public, Government and Parliament.

The data, case studies and insights from 2019–20 provide a window into how the APS adopted new ways of working over the past year. This report shares lessons learned to assist the APS to continue to adapt. And it shows how the resilience of individuals has been tested through back-to-back crises, at the same time as grappling with changing personal circumstances and protecting the health of family, friends and communities.

Black Summer

In September 2019, southern Queensland and South Australia were already contending with bushfires, with state and federal aid mobilised. By November 2019, fires burnt across the country. Before summer's end, 33 people had lost their lives, more than 3,000 homes had been destroyed,³ and more than 17 million hectares of land had been burnt, devastating lives and regional economies. Many cities and towns were blanketed in smoke with air quality ranking amongst the worst in the world.⁴

Australia and the APS are accustomed to bushfire recovery, however the bushfires experienced in 2019–20 required a new level of coordination across Commonwealth, state and territory governments. Governments were coordinating the logistics of large evacuations, protecting the health and safety of communities, and providing immediate financial assistance to impacted people and businesses. Cross-agency and cross-government partnerships were essential.

³ The Hon Scott Morrison MP. (2020). *Condolences: Australian Bushfires*. 4 February.

⁴ ABC News. (2020). *Australia's bushfire smoke spreads to NZ as Canberra's air quality goes off the scale*. 1 January.

The National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA) was established on 6 January 2020 to lead and coordinate a national response to rebuilding bushfire-affected communities, and to administer the National Bushfire Recovery Fund.⁵ A wide range of support measures were developed across agencies and announced in quick succession. Measures ranged from infrastructure and economic support, to community health, tourism and small business assistance. The NBRA continues to provide funding and support to affected regions.

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements was subsequently established on 20 February 2020 to examine Australia's arrangements for preventing, mitigating and responding to natural disasters.⁶

Services Australia played a major role in providing immediate assistance, working shoulder-to-shoulder with Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel in fire-affected communities across New South Wales and Victoria. During the 2019–20 bushfire season, Services Australia processed more than \$223 million in Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payments and took over 200,000 calls via its disaster payments hotline. The average speed of answering these calls was measured in seconds, and in most cases, payments were made in minutes.⁷



The agency also worked with the ADF and Service NSW to deploy and establish multiple Mobile Service Centres and Mobile Service Teams to affected communities. Through a 'Whole-of-Defence' approach beginning in September 2019, APS and Defence contractor personnel, 4,300 ADF members including 1,100 Reservists supported the emergency response.⁸ Defence opened military bases to provide temporary accommodation to evacuees and emergency service workers.⁹

5 NBRA. (2020). *The Agency*

6 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. (2020). *About the Royal Commission*

7 The Hon Stuart Robert MP. (2020). *Government Services in the digital age: the challenges, the plan and the delivery*. (Speech) 7 July

8 NBRA. (2020). *Assistance from the Australian Defence Force factsheet*

9 Department of Defence. (2020). Written submission to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee Inquiry into *Lessons to be learned in relation to the preparation and planning for, response to and recovery efforts following the 2019–20 Australian bushfire season*



Case study

Community-minded

On 4 January 2020—for the first time in Australia's history—the Governor General issued a compulsory call-out to deploy up to 3,000 ADF Reservists for civil aid, humanitarian, medical, civil emergency and disaster assistance.¹⁰

APS employee, Jaison Basil, Assistant Director, Cost Analysis working in the Contestability Division of the Department of Defence was one of the Reservists to answer the call.

In 2017 Jaison joined the Army Reserves and qualified as a Combat Engineer. The role focuses on road clearance, which when overseas might mean looking for mines and booby traps, but on home soil it means assisting with natural disasters such as bushfires and floods. The Reserves appealed to Jaison as he could contribute to the community and maintain his APS career. His APS supervisors remain supportive of his Reserve work and this extended through this call-out.

“

‘My supervisor was really supportive and kept me in the loop as to what work I was expected to resume with on my return. We caught up every week and made sure I still had that connection to my role and my work.’

Jaison's first rotation was based in Nowra, NSW clearing trees from 50 kilometres of roads:

‘These were single roads leading into satellite towns. If the road is blocked then the whole town is blocked in.’

His unit worked with the police, the Rural Fire Service, and local councils to ensure entry and exit points remained open and safe. Assisting in nearby Bega, Jaison's unit cleared trees around a telecommunication tower; a vital asset for surrounding towns to access emergency services.

¹⁰ The Hon Scott Morrison MP. (2020). *Press Conference – Australian Parliament House*. 4 January.

“

‘We’re not trained to fight fires but we free up the people who are so they can focus on their primary tasks.’

Jaison returned home to Canberra temporarily to prepare his family and home in case bushfires threatened. When the threat passed Jaison volunteered for a second rotation helping with flood affected areas of Sydney.

While his APS career in financial policy might appear in stark contrast to his work as a Reservist, to Jaison, supporting his fellow Australians is all in a day’s work for a public servant.



Jaison Basil, ADF Reservist

”

‘I was happy I was there to contribute when this happened. It’s giving back to the community. We help where we can.’

Over the summer, Reservists like Jaison:

- cleared around 4,850 kilometres of roads and 240 kilometres of firebreaks
- cleared and repaired over 1,285 kilometres of fences
- produced nearly 10 million litres of drinking water for Kangaroo Island and Bega
- provided over 77,000 meals to emergency services personnel and evacuees.¹¹

The latest available data indicates that nearly 1,000 APS employees are currently serving as ADF Reservists.¹²

¹¹ Department of Defence. (2020). *Operation Bushfire Assist 2019–2020*. 13 March.

¹² 2017 APS employee census



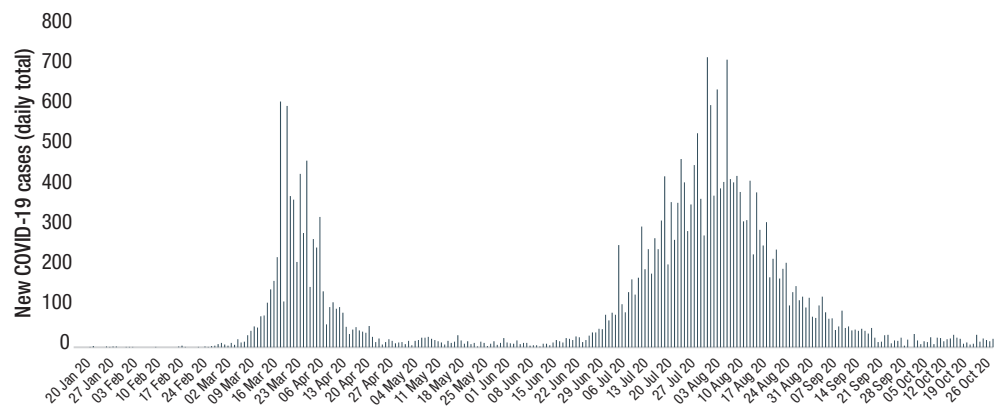
To support community firefighting efforts, in December 2019 the Prime Minister announced increased access to volunteer leave entitlements for APS employees, and enabled Agency Heads to provide additional leave where needed for firefighting.¹³ Commonwealth public servants were provided with up to 28 calendar days of leave for volunteer firefighting efforts. This boost for paid volunteer leave ensured APS employees were able to assist Australian firefighting efforts without using their annual leave.

A global pandemic

In late 2019, COVID-19 began to emerge, and has since become a global pandemic posing significant threats to human health and national economies. On 20 January 2020, Australia’s National Incident Room in the Department of Health was activated for COVID-19.¹⁴

Australia’s first case of COVID-19 was recorded on 25 January. By the end of March, with 19 deaths and 4,557 confirmed cases, the country was grappling with the health, economic, social and geopolitical implications of the pandemic. This included the increasing numbers of COVID-19 infections, physical distancing requirements, job losses, borders closures, and supply chain and industry disruption.

Figure 1.1: Australian daily COVID-19 case totals (to 26 October 2020)



Source: Our World in Data

¹³ The Hon Scott Morrison MP. (2019). *Media Release: Boosting leave for APS volunteer firefighters*. 24 December.

¹⁴ The National Incident Room coordinates national responses to health emergencies and emerging threats. It has been activated since November 2019 in response to the national bushfires, White Island volcano eruption, the measles outbreak in Samoa and COVID-19.

As at 26 October 2020, there had been more than 42 million confirmed cases and more than 1.1 million confirmed deaths worldwide reported to the World Health Organization.¹⁵

Australia has controlled the spread of COVID-19 through restrictions, physical distancing and inter-jurisdictional cooperation. On 26 October, there had been 27,525 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Australia, which had resulted in 905 deaths.¹⁶ As at 26 October, there had been 114 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among APS employees, and no deaths. APS COVID-19 cases have occurred in Australia and overseas.

'Every member of the federation of Australia has responded well. One of the great legacies of this outbreak is how our federation has worked well.'

Dr Brendan Murphy, Chief Medical Officer¹⁷

Surge in demand

The Australian Government's support measures for COVID-19 announced in March-April 2020 were significant: \$289 billion in fiscal and balance sheet measures, equivalent to around 14.6% of GDP.¹⁸

Following national restrictions implemented by National Cabinet on 22 March, more than 1 million Australians found themselves out of work and seeking immediate assistance from the Government.¹⁹ The sudden closure of businesses left many in the community without paid work. Approximately half of Australian businesses surveyed in March reported an adverse impact as a result of COVID-19 and 86% of businesses anticipated being impacted in the months ahead.²⁰

During March the Government announced early release of superannuation for individuals in financial stress and the JobKeeper payment to keep people connected to their jobs, prompting a surge in demand for government payments.²¹

15 World Health Organization. (2020). *WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard*. 26 October.

16 Department of Health. (2020). *Coronavirus (COVID-19) current situation and case numbers*. 26 October.

17 Professor Brendan Murphy in Anastasia Tsirtsakis. (2020). *Outgoing Chief Medical Officer praised for work during the pandemic*. 26 June.

18 Australian Government. (2020). *Overview fact sheet*. Economic and Fiscal Update. 23 July.

19 The Hon Stuart Robert MP. (2020). *Government Services in the digital age: the challenges, the plan and the delivery*. (Speech). 7 July.

20 ABS. (2020). *Business Indicators, Business Impacts of COVID-19*. 26 March.

21 The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP. (2020). *\$130 billion JobKeeper payment to keep Australians in a job*. Joint media release with the Hon Scott Morrison MP. 30 March.

By 8 May the ATO had approved 1.3 million applications for early release of superannuation; a total of \$10.6 billion.²²

By mid-July, 960,000 organisations and more than 3.5 million individuals had received JobKeeper payments worth \$30.6 billion with an estimated total spend through to 2020–21 of \$85.7 billion.²³ The Boosting Cash Flow for Employers measure provided more than \$16 billion in payments to more than 750,000 employers across Australia.²⁴



Public facing services increased to levels unseen before.

Services Australia processed 1.3 million JobSeeker claims in 55 days, a claim volume normally processed in 2.5 years. At the peak, more than 53,000 claims were completed in a single day. Within the same period, Services Australia monitored:

- 3.7 million phone calls
- 1.9 million service centre walk-ins
- 250,000 social media interactions.²⁵

In the ATO, call volumes increased by 106% in April 2020, compared to April 2019.²⁶

The surge in demand was not limited to JobSeeker and JobKeeper; almost every APS agency faced significant increases in demand for some, or all, of its functions.

Call centres, communication, media and digital teams; as well as internal enabling functions such as facilities and ICT all experienced rising demand.

In mid-March, the Department of Health's AskMBS function which assists health practitioners to comply with Medicare Benefits Schedule billing requirements, saw the number of enquiries received more than double, compared to pre-COVID levels.

The number of businesses contacting the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources between March to June 2020 increased by 116% compared to the same period in 2019, and variations to business grants increased by almost 150%.²⁷

22 Senate Select Committee on COVID-19. (2020). Whole-of-Government Submission. 12 May.

23 Australian Government. (2020). *Part 1: Overview*. Economic and Fiscal Update. 23 July 2020.

24 The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP. (2020). *Economic and Fiscal Update*. Joint media release with Senator the Hon Mathias Cormann. 23 July.

25 The Hon Stuart Robert MP. (2020). Government Services in the digital age: the challenges, the plan and the delivery. (Speech). 7 July.

26 APS Productivity Working Group data [unpublished]

27 Ibid. Business contacts include calls, emails and webchats via the business.gov.au channel. Variations to business grants refer to amendments processed through the department's Business Grants Hub.

The myGov website, which hosts digital access to Centrelink, Medicare and ATO services, received 2.6 million logins on 25 March 2020. This was a 44% increase on the previous record of 1.8 million daily logins, recorded during the July 2019 tax time period.²⁸

There was also an increased demand for up-to-the-minute information.

Statistical releases from the ABS increased by more than 51% in May and June 2020 compared to the average for the previous 13 months.

The Department of Health's social media team had over a 3,000% increase on business-as-usual social media activity between 20 January and 29 May 2020. Traditional media enquiries also increased for agencies; the ABS received approximately 67% more media enquiries in June 2020 than June 2019.²⁹

Many policy teams experienced significant increases in their work to develop advice and policies to assist with the COVID-19 response.

For example, the Attorney-General's Department supported the development and implementation of the temporary JobKeeper amendments to the *Fair Work Act 2009*, and developed legislation to provide privacy protections to users of the COVIDSafe app.³⁰ The introduction of JobKeeper, new measures to assist businesses, and changes to JobSeeker all required significant work from policy teams and agencies to reach decision and implementation. Services Australia implemented 50 policy changes to 20 payments on behalf of numerous departments in just 55 days. The agency added almost 300 new services to the Medicare Benefits Schedule, often within hours of a Government decision.³¹

28 The Hon Stuart Robert MP. (2020). *Media release: Update on Government Services*. 25 March.

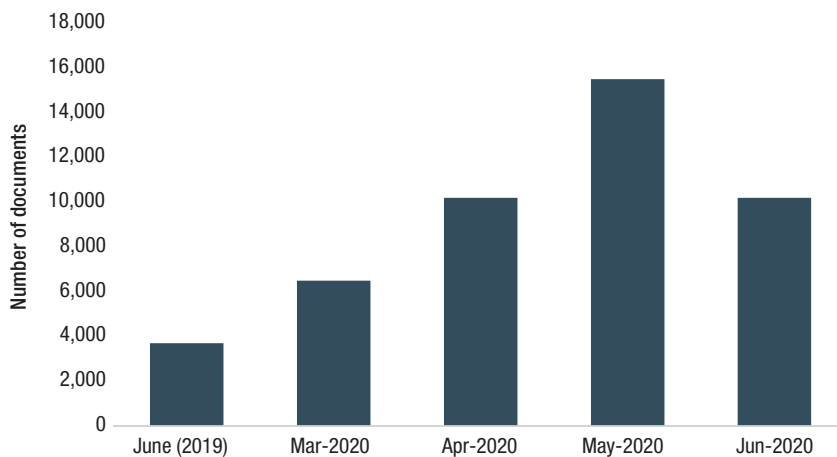
29 APS Productivity Working Group data [unpublished]

30 *Attorney-General's Department Annual Report 2019–20*

31 The Hon Stuart Robert MP. (2020). *Government Services in the digital age: the challenges, the plan and the delivery*. (Speech). 7 July.

Available data shows ministerial submissions, briefing and correspondence to Government almost doubled in March, tripled in April and June, and quadrupled in May to more than 15,000 across 7 agencies (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Volume of Parliamentary Document Management System (PDMS) outputs, 7 agencies (June 2019 and March to June 2020)



Source: Internal agency PDMS data

Internationally, employees from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) worked around the clock to assist more than 28,000 Australians to return from overseas.³² During this time, DFAT has also provided consular support to Australians overseas in quarantine or diagnosed with COVID-19, receiving more than 40,600 phone calls to its consular service.³³

Since 21 January DFAT has updated more than 2,300 travel advisories; shared around 5,300 Smartraveller social media posts; and fielded over 90,000 COVID-19 related phone calls. This was done while transitioning around 300 DFAT portfolio employees and 800 dependants out of diplomatic posts on welfare, medical and safety grounds. DFAT has since supported the progressive return of employees and dependants to diplomatic posts following an assessment of the risks in each location and appropriate mitigations.³⁴

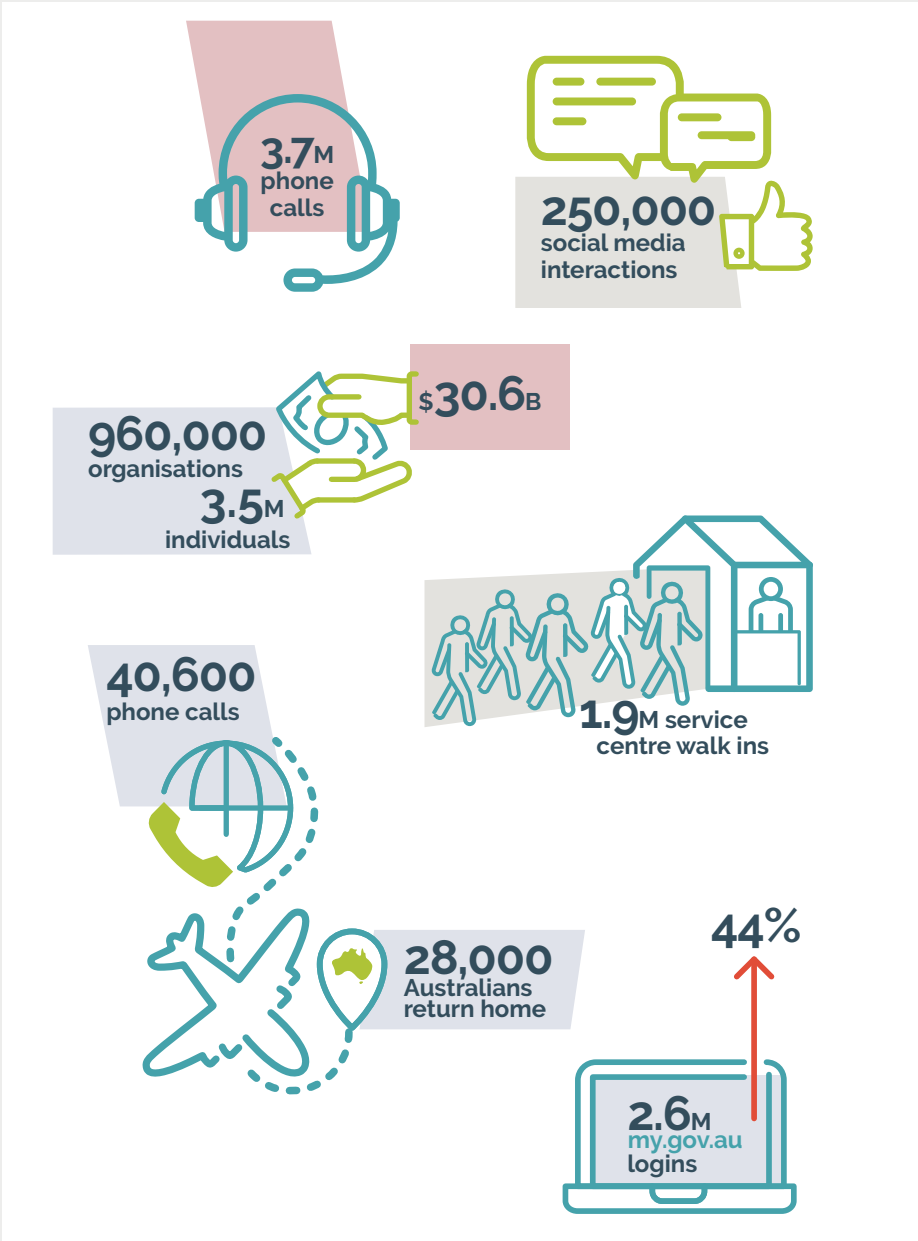
Within Australia and across the globe, these actions speak volumes. Each phone call or claim represents an individual or business owner in acute need of assistance, and an APS employee connecting them to essential services and support.

³² As at 7 October 2020

³³ Internal DFAT data [unpublished]

³⁴ Ibid.

APS support for Australians



Case study

A rapid response in-flight

Aviation was one of the first industries impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it continues to be one of the hardest-hit of Australia's major industries.

Over 4 weeks, travel restrictions, social distancing, quarantine requirements, business closures, and stay-at-home orders effectively shut down air travel.

At its lowest point, domestic passenger numbers fell from over 1 million to around 30,000 per week (down over 97%); from 13,000 weekly flights to 600 weekly flights; and from 1.6 million weekly available seats to 60,000 weekly available seats.

In response, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications rapidly designed and implemented a series of interrelated funding programs and measures designed to stabilise the sector. Across government \$2.7 billion has been committed to the aviation sector, with these measures ensuring the continued delivery of minimum levels of aviation connectivity (for freight and people) during the pandemic, and the preservation of industry capacity and capability for the recovery phase.

A new dedicated Aviation and Airports Group (AAG), comprising 7 branches working together across 2 linked divisions is now in place. Using a taskforce model, it features high levels of mobility and agility to respond to the rapidly changing environment.

Approximately 40 additional employees (including 5 additional SES officers) all with a range or policy program skills joined existing subject matter experts.





Within AAG, flat and fluid organisational structures were adopted to enable:

- **stable levels of continuity for new programs:** to provide stakeholders with meaningful and known contacts within the department during a time of crisis
- **probity and integrity of program design and delivery:** an early and ongoing focus on governance, including the standing up of a new assurance function and dedicated Program Delivery Board within AAG
- **business as usual work to continue:** to ensure high levels of visibility and agreement around trade-offs being made in terms of temporarily pausing lower priority work and ongoing attention to all legislated functions
- **new dedicated tiger teams for rapid deployment:** to provide an essential, highly mobile policy response capability in a highly volatile environment.

At the height of the pandemic response work approximately 90% of the 120 staff in the AAG were working on COVID-19 issues. AAG's work was achieved through the ongoing professionalism and diligence of individual officers and resourcing and specialist support from across the department.

The success of the response is evidenced by the timely, robust implementation of measures which have ultimately allowed the aviation sector to continue operations during the crisis phase and position it for the recovery phase.

Case study

Delivery of essential weather services come rain, bushfire, or global pandemic

During the Black Summer bushfires the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) employees provided more than 2,000 specialised fire weather incident forecasts, 319 fire weather warnings, 22 severe weather update videos, around 100 critical event briefings, and responded to approximately 4,400 traditional media enquiries.

To manage employee fatigue, the BOM used incident management coordination and support structures to prioritise customer needs, and flexible deployment of capability where and when it was needed. For example, the BOM deployed capability from Tasmania, Western Australia, and Queensland to respond to the need for additional support for the New South Wales and Victorian bushfires. Four local meteorologists provided specialised knowledge at NSW Rural Fire Service headquarters during peak fire-risk days in December 2019.

Just as the workload began to decrease, the BOM was confronted with the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. This triggered their National Incident and Crisis Management team who ensured the continuity of the BOM's services to the Australian community, as well as the safety of its employees and contractors, most of whom are based in Melbourne.





Diana Eadie, a Communication Meteorologist, on the job during Stage 4 in Melbourne, delivering essential services for Australia.

In March 2020, approximately 88% of the BOM workforce transitioned to working from home. Employees were provided with equipment and hygiene supplies, and social distancing measures were implemented for the safety of critical operational employees who remained in the office.

The BOM's response has enabled the continuity of vital services while managing the impacts both the bushfires and COVID-19 have had on their employees and the Australian community.

APS workforce response

Led by the Secretaries Board, Chief Operating Officers (COO) Committee and the Australian Public Service Commissioner, the APS responded with agility and at pace to the pandemic.

The Secretaries Board, made up of all departmental Secretaries, the Australian Public Service Commissioner and the Director-General of National Intelligence typically meets monthly. The heads of Services Australia, the ATO and the Digital Transformation Agency sit on the Board as ex-officio members. Between February and July 2020 the Board met 27 times to discuss ways to enhance the APS's role in supporting the Government's response to COVID-19 and to prioritise the Government's recovery agenda.

The COO Committee met 33 times over the same period to manage the operational and workforce response. It advised the Australian Public Service Commissioner on key issues, and COOs were responsible for implementing decisions in their agencies.

Two cross-government taskforces were established to coordinate and progress workforce matters:

- The APSC COVID-19 Taskforce advised the COO Committee on workforce issues such as remote working, leave, COVID-safe work principles, and extending the contracts of non-ongoing APS employees. It functioned as a single source of truth for whole-of-APS COVID-19 workplace policies and a source of advice for HR colleagues across the APS.
- The APS Workforce Management Taskforce facilitated mobility of APS employees to support critical functions across the service.

Agency Heads supported ministers and actioned business continuity plans, and established crisis management teams and new taskforces to lead urgent priority work within their own portfolios and with others across the APS.

The APS workforce responded to the increased demand on government services and support, while operating in a changing environment. In high priority work areas outputs increased to more than double, and during shorter periods, more than 4 times their pre-pandemic levels.³⁵

³⁵ APS Productivity Working Group [unpublished]

At the time of writing it would be premature to consider these events resolved. Many Australians are still rebuilding after the impact of the bushfires, the pathway out of the pandemic will be long, and other events may well bring new challenges.

The APS has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to service during difficult and uncertain times. It has shown it is resilient, adaptive, and a workforce working as one.

One APS

‘One APS has been hollow in the past. This time we said... I’m ok for now, but I’ve got 200 people that could really assist you...’

Amanda Cattermole, the then Chief Operating Officer, Services Australia³⁶

The APS has increased collaboration across and outside the public sector to tackle the multi-sector COVID-19 pandemic challenges. In working as a single enterprise the APS has facilitated rapid decision-making, worked across traditional boundaries, and aligned effort to deliver essential services to the public.

Clarity of purpose

Crisis, by its nature, focuses attention. When people work together with a common aim, complex challenges are better overcome.³⁷ This past year, a clarity of purpose has helped dissolve silos and change behavioural norms as the APS worked to solve the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

APS priorities simplified to delivering the Government’s crisis support package, and protecting the health and wellbeing of its employees.

‘Amazing what clarity of purpose does—there was no heat in any of this—very matter of fact... everyone was highly collaborative.’

Charles Wann, A/g Chief Operating Officer, Department of Health³⁸

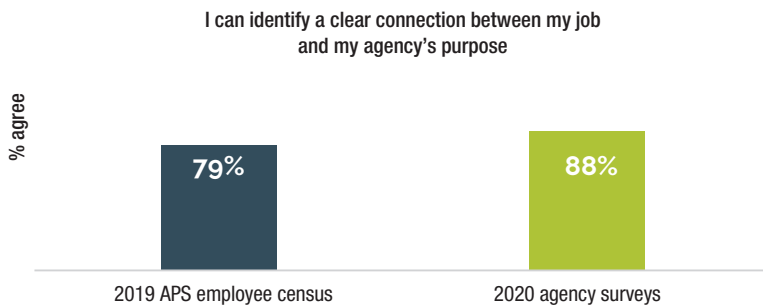
³⁶ COO interview [unpublished]

³⁷ OECD Public Governance Reviews. (2017). *Skills for a High Performing Civil Service*

³⁸ COO interview [unpublished]

Leaders took action to reprioritise their work and this increased clarity of purpose was felt across all APS levels. Compared to 2019, larger proportions of APS employees were able to identify a clear connection between their job and their agency's purpose (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3: Proportion of APS employees who can identify a clear connection between their job and their agency's purpose



Source: 2019 APS employee census and 2020 internal APS agency employee surveys (both for the same 12 APS agencies, N=23,000)

Collaborative

Collaboration offers the APS ways to design better solutions, provide stronger policy advice, and deliver better services. Working across portfolio boundaries brings diverse perspectives, multi-disciplinary approaches and system-wide solutions to complex challenges.³⁹ Further, partnering with other jurisdictions, business leaders and the community has the potential to leverage unique strengths and deliver high quality results for Australians.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic required governments, agencies and businesses to work together towards shared goals. Governments collaborated together and with the business sector in new ways.

In March 2020, the new National Cabinet was established to better coordinate the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic, resetting inter-jurisdictional coordination.

Within the APS, system-wide collaboration supported government to solve complex cross-portfolio problems. The National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) was established on 5 March 2020 to complement existing capabilities and engagement across the Commonwealth.

39 Commonwealth of Australia. (2019). *Our Public Service, Our Future. Independent Review of the Australian Public Service*

Its primary focus was to coordinate and facilitate nationally consistent approaches to non-health sector planning and response, consistent with medical advice. Sector-specific consultation in areas of education, supply chains, resources, banking and finance, and vulnerable persons has occurred with non-government organisations and the private sector. As at 22 October 2020, the NCM has coordinated 143 meetings across over 25 sectors.⁴⁰

'So the good old issue of toilet paper on the shelves was one of the first things that the National Coordination Mechanism worked on. They worked with industry, they worked through supply chains, we had staff who had worked in many different areas, but I don't think in their entire career they thought they'd be worrying about the supply chain of toilet paper to a Woolworths, Coles or an IGA.'

Cheryl-anne Moy, Chief Operating Officer, Department of Home Affairs⁴¹

On 25 March the Prime Minister established the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission to coordinate advice to the Australian Government on actions to anticipate and mitigate the economic and social effects of the pandemic. The Commission was restructured as the National COVID-19 Commission Advisory Board (NCAB) on 27 July, reflecting its strategic advisory role in providing a business perspective on Australia's economic recovery. Based in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Board works with the National Coordination Mechanism, and the Coronavirus Business Liaison Unit in the Treasury.

'We are providing our advice in real time as the response to the pandemic evolves, and working closely with departments, especially the taskforces in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Treasury... Our role is to maximise the wealth of business experience on our board and provide the breadth of this advice to Government.'

Neville Power, NCAB Chair⁴²

40 Department of Home Affairs. (2020). *National Coordination Mechanism*

41 Cheryl-anne Moy, Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer at the Department of Home Affairs. (2020). *IPAA Work with Purpose Podcast Episode #6*. 12 May.

42 Neville Power. (2020). *Statement by the Chair to the Senate Select Committee, COVID-19*. 4 June.

APS officials have also collaborated closely with other countries to manage travel restrictions, help thousands of Australians return home, keep global supply chains open, and re-shape Australia's international development assistance program to respond to COVID-19.⁴³ The APS has been sharing lessons with international counterparts across the globe and through fora such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Enterprise coordination

The COO Committee is a sub-committee of the Secretaries Board and includes the Chief Operating Officers from all departments and major agencies. The Committee was established in February 2020 as an outcome of the Independent Review of the APS, with 2 primary roles:

- managing whole-of-government operational and implementation matters
- driving delivery of agreed initiatives under the Government's APS reform agenda, in line with the direction set by the Secretaries Board.

Soon after its establishment the Committee was required to scale up its operations rapidly, and turn its focus to COVID-19. The Committee focused its efforts on the APS workforce, including how the workforce could work together to deliver what was needed to the Australian people, while also ensuring the health and safety of APS employees.

The whole-of-APS nature of the COVID-19 response did not override the workforce management responsibilities of Secretaries and Agency Heads. However, whole-of-workforce issues that emerged through the COVID-19 response were raised and discussed at COO Committee meetings, in close consultation with the Australian Public Service Commission and the Department of Health.

Throughout the pandemic the COO Committee considered a number of APS workforce issues including:

- APS-wide domestic travel advice
- arrangements for casual employees who were forced to isolate
- the impact of unplanned and planned school closures on working arrangements
- health and safety protocols for APS workplaces.

⁴³ Senate Select Committee on COVID-19. (2020). Whole-of-Government Submission. 12 May.

The COO Committee established working groups to consider emerging issues, including lessons learned from the pandemic response.

It provided an avenue for a consistent understanding of issues and application of workforce measures across the APS. Members were responsible for sharing relevant information and decisions across their portfolio agencies. This allowed rapid dissemination of key messages and information across the APS workforce.

'[What] we've proven to ourselves, secretaries and broader APS is that we can come up with collective decisions that we then all support and adopt across our organisations, in a way that we haven't achieved as effectively in the past...'

Katherine Jones, Chair of COO Committee and Associate Secretary, Department of Defence⁴⁴

⁴⁴ COO interview [unpublished]

Case study

National Coordination Mechanism

Centralised engagement on support measures to national crises

The necessary restrictions on Australian businesses and society in order to limit the spread of COVID-19 resulted in non-health consequences that required unprecedented levels of cross-sector, cross-agency and cross-government cooperation.

The speed with which complex and significant issues emerged necessitated swift policy and operational decisions from all levels of government. The NCM supported decision-making by providing a centralised administrative and secretariat support function to connect subject matter experts across jurisdictions to respond directly to emerging and existing issues.

The NCM sector-based meeting model identified and escalated significant non-health priorities including protecting supply chains for critical infrastructure and the movement of freight in the national interest; protecting access to essential services for vulnerable Australians; supporting programs to effectively manage returning Australians; and the manufacture of, and access to, personal protective equipment.

During Victoria's second wave, the NCM rapidly brought together First Ministers' Department representatives with key Commonwealth stakeholders to enable jurisdictional information sharing; to support the establishment of the Victorian Aged Care Response Centre; and to ensure that changes to border controls with neighbouring states would not prevent the movement of critical goods and services.

From the 2020–21 financial year, the NCM has been embedded permanently within the Department of Home Affairs. It is an 'all hazards' coordination function supporting Emergency Management Australia to enhance Australia's ability to respond to national crises and critical disruptions.



Learning through change: Robust crisis architecture

At an enterprise level, senior governance bodies adjusted meeting cadence and focus to support APS-wide crisis operations. Disciplined communication flows and information sharing had a practical impact across the APS and into portfolio bodies.

Within departments, established governance mechanisms were adapted to expedite decision-making. There are lessons around how, in business-as-usual settings, making decisions can be done more efficiently with appropriate due diligence.

There are also lessons in when and how to engage existing forums, and how to understand strategic issues quickly. This may include how to dedicate resources to address emerging longer-term risks while dealing with crisis. In DFAT, for example, evaluation teams are embedded within crisis management bodies to support their ongoing effectiveness.

Right-size governance

Agile, 'right-size' governance enhanced coordination and consistency in workforce management across the APS, and enabled rapid, risk-based decision-making and collaborative problem solving.

This was critical for effective crisis response. It allowed enterprise-wide identification of key issues, coordinated communication, and accelerated ICT uplift.

Empower teams

Leaders that explicitly and deliberately empowered their staff surfaced relevant skills and expertise more readily to make fast and informed crisis-management decisions. Empowering people also fostered innovation to deliver new products and deeper insights to support Government decision-making.

Integrated scenario planning

Many agency-level business continuity plans were adapted in-flight to account for the complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Crisis brings uncertainty and not all possibilities can be planned for, however there is an opportunity to evolve the tools, mechanisms and behaviours employed during recent events. This can be achieved through APS-wide scenario exercises, and by developing the leadership behaviours that enable effective management of cross-cutting issues.

Adaptive

'The thing that's been really different this year is how long it's been busy for and how long we've had to adapt to the circumstances. . . The pandemic is just a constant sort of uncertainty and unknown scenarios if you like.'

Dr Steven Kennedy PSM, Secretary of the Treasury⁴⁵

The COVID-19 pandemic has required the APS to adapt rapidly and at scale. Some areas were scaled up, some work was temporarily paused, and people were moved to focus on new priorities.

Almost every agency stood up crisis management teams or COVID-19 specific taskforces to manage both their response and execute their portfolio responsibilities. Many agencies also stood up internal taskforces to manage workforce impacts.

Many agencies reorganised internal structures and employees around emerging priorities. For example, the Department of Health re-tasked nearly every area of the department and the ATO moved more than 3,500 employees internally.⁴⁶

With new priorities, many agencies reshaped teams and structures to support critical work.

Supporting businesses and individuals

Developed in the second half of March 2020, JobKeeper Payment will be the largest labour market and fiscal stimulus program in Australian history. Supporting over 1 million businesses and 3.8 million individuals, JobKeeper provided much needed economic support as well as supporting consumer and business confidence. The JobMaker Hiring Credit was also developed, focusing on workforce participation and reducing the scarring effects of long-term unemployment on younger Australians.

Treasury stood up a new area, bringing together a mix of staff with policy, implementation, data analytics and reporting, and project and risk management skills. Their work continues—to monitor the policy landscape and adjust policy responses as Australia transitions out of the initial COVID-19 response.

⁴⁵ Dr Steven Kennedy PSM, Secretary of the Treasury. (2020). *IPAA Work with Purpose Podcast Episode #23*. 21 September.

⁴⁶ Internal APS data [unpublished]

‘...we wondered whether our systems would cope, we wondered whether employees and managers would adapt. We wondered whether there were things that just couldn’t be done remotely or wouldn’t work as well as usual, but we made it work. We adapted, and we learned on the fly.’

Marco Spaccavento, Group Manager, APSC COVID-19 Taskforce⁴⁷

New ways of partnering with industry, small business and other jurisdictions has ensured continuity in critical areas and has been a litmus test for how risk-tolerant relationships built around shared outcomes can deliver results.



The APS delivered services to businesses and people in new ways. For example, the Department of Veterans’ Affairs adapted their counselling service to enable clients to access services using teleconferencing technology, where clinically appropriate. The wider uptake of telehealth services was also significant. Data from 13 to 31 March 2020 shows an average of 1,100 telehealth services accessed per day, for just under 1,000 unique clients per day. In April this increased to around 2,500 services for around 2,400 unique clients per day.⁴⁸

Government regulators worked closely with industry to innovate and deliver practical solutions to emerging problems.

⁴⁷ Public Sector Network. (2020). *Adapting to new ways of working in challenging times*. 11 August.

⁴⁸ Department of Veterans’ Affairs internal data [unpublished]

Case study

Priority lane for supermarkets during COVID-19

Panic-buying at the beginning of the pandemic fuelled perceptions that Australia could run out of food, while unprecedented demand for personal protective equipment and medical supplies led to domestic shortages.

To combat this, the Australian Government, in consultation with industry established the Border Clearance Supermarket Taskforce. The Taskforce considered options to help streamline the border clearance for an expected increase in food and grocery imports into the Australian market. Biosecurity Operations Division within the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment was appointed to lead the engagement with industry on behalf of the Taskforce.

The department developed a priority border clearance pathway arrangement that was agreed through close consultation with the 6 major retail chains. This arrangement ensured the department met its regulatory requirements under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and the *Imported Food Control Act 1992* while enabling priority import clearances of essential grocery and medical supplies required through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The arrangement demonstrated the strong relationship between the APS and industry. Industry committed to providing specifically-formatted, advance notification of individual import consignments to support the prioritisation process, while the department placed dedicated resources to ensure immediate turnaround of document assessment, booking and inspection functions.

To speed up the process without compromising regulatory requirements, the department also trained additional imported food inspection officers, and trialled smart technology for remote visual assessments of labels.

An internal working group was established within the department to manage the arrangements and ensure the processes were working, with support and maintenance functions rapidly stood up.



Brett Lindquist, biosecurity officer at the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, conducting an imported food inspection near Melbourne, Victoria.



The Biosecurity Operations Division expedited Imported Food accreditation training for an additional 41 officers; used dedicated email system rules to manage industry import notifications; scheduled internal performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms; enhanced IT workflow systems to improve visibility and management of identified imports; and ensured responsive reporting via enhanced data visualisations.

The division also deployed dedicated employees to manage and prioritise workloads 7 days per week, armed with specific instructional materials to help expedite urgent COVID-19 supplies.

The arrangement succeeded in ensuring the department had the capacity and capability to manage the clearance of critical grocery and medical supplies into Australia. The success of the department and industry working together demonstrates the benefits of Government-Industry partnerships and is a repeatable model that could be implemented again if the need arises.

Delivering differently

‘...we saw Australians in need. And that meant we had to be able to respond to that. We had to do different things, we had to put in different options. . . So we worked with Services Australia and the ministers very closely to do innovative approaches, things that were a little bit different to what we had done in the past.’

Kathryn Campbell AO CSC, Secretary, Department of Social Services⁴⁹

The dual crises of 2019–20 have presented numerous opportunities to challenge the way the APS collectively thinks and responds to problems.

Rapid shifts in societal and working environments, uncertainty, and a need to hypothesise and plan for different scenarios have required the APS to think expansively.

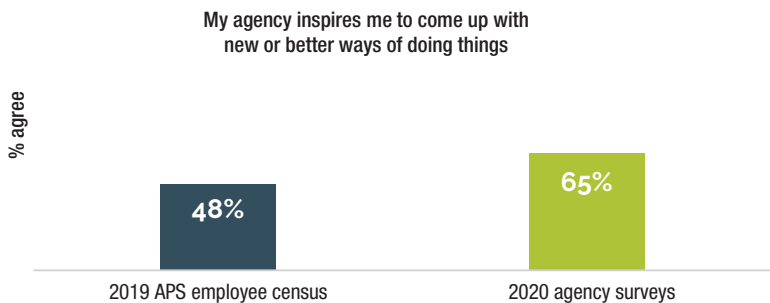
Research undertaken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic suggests public servants are eager to embrace innovation but face blockers around silo mentalities, risk aversion, and training in innovation skills.⁵⁰ However, interim data and case studies from 2020 suggest a positive change is underway.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, internal APS agency employee surveys comprising 23,000 responses across 12 agencies point to a workforce that felt more empowered to try new ways of doing things (Figure 1.4).

⁴⁹ Kathryn Campbell AO CSC, Secretary, Department of Social Services. (2020). *IPAA Work with Purpose Podcast Episode #4*. 28 April.

⁵⁰ ANZSOG. (2019). *Today's Problems, Yesterday's Toolkit*

Figure 1.4: Proportion of APS employees who feel their agency inspires them to come up with new or better ways of doing things



Source: Analysis of 12 agencies across the 2019 APS employee census and 2020 internal APS agency employee surveys (N=23,000)

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted new approaches to risk as new and heightened risks emerged. These range from risks associated with policy decisions and rapid roll-out of programs, to enterprise risks such as WHS and cyber security. Working across traditional boundaries has enabled officers to come together on common and shared risks to deliver outcomes. This includes formal structures such as the COO Committee and informal networks to test ideas and challenges.

In some cases, risk tolerances were adjusted, leading to more efficient and effective outcomes that should not be lost, for example, the expansion of Telehealth. In other cases, it will be appropriate to return to previous arrangements.

The APS can leverage these experiences to accelerate the shift to a more innovative culture, enabling staff to solve problems through creative, data-driven and participatory methods, and mature risk engagement.

Case study

Innovation supporting stronger cargo biosecurity

‘The opportunities are endless with the “Smartglasses” application, and we hope this technology can be utilised in a number of approved arrangement inspections and treatment activities.’

ANJ representative

Increased volumes of cargo and more complex global pathways puts significant pressure on managing biosecurity risks. To meet this challenge, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is partnering with industry to create innovative solutions.

In early 2020 the department’s Biosecurity Innovation Branch began trialling RealWare’s hands-free Smartglasses to test whether inspection and audit activities can be conducted remotely via live-stream.

Employees at these facilities wore the device while a biosecurity officer watched the live feed from a remote location, such as a regional office or their home. During the test, the biosecurity officer directs the employee around the facility through an audio function. This live exchange also gives the facility employee the opportunity to manage any urgent biosecurity risk matters that the biosecurity officer could see during the inspection.

Greater uptake in technology like Smartglasses will potentially enable industry and the department to benefit from reductions in inspection-related costs, a stronger understanding of biosecurity risks managed through inspections, and the ability to shift resources to other inspection activities.

‘We believe there is potential to increase quarantine inspection hours by utilising other states’ or countries’ time zones, which is something the industry has been craving for years.’

ANJ representative

While the pilot is still in its early stages, industry feedback is positive and the team is now considering how the Smartglasses technology could be applied to other areas of inspections and to the department more broadly.

Industry representatives from Price & Speed and ANJ Container Services participated in the department's Smartglasses pilot for rural tailgate inspections. Participants have spoken positively about the trial:

'This will prove to be a benchmark future development in delivering a service to the industry that ensures our biosecurity is not compromised without hindering the flow of imported goods.'

Kevin Malouf, Managing Director, Price & Speed.



Co-designed pilots and partnerships between the APS and industry helps drive innovation and business improvements. These types of innovation pilots will help to improve and modernise Australia's biosecurity operations into the future.

Douglas Manhani, a Price & Speed employee, undertaking a rural tailgate inspection activity at the Price & Speed depot, Sydney.



Mobile

‘...you’ve got very good public servants who are competent, multi-skilled who can then be diverted on to other challenges.’

Michael Pezzullo AO, Secretary, Department of Home Affairs⁵¹

Increased levels of mobility across APS agencies, and into other jurisdictions and sectors, has the capacity to build capability, diversify perspectives, and strengthen the work of the APS.⁵²

The APS mobilised capability at record levels for the COVID-19 pandemic response.⁵³

On 26 March 2020, the Prime Minister directed agencies to identify employees who could temporarily assist other APS agencies, state and territory government agencies, and community organisations.⁵⁴ The Australian Public Service Commissioner established the Workforce Management Taskforce to manage the movement of APS employees across all agencies. Agencies advised the Taskforce of their critical functions and identified employees who could postpone their work to move to critical functions.

The APS estimated that 87% of employees were occupied with delivering critical services to the Australian public and supporting Government. The remainder of employees were available to support surges in demand where required across the APS.

Within weeks, agencies identified 5,350 employees who could be deployed to frontline agencies on a temporary basis.⁵⁵ By mid-May, more than 8,900 employees were redeployed within their own agencies, and more than 2,000 into other agencies.⁵⁶ By early September, more than 2,300 APS employees had moved to other APS agencies temporarily.

51 Michael Pezzullo AO. In Shannon Jenkins. (2020). *The world wins at that struggle: Mike Pezzullo on embracing uncertainty*

52 Commonwealth of Australia. (2019). *Independent Review of the Australian Public Service*

53 Mobility is the temporary movement of capability (skills and experiences, as represented by people) within and between APS agencies, other jurisdictions, and the private and not-for-profit sectors. Mobility can happen through the initiative of an agency or an individual.

54 Prime Minister. (2020). *Prime Minister’s direction under subsection 21(1) – 2020 (No. 1)*

55 PM&C. (2020). Whole-of-government submission to the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19.

56 Workforce Management Taskforce data

Meeting the demand

The 2020 APS Agency Survey found:

- 22 agencies reported that more than half of their employees were directly supporting the COVID-19 response, including central agencies and those leading service delivery.⁵⁷
- 31 agencies had between 10% and 50% of employees directly supporting the COVID-19 response.
- 42 agencies had fewer than 10% of employees directly supporting the COVID-19 response. Many agencies in this group, like the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, continued essential functions of government.

Most employees mobilised through the Workforce Management Taskforce assisted Services Australia (2,165), with others moving across the service to assist with COVID-19 response work. Other agencies, such as the Treasury, took a portfolio approach, moving employees within their portfolio to leverage specialist skillsets. Seventy-seven Victorian-based APS employees were deployed to support the Victorian public sector.

Most employees assisting Services Australia were deployed to a call or processing centre, and most of these employees (80%) had no prior experience in these roles.⁵⁸ This cohort began telephoning Australian citizens directly, entering new customers into unfamiliar systems, responding to enquiries, and processing applications. Many in the community had never received income support payments before and were navigating these systems for the first time. This presented a steep learning curve for people on both sides of the transaction.

⁵⁷ Representing 59% of workforce

⁵⁸ APS surge workforce survey results as at 14 September 2020

The surge experience

'We need to look at ways in which we can put service delivery into people's careers because it does connect policy creation with implementation. It gives us all an understanding of what citizens really need from the services that we provide.'

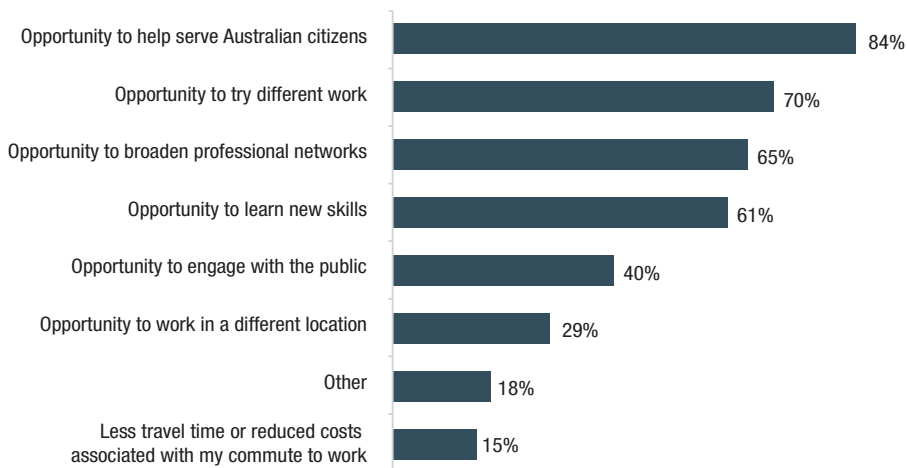
Rebecca Skinner, CEO, Services Australia⁵⁹

The benefits of mobility go beyond meeting increased demand.

Employees take what they have learned back to their home agencies. New skills, expanded networks, and an acute understanding of how APS work directly impacts the public is able to be applied to their usual work.

Of the surge workforce, most survey respondents took the opportunity in order to help serve Australians (59%). Most respondents identified one or more positive elements from their experience (65%), with the most common being the opportunity to help serve Australian citizens (84%), to try different work (70%), broaden professional networks (65%) and learn new skills (61%) (Figure 1.5). Around two-thirds would volunteer again for a temporary assignment in another agency to support critical government functions (64%).⁶⁰

Figure 1.5: What were the positives of the temporary mobility opportunity?



Source: APS surge workforce survey results⁶¹

⁵⁹ Rebecca Skinner, CEO, Services Australia. (2020). *IPAA Work with Purpose Podcast Episode #15*. 13 July.

⁶⁰ APS surge workforce survey results as at 14 September 2020

⁶¹ Note: As employees could select multiple options, percentages do not sum to 100%.

Supporting the community through mobility



'I am proud of the work we have been doing in Services Australia and just knowing that we are helping Australians in need is keeping me energised.'

Sebastian Ward

Many 2020 APS graduate employees were mere weeks into their new jobs when COVID-19 forced APS-wide changes.

Madeleine Antrum and Connor Deegan moved from the National Indigenous Australians Agency to Services Australia to help Australians in need by processing JobSeeker claims. While initially uncertain about redeployment, it was a positive experience for both.



'It's a rare opportunity to see how different departments and agencies work, and to contribute to the COVID-19 response', Madeleine said.

For Connor, speaking directly with customers and putting a voice to a claim has been valuable, 'You can tell the person really needs the money, is keen to get it and we are able to help get it to them.'

Holly White, a Department of Defence graduate, was also deployed to Services Australia.

'It has given me an incredible opportunity to experience first-hand how APS staff directly support the Australian community,' said Holly.



Case study

Breaking down barriers

Before the pandemic, mobility in the APS was predominantly internal, with 2% of the workforce moving between Commonwealth agencies and less than 1% from their home agency to a non-Commonwealth organisation. Data as at 30 June 2019 shows most (70.1%) ongoing employees had only ever been employed in one agency.⁶²

In 2019, more than half of APS employees (56%) indicated they would consider a mobility opportunity if one was available. Of the 29% who identified barriers to seeking a mobility opportunity, the most common included a lack of opportunities due to geographical location (34%), opportunities not being effectively communicated (32%)

⁶² APSED

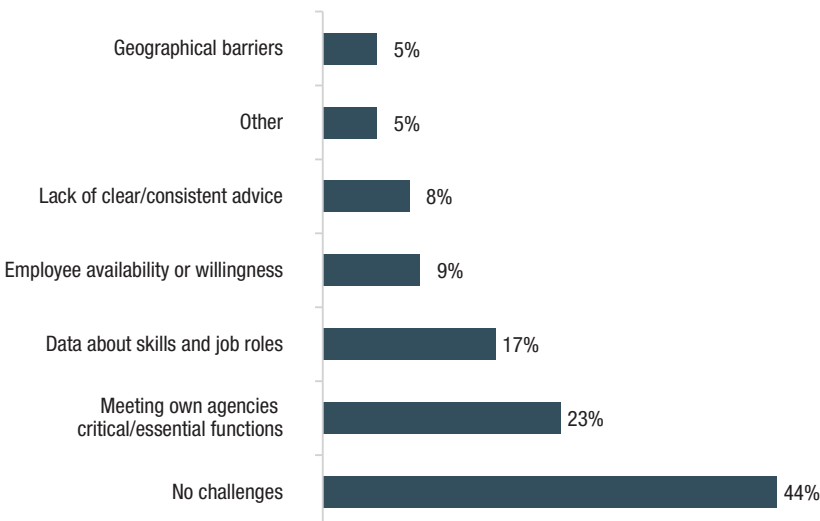
or employees not knowing how to find out about them (21%), and workplaces having difficulty justifying release (19%) or replacing skills (17%).⁶³

Clear prioritisation through the crisis helped reduce the impact of barriers such as justifying release and replacing skills to enable the movement of employees.

In the 2020 APS Agency Survey, just under half of agencies reported no challenges in identifying the capability and roles of employees who could be deployed (44%). However, rapid mobilisation called on new information, systems and introduced new challenges.

Many were addressed through the work of the Workforce Management Taskforce and COO Committee as the surge workforce was identified and mobilised. The challenges most common among agencies were meeting their own essential and critical functions (23%), a lack of centralised data on employees’ skills and job roles (17%), employee availability or willingness (9%).

Figure 1.6: Challenges for agencies in identifying the capability and roles of employees for deployment for the COVID-19 surge response



Source: 2020 Agency Survey⁶⁴

⁶³ 2019 APS employee census

⁶⁴ Note: Agencies could provide multiple responses, percentages do not sum to 100%.

Casual employees at Questacon

One focus of APS mobility during COVID-19 has been to facilitate continued employment for casual APS employees where possible. Some casual employees were reassigned to other roles within their existing agencies, while others were mobilised to critical functions within other agencies.

Questacon employees Annabelle Fife and Gabrielle Magyary were mobilised to Services Australia:

“

‘What I have enjoyed about redeployment is the fact I am given the opportunity to help those in need in such an unprecedented and difficult time.’

Annabelle Fife

‘I’ve really enjoyed redeployment, it’s been clear how important the work I’m doing is beneficial to the community during this time of crisis.’

Gabrielle Magyary

Questacon closed its doors to the public during the pandemic, and redeployed 35 casual team members to Services Australia to support the COVID-19 response.

Questacon’s team was able to apply their skills such as explaining exhibits, performing live science shows and managing the centre’s information desk, to their new support roles at Services Australia. For some, it was an opportunity to develop skills in managing complicated situations, and to broaden their networks to progress their careers.

The mobility process provided casual employees the opportunity to support the COVID-19 response, and to gain a better understanding of whole-of-government priorities. It also reduced the economic impact of COVID-19 restrictions on casual APS employees.



Learning through change: Mobilising to need

Activating large-scale mobility with little lead time is challenging, however, overall the surge experience during the COVID-19 pandemic was positive: meeting service demand for Australians in need, and creating a long-term effect of service delivery experience being taken back into policy development and other roles.

It has emphasised the value of whole-of-APS mobility and has informed how to better prepare for future surge efforts. In a survey of COVID-19 surge employees, clear communication of processes and working arrangements, and improved training and inductions were identified as areas for greater focus.

Lessons will be drawn on to support the planned permanent APS Surge Reserve.

APS volunteers

The pandemic put unexpected pressures on the APS, with demand concentrated more heavily on some agencies. By taking a whole-of-service approach, the APS was able to respond more effectively than if the response was handled by just one or two agencies.

To ensure the same resilience regardless of the crisis faced, the APS Surge Reserve will draw on APS volunteers from across the service and in every state and territory. This will maximise APS readiness for future crises.

Preparing for deployment

During the pandemic, the administration required to identify employees for release threatened to slow the response during a time requiring rapid action. Further, COVID-19 health considerations meant that some employees thought to be available, were not.

The APS Surge Reserve membership will be kept up-to-date to ensure the APS is ready and available when a call out occurs.

Maintaining momentum

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a live pilot of the governance, cultural shifts and logistical mechanisms required to identify and allocate APS capability and capacity as circumstances demand.

The National Framework for Public Sector Mobility

Recognising the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant benefits of a mobile workforce, Commonwealth, state and territory Public Service Commissioners endorsed the National Framework for Public Sector Mobility on 30 July 2020.

The Framework facilitates rapid movement of employees between public sector jurisdictions. It enables the public sector across Australia to respond to current and future challenges, and ensures that critical services can be delivered to the community, when it needs them most.

It will help agencies across jurisdictions broach barriers to mobility and to support their employees on the move, ensuring clear communication between all parties and logistical support. The Framework will be reviewed in early 2021 to determine the practicality of its use to mobilise employees in response to any crisis situation, or to increase mobility between jurisdictions.

APS Surge Reserve

The APS recognises the ongoing importance of being able to mobilise in response to a crisis. The positive impact of mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic response has led to the development of a permanent APS Surge Reserve. The APS Surge Reserve will provide the Government with the capacity to rapidly mobilise APS volunteers in large numbers. Surge Reservists will deploy for short periods (initial terms of up to 8 weeks) to help APS colleagues.

Surge Reservists will be drawn from public servants from across the Commonwealth willing to set aside their day-to-day work in a crisis. The work they do will differ based on the reason for the call-out.

The Reserve will be supported by a Surge Reserve Coordinator function in the Australian Public Service Commission. The Coordinator function will work with agencies to develop training and skills development, work through deployment arrangements, and prepare the Surge Reserve to respond to future crises.

The Surge Reserve adds to, rather than replaces, other arrangements such as internal surge pools, profession-specific arrangements, and temporary registers.

Flexible

'Working from home arrangements have...been quite successful, we're trying to think, what does that mean for the future of how we might work? How do we support ministers when they are remote from us? When we don't have those regular, every few days or at least weekly, face to face meetings?'

Greg Moriarty, Secretary, Department of Defence⁶⁵

In the pandemic context, APS employees were considered essential to keeping the public safe, delivering services to the community, and enabling continuity of Government.

As for other Australian workplaces, COVID-safe measures were introduced in line with health advice: increasing cleaning of high-traffic and high-touch areas, hand sanitiser, limits on the number of people in meeting rooms, and increased space between desks. The inability to meet in person prompted increased use of videoconferencing and innovative ways of delivering work in the field.

The largest shift across the APS was the move to working from home, with more than half of the APS working from home at the peak of national COVID-19 restrictions.

The ability for employees to work from home depends on the type of work they do. For operational reasons many employees are required to attend usual places of work. Many of these employees work in frontline call and contact centre roles;⁶⁶ others require access to information systems or software unable to be accessed remotely.

The APS managed the risk of exposure to COVID-19 so employees could continue critical work by limiting contact between groups of employees such as rotating teams through the office over different hours of the day or on a week on/week off basis.

⁶⁵ Greg Moriarty, Secretary, Department of Defence. (2020). *IPAA Work with Purpose Podcast Episode #8*. 25 May.

⁶⁶ As at 30 June 2020, there were 17,897 APS employees working in frontline call and contact centre roles; an increase from 16,507 in December 2019.

Heading home at scale

Prior to the pandemic, almost all APS agencies offered work from home arrangements⁶⁷ and 22% of employees indicated they worked away from the office some of the time.⁶⁸

Previously, flexible work was most often utilised by women (56%), and flexible hours, working away from the office or part-time work were the most common flexibility arrangements across all APS employees.⁶⁹ 2019 APS employee census data indicates flexibility was well supported, with 83% of respondents agreeing their supervisor actively supported flexible arrangements for all employees, regardless of gender.⁷⁰

In response to the pandemic, flexibility became synonymous with business continuity and protecting the health of APS employees.

In April, at the height of national restrictions, one-fifth of all APS agencies reported that all their employees were working from home. At the highest recorded point, 56% of all APS employees were working from home. This number increased to 69% when Services Australia (which required the majority of its employees to attend usual workplaces for operational reasons) was excluded.⁷¹

Managing dispersed teams

'Everyone's adjusted. There's some humour around these things. There's a lot of connection that can come through a screen...the adjustments of a return to work and a return to more normal life...I think we've just got to be quite thoughtful about that and supportive of staff.'

Frances Adamson, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade⁷²

During 2020, many APS employees worked from home for the first time in their working lives. Some have thrived, some have found elements challenging, and others have found they prefer their usual work environments. While familiar to some, not all APS managers had experience in managing teams in dispersed environments.

⁶⁷ 2019 APS Agency Survey

⁶⁸ 2019 APS employee census

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Workforce Management Taskforce Data

⁷² Frances Adamson, Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2020). *Senate Select Committee on COVID-19*. 20 August.

No APS-wide data is available yet, however interim data suggests that this managerial capability is mixed across the APS.⁷³ Some managers found it challenging while others were comfortable managing employees who were working from home:

- In one agency, most supervisors (60%) thought their role as a supervisor was more challenging than usual due to work from home arrangements.
- The majority of supervisors (77%) within one agency thought they would benefit from additional training and support to manage dispersed teams.
- In one agency, 90% of managers indicated they felt comfortable and well prepared to manage employees for extended telework periods.

'Executives and managers should resist the temptation to micromanage operations. Instead, they should trust, support and enable the people who are keeping critical operations going, identifying and empowering pockets of critical innovation within the organisation.'⁷⁴

As COVID-19 continues to circulate in the community, employees, managers and agencies will need a flexible approach to home-based work that is responsive to a changing external environment.

The APS must continue to explore the benefits of remote working, and of shared workspaces, and the skills, behaviours and ways of working that support a world-class APS.

⁷³ Internal APS agency employee survey data [unpublished]

⁷⁴ Arjen Boin, Fredrik Bynander, Eric Stern, Paul 't Hart. (2020). *Leading in a crisis: Organisational resilience in megacrises*

Changing nature of flexibility

Flexible work is not just about where a person works. Flexibility in the APS includes:

- flexible location through remote access, hot-desking or the provision of laptop devices to individual employees
- flexible hours such as compressed working weeks or reduced hours
- flex time, purchased leave or time off in lieu
- flexible conditions including part-time agreements, career breaks, job-share arrangements, or individual flexibility agreements.

With the right support and systems in place, flexibility can support organisational performance through higher engagement, and offer improved work/life balance to individuals.

According to the ABS, between 2015 and 2019 there has been a steady increase nationwide in the proportion of people with an agreement in place to work flexible hours (from 31.9% to 34.1%) or to work from home (from 29.9% to 32.1%).⁷⁵ The Diversity Council of Australia reports that two-thirds of Australian workers have accessed flexible arrangements in the past year.⁷⁶

Australian research shows employees who have the flexibility they need to manage work and other commitments were 4 times as likely to indicate their team was innovative, close to 3 times as likely to report their team was working together effectively, and twice as likely to agree their team provided excellent customer/client service.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ ABS. (2019). *6333.0 – Characteristics of Employment, Australia, August 2019*

⁷⁶ Diversity Council of Australia. (2020). *The State of Flex 2020*

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Case study

Measuring productivity—a tale of two teams

Like many APS agencies, the Australian Taxation Office rapidly transitioned to mass remote working in 2020. The ATO has measured the productivity outcomes of this transition for some parts of the agency, and has found that results across the agency varied. Where one team saw increased productivity, another team's productivity declined.

Team A

Per-hour productivity increased while working from home:

A small team of fewer than 20 employees providing corporate services saw increased productivity throughout the COVID-19 period. As part of the ATO's pandemic response, 40% of the team was reassigned to other tasks within the agency, leaving 60% of the team remaining.

These 60% of people delivered around 75% of the team's original outputs, while working from home. Therefore, per-worker productivity for the team increased by 25%.

The team experienced a small growth in average hours worked, which explains part of this result. The following factors also contributed to the growth in productivity:

- The team was already geographically dispersed, and was accustomed to working remotely from one another.
- The work rarely required more than one system to be accessed at a time, and rarely required access to classified information.
- The nature of the work means that tasks could often be clearly assigned to individual team members.

b

Team B

Per-hour productivity declined while working from home:

A large team of around 180 employees providing citizen-facing services saw a decline in productivity while working from home. This team provides a review and assessment of citizen information.

Analysis of average review times for 2 key stages of this process shows that the average review time is around 16 hours for employees working in the office, but around 20 hours—or 25% longer—for employees working from home.

The following factors were observed as contributing to this result:

- Working from across multiple systems at home led to lags.
- Employees don't have access to multiple screens or printers at home, which made it difficult to compare information.
- The use of mobile phones to contact clients and co-workers made it difficult to record notes in real time in the relevant systems, like employees would usually do in the office.
- Remote working meant that every time an employee needed assistance or advice, they would need to call or message a co-worker or manager, adding time to the process as compared to sitting next to them in an office environment.



Learning through change: Flexible and connected

Flexibility at scale disrupted norms within the APS and provided an opportunity to deepen APS understanding of the core success factors of remote working.

ICT matters

Access to digital tools, information systems and videoconferencing technology were critical during crisis, to ensure timely communication between ministers and the APS, business continuity of Government, and team engagement.

Sustaining this capacity and capability is a critical factor for sustained productivity and engagement.

High-performance culture

Trust among leaders and teams forms the basis of effective outcomes-based management. This is essential for dispersed workplace environments, and was paramount during the large-scale remote working transition during the pandemic.

The APS requires skilled managers with the mindset, tools and ability to manage dispersed teams pro-actively, employ outcome-based management, and foster open and accountable ways of working.

Learn and adapt

Home-based or remote work does not suit all roles in the APS, nor all employees.

Some tasks may be better suited to co-location, and others may be more efficiently done in locations with fewer distractions.

For some business functions, a dispersed team may not be a sustainable model.

An evidence-based approach with regular review points is important—to understand the impacts of flexibility on individuals, teams and delivery, and optimise ways of working for success.

Maintain connection

Maintaining connections among people is essential irrespective of location.

Shared work spaces offer opportunities to collaborate through informal and unplanned meetings, and networks may narrow if remote employees only engage with people within their own work area.

A hybrid model that balances greater levels of remote work with physical co-location requires a deliberate focus on employee engagement and connection to maintain collaboration, culture and team cohesion.

Keep talking

Clear, two-way communication is essential to build a shared understanding of a common purpose and prioritisation that carries through, whatever the workplace. Open communication between employees and managers supports employee engagement, planning and shared expectations.

Flexibility will require an individual approach—managers and employees are required to work together to determine what works best, based on the outcomes required of the role.

Employer of choice

'Potential employees are looking for a dynamic, challenging and flexible work environment, and the APS will need to work hard to attract them.'⁷⁸

Expectations of employees are changing within and outside of the APS, as new ways of working were adopted during the pandemic, bringing the future of work into the present.

Australian employees have increased expectations for accessing remote work. In one survey of Australians, 82% of respondents indicated that COVID-19 has changed how they want to work, and 97% of respondents wanted to retain the freedom to work flexibly when COVID-19 restrictions are over.⁷⁹

Remote work offers the potential for the APS to access wider labour markets and in-demand skills, reducing geographic barriers to some APS roles. APS employees are highly educated with 83.8% of reported employees having a post-high school qualification, however there are emerging gaps in the skillsets required to meet future need. In 2019, agencies reported skills shortages, particularly in data, digital, ICT and STEM roles.⁸⁰

To remain an employer of choice, and access new pools of talent, flexibility will remain an important component of the APS.

Resilient

'The response to COVID-19 requires organisations to perform intense sprints while running a marathon.'⁸¹

Complex crises like the COVID-19 pandemic require organisations to 'respond reliably to peak pressures and messy circumstances', and 'sustain this reliability over a long period of time, even when key staff and resources are impacted'.⁸² A resilient organisation has the ability to limit the potential impacts of future crises, and leverage the lessons learnt as strategic opportunities for positive change. This foresight is achieved through a workforce comprising strong leadership and empowered employees with an understanding and commitment to the organisation's priorities.

⁷⁸ APSC. (2018). *Attracting and recruiting*

⁷⁹ ANZ. (2020). *COVID-19 takes flexible working mainstream*

⁸⁰ 2019 APS Agency Survey

⁸¹ Arjen Boin, Fredrik Bynander, Eric Stern, Paul 't Hart. (2020). *Leading in a crisis: Organisational resilience in mega crises*

⁸² Ibid.

It is critical for leaders and organisations to maintain long-term perspective through complex crises. This will ensure the APS is able to sustain its response through the crisis period and into the recovery phase.

'People were working 7 days a week, extraordinary hours every single day to be able to do this. Now it's just not sustainable clearly... You can't all be working that period of time.

'There is an enormous dedication amongst the staff, there's an enormous sense of pride and support for each other. But... it can't go on forever.'

Chris Jordan AO, Commissioner, ATO⁸³

APS employees are part of the wider community and are not immune to the pressures all Australians have confronted the past year. Back-to-back crises have tested the resilience of many APS employees.

When the COVID-19 crisis response began in early 2020, many employees had been working through the heightened pressure and stress of the Black Summer crisis. Some agencies had undergone significant structural change implementing Machinery of Government changes in just 34 business days.

APS employees have taken fewer breaks from work than usual. This is evidenced by rising leave balances for both scheduled and unscheduled absences. Compared to the 3 months to June in 2019, unscheduled absences over the same period in 2020 were on average 25% lower per employee (from 3.1 to 2.3 days per employee).⁸⁴

The pandemic also brought a shared sense of vulnerability. Many employees worried about the health and livelihood of family and friends. Many have assisted children to learn remotely, others have found themselves with new caring responsibilities for vulnerable family members. For the 25,890 APS employees in Victoria, a second wave of COVID-19 infections has meant a second period of increased restrictions.

Employees have navigated new working environments alongside housemates or family members for the first time. In one agency, taking active breaks was one of the top challenges of working from home; and many employees were finding the lines between work and home life were blurring.⁸⁵

83 Chris Jordan AO, Commissioner, ATO. (2020). *IPAA Work with Purpose podcast #19*. 17 August.

84 2019–2020 Unscheduled Absence Survey (Appendix 5). Unscheduled absence includes personal, carers and miscellaneous leave (bereavement, compassionate and emergency leave).

85 Internal APS agency employee survey data

Preliminary data from the national work health and safety, and workers' compensation authority, Comcare, indicates there has been a decrease in claims received from March to August 2020 as compared to the same period in 2019. From 2019 to 2020, injury claims received fell by 19% and psychological claims by 15%. There was a slight increase of 1% in physical disease claims received. While Comcare is seeing some changes in the types of psychological claims during the pandemic, it is too soon to identify or confirm any strong trends in the data.

To remain connected, the APS has communicated with employees in new ways. Executives increased the frequency of communications and began engaging with employees in more personal ways. Dispersed teams used technology to keep connected and productive. Some departments simply picked up the phone, proactively checking on employee wellbeing or to perform virtual workplace assessments. In one agency, SES Band 1s called each of their employees once a month to check-in and gain a sense of how they were faring at home.

Results of agencies' internal employee surveys showed a mixed impact on wellbeing and mental health compared to pre-COVID-19. Relatively large cohorts reported lower wellbeing, including increased stress and feelings of isolation. Others reported higher levels of wellbeing citing greater flexibility and work/life balance as the reason.

- 35% of respondents in one large agency reported their mental health had declined to some degree—with many others reporting no impact (41%) or improved mental health (21%).
- 21% of respondents within another large agency felt their mental health and wellbeing had been adversely affected—and the majority reported no adverse impact (65%).
- 28% of respondents within a third large agency reported that their overall wellbeing over the previous week was poorer than pre-COVID-19—with about half reporting no impact (48%), and one quarter reporting improvements (23%).⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Internal APS agency employee survey data

Department of Education, Skills and Employment—Leave deep dive review 2020⁸⁷

Workplace leave

A deep dive into DESE leave data reveals a dramatic fall in the proportion of employees taking annual leave between February and May 2020. The number of employees taking annual leave in April and May 2020 was significantly lower than the past 2 years.

Similarly, the proportion of employees taking personal leave in 2020 has been substantially less than in the previous two years. At its lowest point in April, 25% of employees used personal leave. Since then, the use of personal leave has increased however it continues to be below 2018 and 2019 rates.

In contrast, flex balances increased significantly from February, reaching a peak in June/July 2020.

Figure 1.7: Percentage of employees taking annual leave, DESE (2018 to 2020)

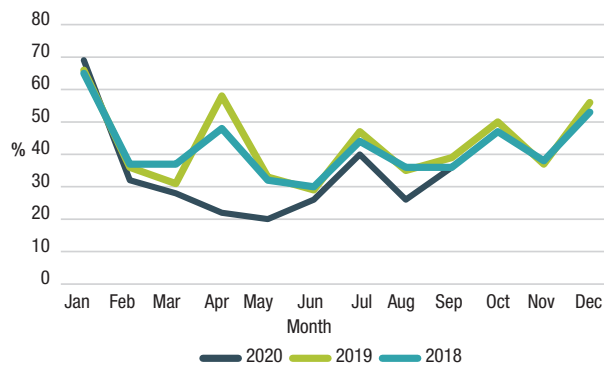
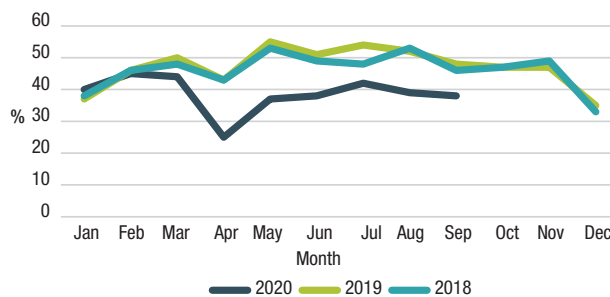
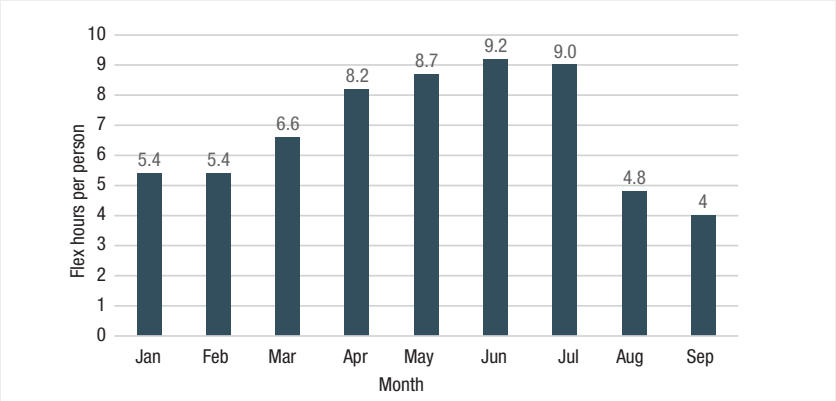


Figure 1.8: Percentage of employees taking personal leave, DESE (2018 to 2020)



⁸⁷ DESE internal data

Figure 1.9: Flex balances—hours per person at end of month, DESE (January to September 2020)



Workplace availability

Leave effects

Pre-COVID 2019 figures
Out of 20 working days:

- 1.5 days per employee of planned leave
- 1 day per employee of unplanned leave



April 2020 (during-COVID)
Out of 20 working days:

- 0.5 days per employee of planned leave
- 0.5 days per employee of unplanned leave



% change in 'workplace availability' = approximately 7.5% growth in labour via reduced leave

Flex balance effects



Flex growth per critical employee = around 2 hours during April 2020.

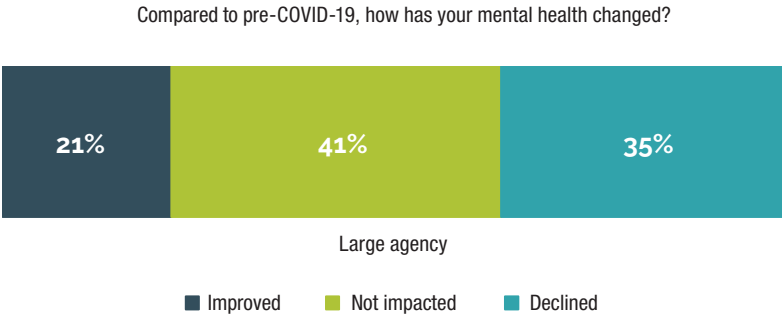
Flex growth as % of normal full-time monthly working hours (2 hours divided by 150 hours) = approximately 1.3% growth in labour via increased flex

Total effects

Approximately 9% increase in 'workplace availability', or total hours worked, in April 2020 to support Australia as part of the COVID-19 response.



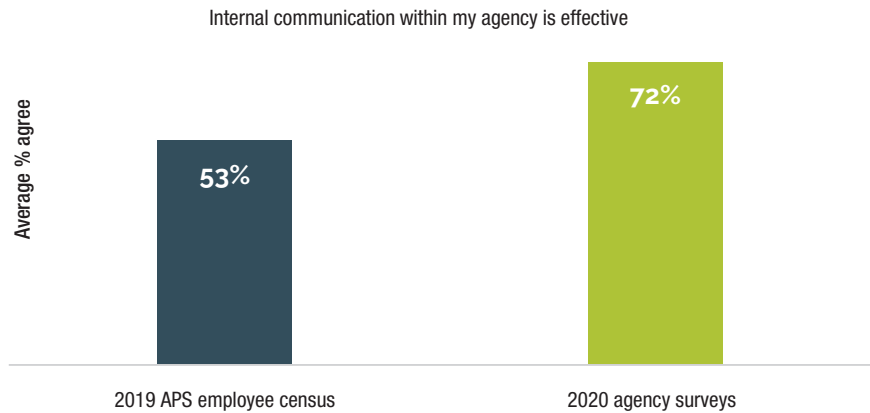
Figure 1.10: Employee perceptions of mental health changes at one APS agency



Source: Internal APS agency employee survey data

Indicative data shows employees felt supported by their agencies, managers and colleagues. Similarly, internal communication was viewed positively by most employees, and these levels of perceived support may have gone some way to counter the impacts to mental health and wellbeing. Data from 12 agencies shows a significant increase in satisfaction with internal communication compared to 2019 (up 19 percentage points), with small agencies having the highest positive responses compared to large agencies.

Figure 1.11: Internal communication (12 agencies)



Source: Analysis of 12 agencies across the 2019 APS employee census and 2020 internal APS agency employee surveys (N=23,000)

Learning through change: Wellbeing at the core

Back-to-back crises have tested the resilience of the APS organisation, and its people. The experience offers insights for the value of a people-first approach, clear communication, and reinforces the importance of developing deep capability to reduce the risk of burnout.

People first

Increased demand on the APS during the COVID-19 pandemic was largely met through increased hours, less leave and reliance on proven performers. This has served the APS well in the past to meet one-off peaks, however back-to-back crises reinforces that the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and capability development must remain at the core of strategic workforce plans. It is important to:

- Support wellbeing through preventative measures and build employee awareness of supportive wellbeing practises.
- Adapt WHS processes and related policies to support wellbeing and ensure they are fit-for-purpose and flexible.
- Develop future leaders and involve them in crisis exercises to build future readiness and reduce risk.

Engage with vulnerability

The nature of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted APS leadership to communicate in a new way with its workforce: responding to the rapidly changing external environment, the imperative to continue delivering critical services to the community, and a heightened sense of vulnerability felt by many.

The visibility APS leaders provided and the empathy they expressed gave many employees a renewed sense of connection to their agency's purpose.

To continue this momentum, APS leaders should engage in pro-active two-way communication regularly and check in on wellbeing, as well as the progress of work.



Chapter two

Supporting recovery

‘We are reforming in practice as we act to respond to COVID-19. We are more connected, responsive and adaptable than ever.’

Philip Gaetjens, Secretary, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Peter Woolcott AO, APS Commissioner⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Philip Gaetjens and Peter Woolcott AO. (2020). *Open Letter to the Australian Public Service*. 9 April.



Supporting recovery

Australia's recovery from the pandemic requires the APS performing at its best: a joined-up enterprise, a culture of integrity, a high-performing and mobile workforce with the capabilities needed for the future.

Australia faces a range of economic and societal challenges, changing work patterns, and technological shifts impacting the way citizens and governments engage with each other. While the role of the APS remains the same, the APS needs to harness the experiences and lessons learnt from the last 12 months and orient its effort around recovery.

Delivering for Australians

As 2020 began, the future reform agenda for the APS was clear. The *2018–19 Independent Review of the APS* had been delivered, and the Government set in motion its reform agenda for the APS: *Delivering for Australians*. Anchored around 6 pillars, its purpose is to sustain and extend a world-class public service. It looked to an adaptive and delivery-focused APS connected to the people of Australia, acting with integrity around clear priorities, and delivering seamless services.

The APS had made early progress:

- a significant restructure of the APS was in place from 1 February 2020, reducing the number of APS departments from 18 to 14, designed to streamline government functions, improve decision-making and deliver better services
- development of digital and data professions have progressed, building on the experience of the HR profession launched in October 2019
- strategies to improve diversity in the APS have been developed; the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy and a new APS Disability Employment Strategy
- strategic workforce planning continues and streams of work to develop APS capability, improve performance management and integrity measures, and to centralise aspects of recruitment are underway; and a review of the APS classification structure will commence soon.

Formal implementation planning of APS reform paused in April 2020 in order to manage the COVID-19 response.

The Secretaries Board soon recognised that the events of 2019-20 had the potential to contribute to the acceleration of reform in the APS through practical change. Many forward year plans were executed in weeks to ensure business continuity, and an effective crisis response.

Secretaries Board sought to refocus the reform agenda on those aspects that have immediate and high-impact in supporting Australia's response to and recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, while building long-term APS capability. These are anchored around 3 key priorities:⁸⁹

- **Continuing to support Australia's response to and recovery from the pandemic:** by working together as a one enterprise, continuing to share data, mobilise people to where they're most needed, and collaborating early on policy or implementation challenges with industry and the community. The Secretaries Board will continue supporting the development and delivery of cross-cutting Government priorities and the COO Committee will continue addressing the APS's operational requirements and facilitating the mobilisation.
- **Accelerating APS digital transformation:** through an enterprise-wide approach to investing in and developing ICT and digital systems, a targeted review and risk profile of its digital and ICT needs, as well its workforce capabilities and a new Secretaries Digital Committee will ensure effective APS digital governance and drive delivery of these reforms.
- **Investing in the skills the APS needs now and in the future:** through the APS Workforce Strategy, continued investment in APS employees will ensure the new experience and skills gained are retained, and that the needs of the future are prioritised, and a dedicated surge reserve will enable APS volunteers to be deployed to a range of critical functions.

89 Philip Gaetjens and Peter Woolcott AO. (2020). *Open Letter to the Australian Public Service*. 4 September.

Independent Review of the APS

The Government commissioned an independent review of the APS on 4 May 2018, the largest of its kind in 40 years. The Review was led by an independent panel of 6 individuals with public and private experience, led by Mr David Thodey AO.

The objective of the APS Review was to identify an ambitious program of transformational reforms, ensuring the APS is fit-for-purpose for the coming decades. The APS Review covered the capability, culture and operating model of the APS, with a focus on innovation, collaboration, citizen engagement, and delivering better outcomes.

The panel engaged widely within and outside the APS, with more than 400 meetings, workshops and events, and more than 5,000 contributions from over 11,000 participants. This involved public opportunities to make a submission and comment online, dialogues and formal meetings, workshops, information sessions and site visits.

The Government released the final report of the APS Review on 13 December 2019,⁹⁰ alongside its response.⁹¹ The report made 40 recommendations, providing a comprehensive platform for change, with 35 of the recommendations accepted partially or in full.

Key findings include the need for a capable, citizen-focused and trusted APS that collaborates, partners with others and delivers decisively. The report also highlighted the need for new ways of working and the importance of harnessing data and technology in a changing and increasingly connected world.

Delivering for Australians

In December 2019, the Government announced its APS reform agenda '*Delivering for Australians*'. The Government also committed \$15.1 million over 2 years to commence delivery of the agreed recommendations.

The APS reform agenda sets out 6 guideposts for a modern, high-performing public service. The reforms seek to ensure clear roles and priorities, deliver better services to Australians, supporting effective implementation, foster engagement and openness to different viewpoints, and ensure the APS adapts to change, and acts with the utmost integrity.

The APS Reform Office, within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, was established in February 2020 to undertake implementation planning and support APS-wide delivery.

⁹⁰ Commonwealth of Australia. (2019). *Independent Review of the Australian Public Service*

⁹¹ Commonwealth of Australia. (2019). *Delivering for Australians: A world-class Australian Public Service. The Government's APS reform agenda*

Pro-integrity culture

'Trust in the APS is related to its capacity to deliver—but the quality of both 'what' is delivered and 'how' delivery is achieved are each crucial to that trust. At each stage of their career an APS employee needs to know what professional standards and responsibilities are expected of them, needs to have developed the capabilities necessary to meet those standards and responsibilities, and needs to be held accountable for the 'what' and the 'how' of their performance, including in respect of those standards and responsibilities.'

Steve Sedgwick AO⁹²

APS employees occupy a position of trust. This brings a level of responsibility that must be matched by the highest standards of ethical behaviour. Underpinning the APS's approach to integrity culture are the APS Values, the APS Employment Principles and the APS Code of Conduct, set out in the *Public Service Act 1999*. In particular, the Code of Conduct and the APS Values give 'a clear statement to those within the APS, and to the Australian people, of the conduct that is expected of public servants.'⁹³

The APS Values guide the work of every APS employee, every day. This has never been more apparent than in 2019–20. Having a shared set of values meant that, as employees surged into different APS agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic response, they understood that the expected behaviours were consistent across the service.

To maintain and foster integrity, the APS requires an institutional approach, in which the processes, governance, accountability, performance, purpose and culture of the APS are seen to be trustworthy.⁹⁴ Expanding on this concept, establishing a pro-integrity culture at the institutional level means setting a culture that values, acknowledges and champions proactively doing the right thing, rather than purely a compliance-driven approach which focuses exclusively on avoidance of wrong doing.

In a pro-integrity culture, compliance rules and penalties for breaches should not be the primary motivating factor in the day-to-day conduct of an APS employee; the motivation should be driven by a genuine commitment to upholding and championing integrity as a core component of a professional public service. Compliance measures are an important facet of an integrity framework, but work best as part of a broader pro-integrity culture.

⁹² Steve Sedgwick AO. (2020). [unpublished]

⁹³ EM1 for the Public Service Bill 1999

⁹⁴ N. Kirby & S. Webbe, Being a trusted and respected partner: the APS Integrity Framework, ANZSOG, 2019.

In fact, pro-integrity culture can serve as a preventative measure against misconduct; when culture, systems and processes are established on a strong foundation of integrity, misconduct or lack of integrity become more apparent, meaning employees are sensitive and alert to breaches and respond appropriately.

Trust well placed

Trust in the public sector is founded on visibility of integrity in action. Employees who reported that their SES manager was ‘sufficiently visible’ were more likely to indicate that senior leaders in their agency promoted the APS Values.⁹⁵

The COVID-19 crisis created a direct line of sight from the Australian community to the actions of the APS. Due to the increased need for social welfare support, many in the community have interacted or engaged with parts of the APS for the first time. This broader exposure to the work of the APS—who its people are, the services it delivers, and the systems and processes it supports—is an opportunity to increase trust in Australian public institutions.

The Citizen Experience Survey is a regular, national survey measuring citizens’ experience with services delivered by the APS. Data collected in June 2020 shows an uptick in the measures of citizen satisfaction and trust in Australian public services. In June 2020, around 3 in 4 people were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with services they’d accessed, and approximately two-thirds at least somewhat trusted services. Importantly, less than 1 in 10 people distrusted or were dissatisfied with services.⁹⁶ Results are driven by increased satisfaction in parts of the service journey including with information from the service being easy to understand and employees delivering what they say they will.

A focus on tangible outcomes for Australians is one way the APS can reinforce a culture of integrity.



Message written on footpath outside the Yarra Service Centre, Abbotsford, Victoria.

⁹⁵ 2019 APS employee census

⁹⁶ Early results from the forthcoming Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Citizen Experience Survey, 2020.

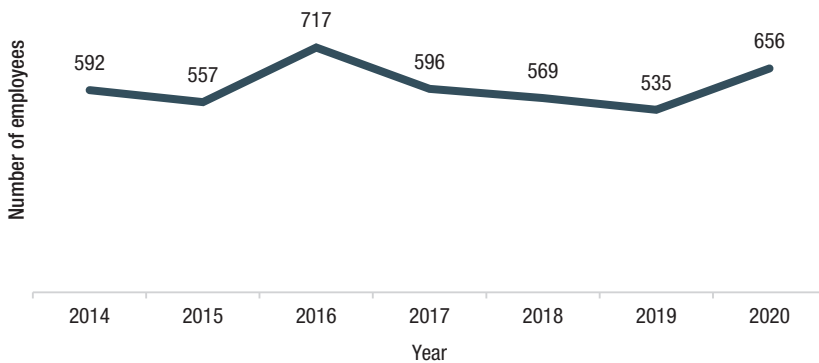
Calling it out

APS employees perceive the service to have a strong integrity culture. In the most recent APS employee census (from 2019), at least 90% of employees perceived their colleagues and supervisors ‘always’ or ‘often’ acted in accordance with the APS Values. These perceptions have remained relatively stable since questions about this were included in the APS employee census in 2014.

In a pro-integrity culture the APS is collectively accountable for ensuring it fulfils its purpose, and models behaviours such as openness, collaboration, keeping commitments, and honesty. A pro-integrity culture is also sensitive to and intolerant of misconduct, and understands when and how to call out poor behaviour.

In the 2020 APS Agency Survey, agencies reported that 656 employees were the subject of an investigation into a suspected breach of the APS Code of Conduct that was finalised in 2019–20.

Figure 2.1: Number of APS employees investigated for a suspected breach of the APS Code of Conduct (2014 to 2020)



Source: APS Agency Survey

While the number is higher than in recent years, it remains proportionately low to the size of the workforce and demonstrates that existing reporting and investigation processes are working.



Case study

Update of social media guidance

Social media use in Australia has been steadily growing, with an estimated 18 million Australians—71% of the population—now active on social media platforms.⁹⁷ Like all citizens, APS employees hold personal views and political opinions, and participate in social media.

The trusted position the APS holds means employees expressing their views can reflect not only on them as individuals, but also on their agencies and the APS as a whole. Employees' personal behaviour can ultimately affect the confidence of the Australian community and the Government in the integrity of the APS as an institution.

This is why some obligations as public servants extend into public servants' private lives, and must be balanced with their rights as citizens. On social media, confidence in the APS can be undermined by individual employees' personal behaviour.

In September 2020, the APSC released updated guidance on personal behaviour on social media. The guidance provides a practical framework to help APS employees and agencies strike a reasonable balance between employees' right to personal and political expression and their obligations as APS employees.

The guidance contains practical examples to assist APS employees and agencies to understand and assess the risks of different online behaviours, and make sound, proportionate decisions. The updated guidance is part of the APSC's work to enhance a pro-integrity culture within the APS.

⁹⁷ We Are Social. (2020). *Digital 2020 Australia*





‘APS employees have a right to personal and political expression on social media. But this right must be balanced with the obligations of APS employment, and the importance of maintaining public confidence in the service’

Peter Woolcott AO,
Australian Public Service Commissioner

Digital transformation

Australia is a strong performer in e-government development, ranked fifth in the world according to the United Nations annual survey for 2020.⁹⁸

The Australian Government is accelerating reforms and investments to enable greater adoption of digital technologies, supporting the goal for Australia to be a leading digital economy by 2030.⁹⁹

The APS is delivering the Government’s digital agenda to support community needs. The Digital Transformation Strategy sets the direction to delivery world-leading digital services for all Australians. Its focus is on making government easy to deal with, informed by users, and fit for the digital age.¹⁰⁰

APS reforms prioritises greater digital transformation through an enterprise-wide approach to investment in and development of ICT and digital systems. The APS will focus where possible on building and reusing common digital platforms to support APS-wide collaboration and problem-solving.

Investments will be informed by a clear picture of current assets and future needs, through a targeted review of the APS’ digital and ICT needs, capabilities and risks, led by the new Secretaries Digital Committee, established in September 2020.¹⁰¹

Digital APS

The pandemic underscored the need for ongoing focus on digital transformation. In a high-pressure environment, reliable, accessible and secure tools are essential for effective incident management and communications within the APS and service delivery to the community.

During the pandemic, agencies reported a rapid uplift of technology to support business continuity and remote work—increasing bandwidth, licencing and IT equipment. For example, one agency increased its capacity to support remote work from 70 to 700 employees within 3 weeks, and others report implementing 2-year ICT programs within months.

98 UN. (2020). *UN E-Government Survey*

99 Commonwealth of Australia. (2020). JobMaker: *Creating jobs and rebuilding our economy*. Budget 2020–21

100 DTA. (2019). *Digital Transformation Strategy*

101 Philip Gaetjens and Peter Woolcott AO. (2020). *Open Letter to the Australian Public Service*. 4 September.

Whilst digital systems are essential for business continuity and productivity, the pandemic also demonstrated the need for greater interoperability and common APS-wide enabling systems.

GovTEAMS is one such mechanism. It provides a digital platform for APS employees to work, learn and collaborate in a secure online environment. Uptake increased by 351% to 86,970 users over the 12 months to 30 July 2020, up from 19,285 registered users on 30 July 2019. Between 1 March and 30 June 2020, there were 454,497 community-wide chats on GovTEAMS; 4,761,034 one-on-one chat messages; 142,004 audio and video calls; and 193,874 meeting attendees.¹⁰²

Learning through change: Seamless, secure digital

Real-time, high quality virtual communication among leaders and across teams, with industry, stakeholders and the community was essential at the height of crisis. Leaders required live communications with ministers, executive teams and employees.

A mixed ICT approach within and across agencies was required to support access to classified information, provide tools and technology to enable remote access, and to support new ways of delivering enabled by technology.

Seamless APS

Many barriers to remote work were removed as ICT teams worked hard to uplift APS digital capacity: increasing bandwidth, expanding software licensing, and issuing equipment.

The value of common ICT systems to support enterprise-wide operations became clear: GovTEAMS provided a secure, shared platform for hosting critical resources, and offered many agencies a platform to host virtual meetings.

However, the digital experience differed across the APS and increased levels of collaboration and mobility highlighted where duplicate processes exist.

A continued focus on common or inter-operable ICT through the APS reform agenda remains essential for an efficient APS that can more readily deliver services.

Information and cyber security

The rapid rollout of physical equipment to homes, instructions for online collaboration tools, and clear guidance around asset, document and cyber security ensured work continued without disruption.

New ways of working prompts a rethink of standard security measures and training. Many teams adapted to ensure common security practices in usual workplaces were transferred to the home, and cyber security awareness was adapted to the new circumstances.

¹⁰² Department of Finance data [unpublished]

Case study

A balancing act in extraordinary times

During the COVID-19 pandemic the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) transitioned its employees to remote working, while addressing urgent regulatory actions requested by the media and communications industry sectors.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted heavily on the media and communications sectors at a time when they were delivering critical services to keep Australians informed and connected.

The ACMA established a multi-disciplinary COVID-19 Taskforce to respond to industry requests for regulatory forbearance and other actions. The Taskforce considered requests across 49 acts and instruments, and more than 200 separate legislative provisions. Requests were considered on a case-by-case basis and decisions balanced the risk of harm for consumers with supporting industry to deliver vital services to Australians.

In February 2020, when COVID-19 cases were escalating around the world, the ACMA tested its ICT systems and placed advanced orders for IT equipment in preparation. Fortunately, the ACMA had already invested in its remote IT architecture and had moved all employees to laptops in 2018. This meant everyone could seamlessly transition from the office to home without any significant impacts on the operation of the agency.

In March 2020, due to the early preparation and an existing culture of flexibility, the ACMA was able to transition its 530 employees from offices to homes in less than 2 weeks.

A logistics centre was established in the ACMA's Canberra office where IT equipment packages were delivered to employees across Australia. The agency also set up an opt-in 'ACMA Alert' text message system to communicate with employees in real time as the pandemic situation changed—98% of the ACMA's employees opted into this service.

The agency also helped support the mental health and social connection of their people while isolating. They established virtual social events, enabled online sharing of 'working from home' tips and scaled up internal communications to ensure employees remained informed, connected and engaged.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented the ACMA, along with government, business and the community, with many significant challenges. But the ACMA has learnt it can successfully work in an agile and flexible way through a crisis while supporting the Government, industry and the Australian community.



'T' for taskforce.
The ACMA's COVID-19 Taskforce meeting on Microsoft Teams.



Case study

GLAMour under pressure

Australia's national galleries, libraries, archives and museums (the GLAM sector) are the keepers and custodians of the country's history, collective knowledge, and national treasures. Behind the exhibitions and reference desks are dedicated APS employees with a passion for maintaining access to Australia's archives and artistic expression.

Used to operating in face-to-face environments, the GLAM sector needed to change their ways of working and community engagement when the pandemic forced their doors to close. With the community confined to their homes, school excursions cancelled and cabin fever setting in, the GLAM sector stood up to deliver via digital means.



Questacon, the National Science and Technology Centre did not stop supporting young people to learn STEM skills when it closed its doors to the public. Instead Questacon rapidly refocused to deliver a hub of online science resources and activities, and worked on creating new experiences in anticipation of reopening.

Temporary closure of the **National Portrait Gallery**, saw the team focus their efforts on increasing their digital programs so that their gallery floors could be explored and experienced across the country.

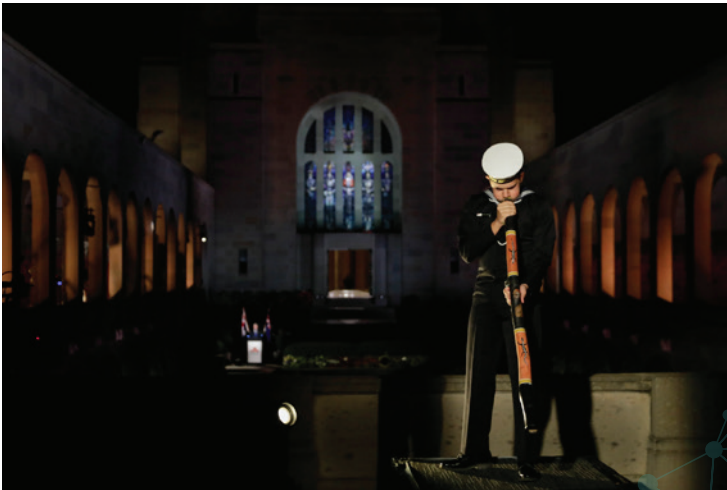
The **National Film and Sound Archive of Australia** launched a range of online events and programs that have reached not only Australians but also people overseas. Between 1 March and 15 May 2020 audiences around the world watched 8,254,980 minutes of footage on their channels, or 15 years of non-stop viewing.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ National Film and Sound Archive of Australia. (2020). *Explore our Collection Online 24/7*



Anzac Day in 1919 was disrupted by the Spanish Flu pandemic. Similarly the 105th anniversary could not be commemorated with the usual marches and two-up gatherings. The **Australian War Memorial** did not let the day go unobserved, working with the ABC to ensure ceremonies could be seen around the world. The Australian War Memorial has also developed Museum At Home which offers online learning resources and virtual tours, still available despite the reopening of the Memorial.

From February 2020 the **National Library of Australia** began working with its state and territory counterparts to ensure that the stories of Australians living through the pandemic are not lost in the annals of memory. The Library is preserving online content such as government advisories, news and support websites to ensure they are discoverable for generations to come.



Anzac Day 2020.
Seaman Lynton
Robbins, Royal
Australian Navy

Source: Australian War Memorial



Effective workforce management

A whole-of-service workforce strategy will provide the overarching framework for building and sustaining the way the APS attracts and develops its people, and utilises their talent.

The first of its kind for the APS, it will build on efforts to strengthen critical capabilities through professional streams, drive workforce productivity with a high performance culture, and develop a strong pipeline of APS leaders.

Leadership

'Public service leadership has never been so challenging or complex. Public service leaders work across organisational boundaries, sectors and jurisdictions to tackle ongoing and emergent policy challenges and improve the impact of public services. They have to make space for innovation while managing risk and being accountable for results. . . The coronavirus has shaken up many old assumptions of public service working methods. . . Effective public service leaders rose to the challenge, leveraging new technologies and managing their workforces in new ways to protect their wellbeing while maintaining and boosting the delivery of essential services.'

OECD¹⁰⁴

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical nature of collaborative and networked leadership for managing complex challenges. In times of crisis, leadership must be people-focused, calm, credible and trusted.¹⁰⁵

The results of recent internal APS agency employee surveys reflect positively on the APS leadership cohort. During the initial pandemic response, available data indicates that employees felt supported by their managers, empowered and trusted. For example, the vast majority of respondents from one agency (93%) reported that their managers trusted them to work productively while working remotely.¹⁰⁶

Leaders have surfaced relevant skills and expertise in areas that proved critical to the pandemic response, and engaged with risk to accelerate delivery.

104 OECD. (2020). *Leadership for a High Performing Public Service: Towards a Senior Civil Service Systems in OECD countries*. 15 September.

105 UN. (2020). *UN/DESA Policy Brief #79: The role of public service and public servants during the COVID-19 pandemic*. 11 June.

106 Internal APS agency employee pulse survey data

Developing leaders

Within the public sector, building leadership capability centred on improving outcomes for society is considered a fundamental condition for trust in public institutions and governance.¹⁰⁷

In the APS, the SES are expected to ‘provide APS-wide strategic leadership of the highest quality that contributes to an effective and cohesive APS.’¹⁰⁸ The SES must promote cooperation within and between agencies and provide professional or specialist expertise, policy advice, program or service deliver and/or regulatory administration at a high level.¹⁰⁹

In 2019, as part of the APS reform agenda, it was agreed that all SES employees would take part in a capability assessment process to help target development and guide career paths. To date, 251 SES (72 SES Band 3 employees, 179 Band 1 and 2s) have been assessed against the APS leadership capabilities established in 2017.

The assessments were paused temporarily during the pandemic response, however over time will provide the APS with oversight of the experience, skills, capability of the APS leadership cohort, including strengths and capability gaps.

Figure 2.2: APS Leadership capabilities and personal qualities



107 OECD. (2019). *Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability*

108 s(35) Public Service Act 1999

109 Ibid.

SES capability assessments to date identify areas of strengths in ‘delivering results’, ‘collaboration’ and ‘influence’. However, there is room to develop these capabilities further to fulfil stewardship responsibilities and have greater impact across the APS enterprise.

Assessments indicate that the capabilities requiring development for the current cohort are ‘visionary’, ‘enabling’ and ‘entrepreneurial’. These are key to shaping long-term organisational strategy, developing high-performing teams, and harnessing the benefits of diverse thinking and perspectives to explore new possibilities. As the APS contends with increasingly complex public policy challenges and ambiguity these capabilities are becoming more critical.

Leadership attributes such as courage (engaging with risk and making difficult decisions), self-awareness (being open to feedback and understanding own strengths, weaknesses and impact on others), and resilience (being adaptable and remaining positive and forward-thinking despite challenges) are essential. Of these, results indicate there are higher levels of resilience and courage with room for greater self-awareness.

The results of SES capability assessments inform individual development plans and intensive leadership programs. These focus on developing adaptive capabilities that senior leaders need now and in the future: influence, working with and through others, engagement and collaboration skills, and experimentation and risk-taking. These themes extend into general leadership programs available to all SES and EL 2s across the APS, with a strong focus on improving self-awareness and confidence as a leader.

SES leadership capability framework

The APSC is now extending the SES leadership capability framework—initially developed for talent assessments—for broader application in recruitment, performance management, development and mobility to ensure leadership capabilities are suitable for the future.

Drawing on the Integrated Leadership System and Work Level Standards, the extended framework will articulate skills, knowledge and attributes which underpin the current model of SES capabilities and identify behavioural indicators for each SES classification.

High performance

A high-performance culture promotes and incentivises effective performance and fosters talent. It has clear performance expectations, focuses on performance improvement, and actively manages performance issues. It requires mutual accountability for achieving effective performance.

Positive culture cannot simply cascade down. Everyone involved needs to live and breathe its values.

Effective performance management must hold both leaders and individual employees accountable for their performance, and must be consistently applied across the service. To reinforce this shift, the APS Commissioner's Directions were updated in 2019 to clarify the obligations of Agency Heads, supervisors, and APS employees in achieving, promoting, and fostering a high-performance culture.¹¹⁰

The APSC also released a guide to support agencies to adopt performance management practices at all levels of their organisations that contribute to a high-performance APS culture. This includes both rewarding and recognising talent, and managing underperformance when required.¹¹¹

Supporting high performers

One year after the Directions were amended, the APSC sought feedback from agencies to understand how they influenced changes to nurture talent and support a high performance culture. The APSC received 43 responses from a cross-section of agencies with different sizes and functions. Responses indicate 53% of agencies have updated their performance frameworks following the release of the Directions, including changes that focus on employee development and capability uplift, and that ensure high performance culture is the responsibility of all APS employees. Agencies who did not make changes noted their existing performance frameworks currently align with the intent of the Directions, or they are currently undertaking reviews to identify if future changes are needed.

¹¹⁰ APSC. (2019). *Commissioner's Directions*

¹¹¹ APSC. (2019). *Performance Management in the Australian Public Service*

Case study

High performance at Home Affairs

‘High performance is a commitment to continuous improvement, delivering outcomes and implementing priorities on time and to a high standard. It is being reliable and trusted to provide services for stakeholders in an efficient and effective manner.’

Department of Home Affairs – Driving a High-performing Culture

Faced with an increasingly volatile operating environment, the Department of Home Affairs transformed its approach to work by developing a strategy that will help their employees prepare for the future. The *Driving a High-performing Culture Framework* seeks to support and embed the transformation, as well as foster and promote a high-performing culture.

It defines an inclusive approach to high performance that is relevant to all employees, regardless of level or role, and provides detailed guidance on how to meet current and future challenges as both individuals and leaders. It's founded on the principle that high performance begins with an individual, and when individuals combine to achieve high performance as a team, they collectively contribute to the high performance of the organisation.

Building a high-performing culture requires focus on enabling, supporting and developing an organisation's people. Underpinning the Framework are the 'Pillars of High Performance' which were developed from research on high performance and culture, and the factors that motivate people at work such as inspiring a sense of purpose, feeling valued and having autonomy. The pillars are:

- Leadership, Talent and Performance
- Health, Wellbeing and Diversity
- Capability, Development and Career

Each pillar details the expectations of everyone in building a high-performing culture and lists which initiatives, mechanisms and networks Home Affairs provides that foster and promote a high-performing culture. The Framework also contains practical guidance for employees and managers on how to assess the performance culture of teams. This assists and encourages individual and collective improvements, and identifies areas for development.

Since its launch in July 2020, the Framework has been embedded in the Home Affairs performance management cycle and relevant eLearning products, and will support Home Affairs' efforts in supporting the APS reform agenda.

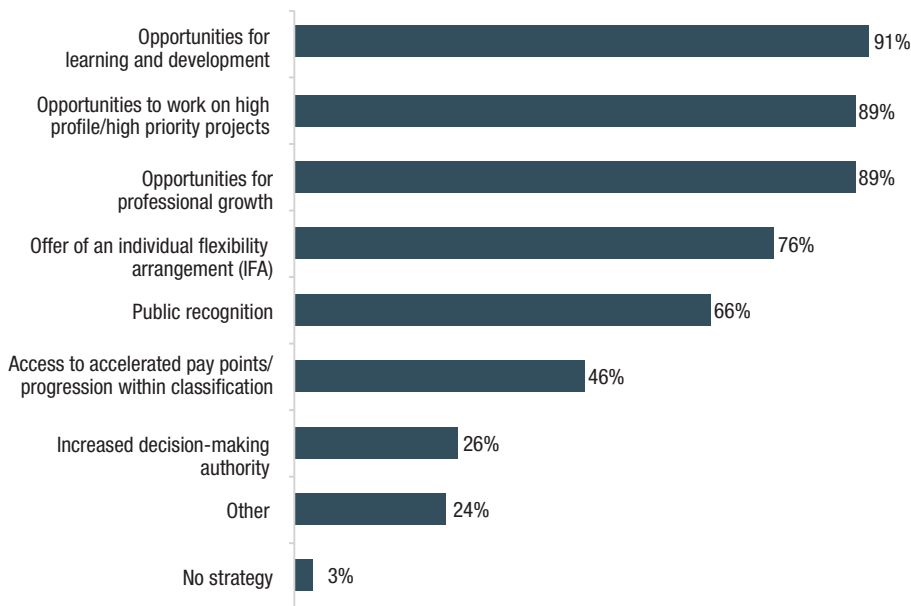


Nick Kirby (left) and Ryan Idder (right) from the Department of Home Affairs view the Driving a High-performing Culture Framework



Under the Commissioner’s Directions, Agency Heads are required to proactively identify, foster and develop APS employees to fulfil their potential for their agency.¹¹² In 2020, almost all agencies had strategies in place to support and extend high performers (Figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Strategies employed by APS agencies to support and extend high performers



Source: 2020 APS Agency Survey¹¹³

Learning anywhere, anytime

While the crises of 2019–2020 have been disruptive and demanding for many agencies, continuous learning in the APS remains a key principle of workforce planning and developing a high-performing workforce.

Activities in learning and development did not pause; rather it meant agencies adopted different approaches, with a focus on 3 priority areas:

- Rapid development of training to support the redeployment of people to areas of critical need.
- Supporting the ongoing capability needs of APS organisations, and partnering with industry and academia to maintain service provision agreements.

¹¹² *Australian Public Service Commissioner’s Amendment (2019 Measures no.1) Direction 2019*

¹¹³ Note: As agencies may have multiple strategies in place, these totals don’t add to 100%.

- Enabling APS employees to remain productive, engaged and connected through meaningful learning and development activities.

APS agencies looked to digital technologies to provide a blended delivery of continuous learning:

- Face-to-face classroom training and other forms of interactive learning such as coaching are being delivered by virtual delivery platforms.
- Agency Learning Management Systems (LMS) have provided their employees with access to a range of eLearning resources.
- Employees have undertaken self-directed learning activities, such as reading and research by accessing relevant online content from a range of sources.

The APSC Centre for Leadership and Learning has partnered with APS agencies and other organisations to provide access to online learning for all APS employees, complementing the learning resources provided by agencies. The APSLEARN Online Learning Catalogue makes available a mix of facilitated and self-directed options, with topics covering core skills, public sector governance, management skills, and leadership.

These experiences also demonstrate an opportunity for further expansion beyond traditional approaches to learning and development in the APS. There is scope for self-directed learning experiences (access anywhere, anytime), common learning and professionalisation resources and platforms that are informed by a comprehensive understanding of workforce skills and needs. Agencies are continuing to collaborate to develop a personalised, social and ‘in-workflow’ learning experience across the APS.

Some elements of learning need social interaction. APSC evaluation data indicates participants value the virtual learning and are demonstrating strong increases in capability development comparable to face-to-face delivered programs. Over time an appropriate balance between online and face-to-face learning will emerge.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, geographic location and time pressures were an obstacle to uptake of some courses. The adoption of digital technologies, including self-guided courses, has increased access to more employees, opening up possibilities for those overseas or outside major cities, or with flexible arrangements, to learn at a time that suits them.



Case study

Jawun secondment going virtual

‘My motivation in becoming a Jawun Secondee, was all about giving back and making a difference to community. Whilst I was able to fulfil my personal goal, it was my host Yerin Aboriginal Health Service, who gave their all to ensure I had a meaningful journey. The generosity of spirit, culture and sharing was an experience I will always remember. Because of my experience, I have not only grown as a leader, more importantly, I have grown as a human.’

Lee Daniels

Lee Daniels from Services Australia in Parramatta was one of the first people to participate in a Jawun virtual secondment, a new mode of delivery for the Jawun Secondment Program. Lee’s placement was at Yerin Aboriginal Health Services in Wyong, NSW.

Lee worked remotely to develop training materials on positive performance management and difficult conversations with staff, designed for Yerin’s current cohort of managers and team leaders.

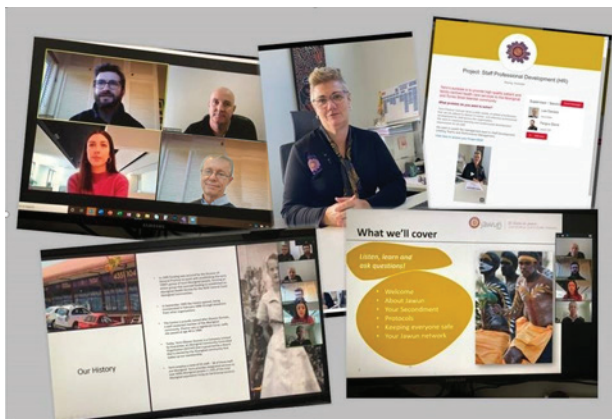
Jawun places high-performing, highly-skilled APS employees into Indigenous organisations, often requiring secondees to live away from home for 6–12 weeks. In light of COVID-19, Jawun developed a virtual delivery model to continue supporting Indigenous partners.

The program is now accessible to more people. While being physically embedded in the organisation has significant benefits to the individual, organisation and community, the travel requirement limits the pool of potential secondees. The virtual secondment can be undertaken by APS employees who might not otherwise be able to participate, for example, those with caring responsibilities.

Jawun has partnered with the APS for 10 years to strengthen Indigenous-led empowerment and leadership across the country. As at 30 July 2020, 580 APS secondees from 64 agencies have been on secondments in 10 regions across Australia.

An evaluation of Jawun's partnership with the APS found that 99% of Indigenous partners who received secondees from the APS felt they had helped improve the organisation's delivery of long-term outcomes. Feedback from Indigenous partners indicates APS secondees bring strategic thinking and a 'policy lens'. One social services provider in the East Kimberley, described how an APRA secondee 'had us thinking outside the box and seeing the bigger picture'.

The partnership is based on a shared-value model, whereby secondees gain new skills, knowledge and understanding. The majority (96%) of APS secondees felt they improved their personal and professional effectiveness. This included broadening cultural perspectives, increasing flexibility, and strengthening emotional intelligence.¹¹⁴



Photos from Lee's secondment (Lee is in the bottom right of the top left image)

114 Jawun. (2020). *Unique and shared value – Jawun's 10-year partnership with the Australian Public Service*

Building expertise

The response to COVID-19 has...highlighted the need for flexibility in the public service and a capacity to quickly deploy staff into areas of high demand. A more formal and focused professionalisation of key roles is seen as a way to respond to these challenges and to enhance the public service's ability to operate in a unified way.¹¹⁵

The APS is recognised as having a strong system to ensure it is appropriately skilled, through competitive, merit-based recruitment, emphasis on professional experience when recruiting, and ongoing skill-based training and development programs.¹¹⁶

COVID-19 has underscored the importance of developing deep expertise in critical areas within the APS to effectively respond to current and emerging challenges and to leverage these capabilities across the service.

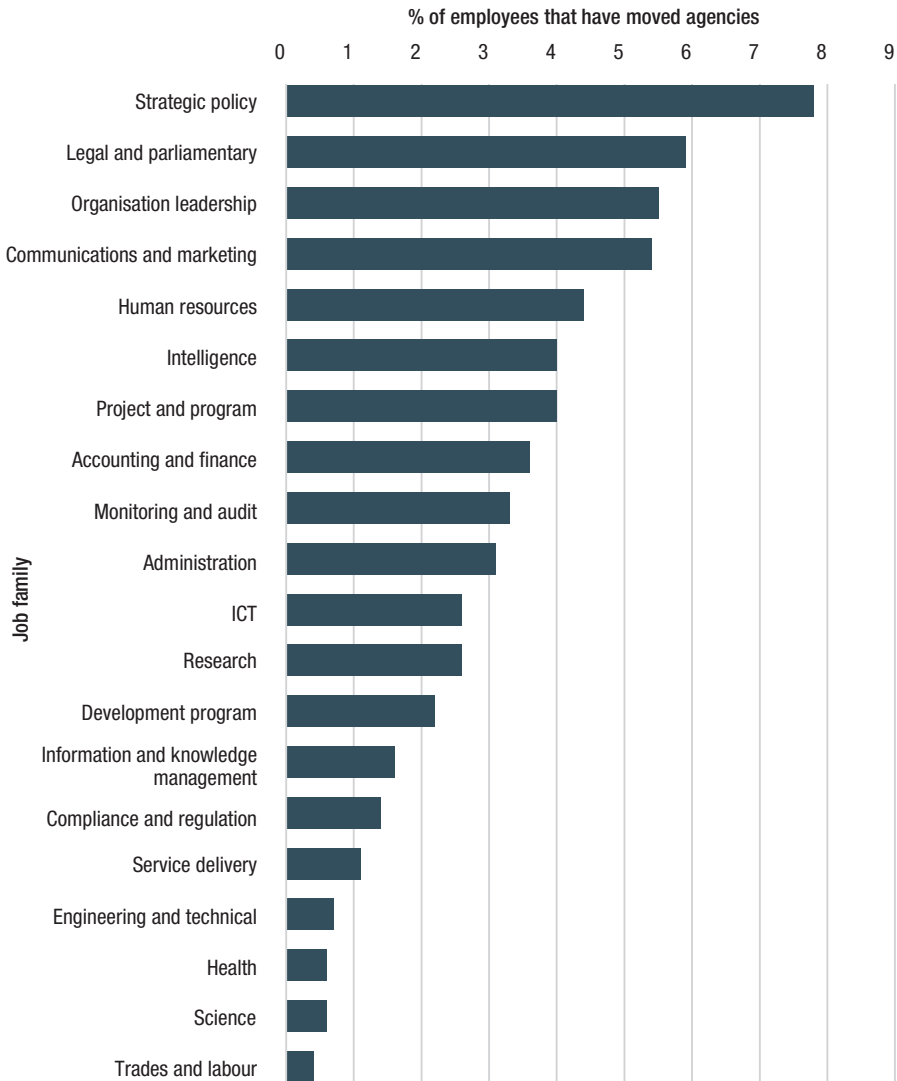
Agencies can benefit from having employees with extensive experience and expertise in a particular role and agency. Most APS employees have only been employed by one agency. However, mobility can play an important role in bringing together diverse skills and experiences to address complex policy challenges and deliver for Australians. Working in multiple agencies is also a good way to build breadth of experience for individuals, and share knowledge and expertise across the APS.

While there is no APS-wide 'right' level of movement between agencies, there are some areas of critical capability that would benefit from greater cross-agency mobility. For example, last year only 2.6% of employees in ICT jobs moved across agencies. This proportion was even less for employees in information and knowledge management jobs, encompassing many data roles, where only 1.6% moved agencies in the last year.¹¹⁷ In addition to the new APS Surge Reserve function, ongoing mobility to build expertise remains important.

115 Richard Bartlett. (2020). Enhancing civil service capability: emergence of the professions model, *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration*

116 Accenture. (2008). *An international Comparison of the United Kingdom's Public Administration*

117 APSED, accounts for permanent and temporary transfers, not secondments.

Figure 2.4: Proportion of employees by job family that have moved agencies (2019–20)

Source: APSED

APS professions were introduced in 2019 to retain and grow deep expertise within the APS and provide rewarding public service careers in critical areas. The APS professional stream approach has been informed by international approaches used in the UK, NZ and Singapore.

Three professional streams were launched in the past year: human resources, digital and data professional streams.

The streams comprise practical initiatives within 3 areas of focus:

- Getting it right from the start: attracting talent to the APS, lifting entry-level skills and creating diversity among the people in these disciplines.
- Developing sophisticated and specialist capabilities: identifying and promoting learning and development opportunities and designing role profiles.
- Embedding a professional workforce: building career pathways, professional communities and professional standards.

The COVID-19 pandemic response in Australia underscores the importance of developing deep expertise across the APS. In addition to the professions, the APS is focusing on improving regulator performance across the service. The APSC is partnering with PM&C and the DAWE to lead a training pilot to lift the performance of agricultural export regulators.¹¹⁸ This will form the foundation for regulator upskilling and training across the Commonwealth.

Strategic human resources

The Australian labour market is changing in response to advancements in technology, evolving work practices and the emergence of new technical skills requirements. The APS is not immune to these changes and must adapt in order to attract, develop, mobilise and retain talented and capable people. Partnerships with the states and territories, the private and community sectors will also be an increasing feature of APS service delivery over the coming years.

The HR function in the APS is critical to ensuring the APS is a high-performing employer of choice and is able to identify, grow and deploy capability to strategic priorities across the APS for the Australian community.

¹¹⁸ The Hon Ben Morton MP. (2020). *The Morrison Government's Deregulation Agenda*

HR profession

‘The HR workforce will become known as a profession that has the ability to develop, win support for and implement people strategies. Strategies that help the APS jump the curve, position us for the future and better serve the Australian people.’

Jacqui Curtis, Head of HR Profession¹¹⁹

In October 2019, the APS established the first APS profession—the HR Professional Stream—to boost the strategic role HR practitioners can play to support agencies and the APS to best deliver their priorities.

Around 2,500 HR practitioners have joined the stream since its inception. It has created a forum to exchange knowledge, promotes the strategic contribution of HR expertise, and supports the pipeline for new HR talent into the APS.

In 2019–20, activities included:

- delivering the first APS-wide HR Graduate Development Program and recruiting for the 2021 intake
- delivering a series of webinars and newsletters on current issues in workforce management, including the response to COVID-19
- implementing a COVID-19 hotline to support and advise HR managers grappling with challenging and sensitive workplace issues
- developing an app to capture the professional profiles, skills and experience of HR leaders to better connect the HR community and facilitate talent management initiatives.

¹¹⁹ APSC. (2019). *APS HR Professional stream*

Case study

ATO helps HR professionals support the mental health of APS employees

During the COVID-19 crisis, Jacqui Curtis, Head of the APS HR Professional Stream, established the APS COVID-19 Hotline. The hotline is a free, confidential short-term mental health advice service for all SES, Statutory Office Holders and HR employees to help guide agencies through the pandemic. The hotline provides fast access to psychologists that can assist employees to support the mental wellbeing of employees and managers during the pandemic.

The hotline was established in recognition of the crucial role SES and HR professionals play in supporting agencies to navigate the pandemic. SES and HR officers have faced increasing pressures in responding to the pandemic, and it has been important these employees receive additional support so that they can support the whole workforce.

Feedback from users of the hotline has been positive:

'I was seeking support for myself and the manager. The manager was distressed and as an HR Advisor I wanted to help them and provide useful information for their staff. The information provided from the hotline was perfect for my situation. I would definitely use the service again if needed. The process was very easy and the staff were friendly and supportive.'



ATO employees in Melbourne (before 2020 social distancing requirements)

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‘I contacted the hotline to seek guidance, and as a sounding board, to assist a manager, with an attendance issue, impacted by COVID-19 anxiety and other mental health issues. The psychologist listened, posed a question I hadn’t considered and gave me talking points for the manager. The process was easy, and fast. I would highly recommend using the hotline if you find yourself questioning the best way forward.’

Fit for the digital age

There are an estimated 10,000 people working in digital and ICT roles across the APS and this is expected to grow as digital technologies continue to impact the way people live, interact and work. To deliver simple, smart, personalised digital services to the community the APS also requires strong service design, user research and agile delivery capabilities.

While Australia is well-regarded for its digital government and has made significant progress in delivering high quality digital services, the APS needs to act quickly and strategically to lift its digital capability.



Digital profession

'It's never been more important to grow our digital expertise. It's no longer enough to have pockets of digital excellence in organisations. We all need to be digitally literate and digitally capable. This is no longer a back-office function. Using digital tools, techniques and methods to transform how we design and deliver government services is a critical priority for the APS.'

Randall Brugeaud, Head of Digital Profession¹²⁰

The Digital Professional Stream was launched in April 2020 to improve the digital expertise of the APS workforce and deliver on the Digital Transformation Strategy's vision of 'a government that's fit for the digital age'.

All digital and ICT professionals across the APS are encouraged to join. As of October 2020, close to 1,000 people have joined as foundation members.

The Digital stream has already delivered a broad range of initiatives to build and mobilise capability, including:

- developing senior executive digital capability through the *Leading in a Digital Age* Program
- supporting women in digital through the Coaching for Women in Digital Program and Women in IT Executive Mentoring Program

¹²⁰ APSC. (2020). [Launch of the Digital Professional Stream](#)

- providing access to a Career Pathfinder tool that helps professionals identify digital career pathways and understand the skills they need to pursue different or more senior roles
- supporting the recruitment of digital graduates, cadets and apprentices
- piloting a Digital Squads service that mobilises small teams to provide direct support to agencies
- preparing for the 2020 Digital Summit held in November 2020.

The professional stream is also collaborating with agencies on whole-of-government capabilities such as learning experience platforms, people platforms and APS workforce planning and development.

The *Leading in a Digital Age* program is an opportunity for APS leaders to come together and develop their capabilities in the context of the digital age. More than 10% of SES employees have already participated in the program.

Virtual delivery technologies employed due to the pandemic restrictions have removed geographic barriers to participation. The involvement of participants across levels of government will enhance the impacts of the program and its citizen-centric focus.

Case study

Digital squads—DAWE Digital Transformation Kickstarter

The Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) provides Digital Squads as a service to agencies with the aim of quickly mobilising multidisciplinary teams of digital specialists. They provide targeted support to help deliver key government priorities, while uplifting the digital capability of individuals, teams and organisations.

One such digital squad has been working closely with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment to develop a shared understanding of digital transformation and building digital capability.

Using the DTA's Service Design and Delivery Process, the team co-designed and delivered a one-day learning workshop, *Digital Transformation Kickstarter*. Material was leveraged from the *Leading in a Digital Age* course, together with other DTA training courses.

The team mobilised groups that needed to build capability to deliver specific transformation projects. The one-day session has been run 3 times and each group has helped iterate the design to cater to user need.

The digital squad will continue to support the department on their transformation journey through drop-in clinics, tailored capability uplift programs, and support for learning on-the-job.





Kickstarting Digital Transformation with DAWE and DTA

Participants said the key takeaways were:

- emphasising the importance of leadership ‘walking the talk’ in relation to digital transformation
- transforming services by engaging directly with users to really understand their needs
- demonstrating the difference a human-centred design and agile approach can make
- showing delivery outcomes early and often, and iterating regularly
- accepting that failure is often part of the transformation process.

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Case study

Trans-Tasman partnership introduces a new era of invoicing

Over 1.2 billion invoices are exchanged each year in Australia, and most businesses still rely on manual invoicing processes. Deloitte Access Economics estimates e-invoices can reduce the average cost of processing paper invoices by 70%.

E-invoicing is an opportunity for Australian businesses and the economy.

COVID-19 has highlighted how digitisation increases the resilience of businesses and creates new opportunities. As invoices are central to business transactions, digitising this element acts as a catalyst to broader digitisation.

E-invoicing is the electronic exchange of invoices between suppliers' and buyers' software and systems without manual intervention. Using common standards allows systems to 'speak' with each other, much like being able to make a mobile phone call to anyone, regardless of the phone brand or telecommunications provider.

In May 2018, Australia and New Zealand agreed to a common approach to e-invoicing as part of the Single Economic Market agenda, to allow businesses to send invoices across the Tasman.

In February 2019, both countries' Prime Ministers adopted Peppol for e-invoicing, an international framework used by over 34 countries to facilitate international trade. In October 2019, the ATO was established as the Australian Peppol Authority and by November e-invoicing commenced.

The efficiency benefits are being leveraged by the Commonwealth Government to pay e-invoices for contracts up to \$1 million within 5 days, helping the cashflow of small businesses. The NSW government has also implemented a 5-day payment policy.

In late 2019, Treasury and the ATO were joint winners of the award for excellence in multi-agency partnership at the 2019 Australian Government Digital Awards, for the close collaboration and co-operation amongst agencies, and with the NZ Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

Further information on e-invoicing is available from the ATO website.



Larissa Walker from ATO and Alyse Thompson from Treasury, with Australian Information Industry Association CEO Ron Gauci





Case study

Electronic prescribing helping to keep Australians safe during COVID-19

Electronic prescribing provides an option for medical professionals to give their patients an electronic prescription rather than a paper-based prescription.

The Department of Health and the Australian Digital Health Agency are working with clinical peak bodies and the medical software industry to make electronic prescriptions available to all Australians by the end of 2020. Already, residents in almost all parts of Victoria and the ACT are able to receive an electronic prescription from their GP if they choose to. Community pharmacies and GP practices across the country are now upgrading their systems and services to provide consumers the choice and convenience of having their medicines supplied from an electronic prescription.

Fast-tracked through the COVID-19 pandemic, by 12 October 2020, over 340,000 electronic prescriptions have been generated by GPs across all states and territories. More than 4,400 doctors have issued electronic prescriptions to patients, and these patients have been supported by over 2,800 community pharmacies that have dispensed from these prescriptions.

This decision is protecting people most at-risk from COVID-19 with multiple benefits to the Australian community. Electronic prescribing will remove the need for handling a physical paper prescription, support digital health services such as telehealth services to ensure continuity of patient care, and protect community members and health care providers from exposure to infectious disease.

The changes provide people in isolation convenient access to their medicines and reduce the risk of disease transmission in waiting rooms and pharmacies.

This initiative provides greater choice of how patients receive their prescriptions and medicines (with paper prescriptions still available), makes prescribing and dispensing medicines more efficient, and has the potential to reduce prescribing and dispensing errors.



Dr Andrew Rochford features in the Digital Health Agency's campaign to inform Australians of the benefits of digitally connected healthcare



Data-driven APS

Facts reduce uncertainty, support decision-making and assist in planning for the future.

The responsible collection, sharing and use of data assists better understanding of and response to community need, especially during crisis. In the past year, the APS has progressed legislative changes to improve data use and sharing across the APS, and established a new data profession to build capability within the APS.

The ability to gather accurate information and share and use to-the-minute data has been central to Australia's response to bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

'...reliance on data, good data—information leading to rapid decision-making that makes a difference—is certainly the key component of how we've approached the crisis up to now.'

Professor Paul Kelly, Deputy Chief Medical Officer¹²¹

During the early months of the pandemic in Australia, events were unfolding rapidly and required timely, accurate information for the Government to respond effectively.

- The Department of Health drew on data flows from multiple sources to deliver a common model for key COVID-19 metrics on cases, testing, hospitalisation, and the number of deaths. For the first time, Australia has a real-time picture of critical hospital capacity and this data now informs the Prime Minister, Ministers and National Cabinet.¹²²
- PM&C's data analytics team pivoted to produce up-to-the-minute information for the Prime Minister on the health and economic impacts of COVID-19.
- A new data sharing partnership between the ABS and ATO provided the ability for detailed insights into how COVID-19 affected jobs and wages in Australia.¹²³

To maintain public trust is essential. As custodians, stewards and users of public data, the APS has a responsibility to govern its use effectively and ethically.

This year, Australia's Office of the National Data Commissioner released the Foundational Four: simple, useful steps APS agencies can take towards improving their data practices and addressing the technical and cultural challenges limiting best use of the data they hold. The Office of the National Data Commissioner is also progressing

¹²¹ Speech at a 2020 APS 200 event

¹²² APSC. (2020). *APS Data Professional Stream*

¹²³ ABS. (2020). *ATO-ABS partnership delivers COVID-19 jobs statistics*. 20 April.

legislative reforms to make sharing of government data easier and safer, including providing practical advice on improving data management in the APS.

In April 2020, to support tracking and tracing of community transmissions of COVID-19, the COVIDSafe app was released to Australians.¹²⁴ By June over 6.1 million people had installed the app¹²⁵—almost one-third of Australian smartphone owners¹²⁶—a signal of growing trust in the responsible use of citizen data for public health outcomes.

Data profession

‘People don’t necessarily put it on their business card, but there is actually more data literacy in the public service than you might think.’

Dr David Gruen, Australian Statistician¹²⁷

Launched in September 2020, the Data Professional Stream will enable the APS to generate deeper insights to inform evidence-based decisions, whether in policy development, program management or service delivery, and deliver better outcomes for the Government and the people of Australia.

The data workforce encompasses a variety of people in a range of data-related roles, including both producers and users of data. The Data Professional Stream will guide responsible, informed, safe and ethical treatment of data across the data use value chain; from collection, generation and management of data, through to its analysis, interpretation and use.¹²⁸

As at 6 October 2020, 859 people have joined the profession, and initiatives are underway, including establishing a network and progressing streamlined recruitment for data graduates.

124 The Hon Greg Hunt MP. (2020). COVIDSafe: *New app to slow the spread of the coronavirus*. Joint media release with the Hon Scott Morrison MP, the Hon Stuart Robert MP, and Professor Brendan Murphy. 26 April.

125 Sophie Meixner. (2020). *How many people have downloaded the COVIDSafe app and how central has it been to Australia’s coronavirus response?* 2 June.

126 Deloitte. (2019). *Mobile Consumer Survey 2019*

127 Australian Financial Review. (2020). *How private sector data is ‘revolutionising’ government*. 17 September.

128 APSC. (2020). *APS Data Professional Stream Strategy*. 21 September.

Case study

Critical role of data in a crisis

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic response, PM&C established a dedicated data analytics team (including experts seconded from across the APS) who compiled and analysed COVID-19 data from Commonwealth, state and territory sources, as well as from the private sector and overseas.

The data team's up-to-date information, statistics, trend analysis and modelling of behaviours and impacts during COVID-19 have been essential in guiding government decision-making and tracking of the effects of measures taken.

The team brought together collective APS information, advice and skills to provide a consolidated product to the Prime Minister and the National Cabinet, rather than a series of separate reports from different pockets of expertise across government. They worked with an initial product and constantly iterated as the crisis evolved. They experimented with new approaches to provide a 'real-time' picture.

This dynamic use of data to measure success and track progress will continue to be critical as the COVID-19 response continues. It will help to ensure implementation of the Government's agenda is on track, and support timely adjustments to programs as the crisis evolves.



PM&C employees in the office (before 2020 social distancing requirements)



Innovation in times of crisis: the ABS' response to COVID-19

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'We were in a unique position to provide enormous value by collecting and publishing near real-time information about how individuals and businesses were responding to the rapidly changing circumstances. So, planning for new, rapid-turnaround outputs was one of the first parts of the ABS response.'

Dr David Gruen, Australian Statistician.

The ABS transformed the way it operates to support Australia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It quickly established taskforces to coordinate business operations and produce new and timely statistical insights, reprioritised work and redeployed 127 staff internally.

The ABS has published interactive maps on its website to help inform government, business and community responses to the pandemic across a range of variables including at-risk populations and housing. The ABS has also collected a range of new statistics and analysis covering COVID-19 impacts on health, labour and the economy. COVID-19 survey insights have been drawn from an additional 5,000 household and 5,000 business interviews.

With face-to-face household interviewing suspended and increased difficulties with business survey response rates, the ABS quickly adapted to focus on telephone and web data collection. Like most APS agencies the ABS workforce transitioned to work from home with 93% of ABS staff working at home at least some of the time, and 73% of staff working from home all of the time. Despite the changed working environment, ABS employees delivered valuable insights to ensure the Government remained informed and able to respond and plan for community need.



Case study



Case study

Single Touch Payroll provides critical data for COVID-19 response

The ATO's commitment to innovation, adaptability and data sharing helped them to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and deliver crucial support measures to the Australian public.

The ATO commenced the introduction of Single Touch Payroll (STP) in 2017 to digitise and streamline tax and super reporting by making it a natural part of running payroll.

As a business runs its payroll, their STP-enabled software sends taxation and superannuation information to the ATO at the same time. This innovation has increased transparency for employees about their tax and super status, as well as employer compliance through ensuring super contributions are made and tax is collected.

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Australia, this innovation was an important enabler; data available through STP was crucial to the integrity and administration of the JobKeeper Program. STP data was also provided to the ABS, which assisted to assess the impact of pandemic restrictions on jobs and wages, in turn allowing government to evaluate Australia's economic status.



Recruiting graduates

Competition for talent is fierce. Graduate programs are a critical source of new employees who bring fresh skillsets, experiences and diversity. The APS' current approach to recruiting graduates can work well, however it is often duplicative and difficult to navigate for graduates.

On average more than 35 individual APS agencies recruiting graduates each year, all using their own processes and assessment criteria. This means a graduate may spend many hours applying for graduate programs, interviewing and completing assessments for multiple agencies. This time-consuming process can be a deterrent for applicants. Further, while some individual agencies are good at marketing their own programs, there isn't a single whole-of-APS employee value proposition that clearly outlines what an APS career can offer to graduates.

Generally speaking, larger APS agencies recruit the largest number of graduates and the costs of graduate recruitment campaigns can be prohibitive for smaller agencies. Of the 53 agencies with fewer than 250 employees, only 6 recruited graduates in 2019–20. This is a loss for not only those agencies, but for the cross-skilling and mobility of the APS workforce.

In 2019–20, the APSC partnered with other agencies to provide a more streamlined process as a step toward more centralised APS graduate recruitment. The project used user-centred service design methodology to identify pain points and opportunities to improve the service for both prospective APS graduates and recruiting agencies.

Augmenting the professions model, the result was a streamlined process allowing graduates to apply just once to be considered for a range of HR, economics, data, STEM and digital streams, as well as a generalist stream. A new graduate recruitment portal on the APS Jobs website was visited over 10,000 times between 30 March and 30 July 2020.

More consolidated marketing and new apply-once opportunities has resulted in approximately 6,000 applications received for the 2021 graduate intake, exceeding expectations. Smaller agencies now have better access to resources to meet their skills and capability gaps. Potential graduates can more effectively see and apply for the diverse opportunities the APS provides, and the APS has removed a barrier to competing for in-demand skills in an increasingly competitive labour market.

The APSC will continue to work with agencies across the APS to improve graduate recruitment over the coming years, including options to scale the streams and work on One APS recruitment initiatives. Continued cooperation across the service will ensure the APS can attract the best and brightest graduates with a diverse mix of skills and experiences.

Case study



2020: A graduate's experience

'We place an incredible amount of importance on the graduate intake every year. That is the future of the public service. So I think in no matter what budget situation, I think all of my colleagues would actually seek to maintain the input of graduates every year so that we can keep the system running and bring in new blood, new ideas.'

Philip Gaetjens, Secretary of Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet¹²⁹

In 2019–20, 1,407 graduates joined the APS across 35 agencies. While the label 'graduate' evokes the image of a fresh-out-of-university 20-something, the 2020 intake includes graduates of all ages, up to people in their early 60s. Of the graduate cohort, 50.5% are women, 3.8% have a disability, and 3.1% are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.¹³⁰

None would have anticipated this beginning to their APS careers. In February 2020 many graduate employees had just moved interstate to join their new agencies, but only a month later faced drastic changes due the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yan Kok joined DFAT in 2020 as a career change. Previously working as a solicitor in Melbourne, Yan had always wanted to work in a policy role.

In April 2020, Yan was one of more than 100 graduates deployed to Services Australia as part of the surge response. The experience opened her eyes to the diversity of work and opportunities across the APS.

'When I went to Services Australia, I was surprised at how many different agencies there were. We all went in wide-eyed and then when we got there and started talking to people around us, there were people from all sorts of weird and wonderful places across the APS. Listening to people's experiences was really interesting and they were all in this one place!'

¹²⁹ Philip Gaetjens, Secretary, PM&C. (2020). *IPAA Work with Purpose Podcast Episode #22*. 14 September.

¹³⁰ APSED

Prior to the secondment, Yan hadn't realised the breadth of opportunities available in the APS.

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'Coming from the private sector, you hear so much about people being in the public service for like 30 years, but you don't actually realise how diverse their career has been. . . Now I know that I could go somewhere else and learn something else. And that was surprising to me.'

Despite the benefits of mobility, Yan acknowledges the year has also been difficult. Graduate program training has been disrupted due to physical distancing requirements and it's been harder to make new friends without activities like social sport. Yan also misses her family in Melbourne but says everyone she has worked with has been very accommodating and friendly.

'This year has been hard, but the graduate program has been a really good entry pathway. . . I can get a good taste of "maybe this was something I didn't think I would like but now I really love it", or "I didn't even know that I was good at this."

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Yan Kok outside Parliament House, Canberra





Chapter three

Your APS

‘...diversity in the public service may also contribute to national cohesiveness. When all groups of society see themselves represented in government and that the reform policies and programmes are close to their needs and cultural identity, their commitment to the national project may be enhanced.’

OECD. (2009) *Fostering Diversity in the Public Service*.

Who we are

As at 30 June 2020, 150,474 people were employed in the APS across 98 agencies in 14 portfolios, an increase of 3,692 (2.5%) APS employees since 30 June 2019.¹³¹

The APS operates in more than 567 locations across Australia and the globe. Women make up 60% of the APS, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3.5% of the workforce. Employees who identify as living with disability make up 4.0% of the APS, 17% of employees speak a language other than English and 22% were born overseas.

Ongoing and non-ongoing employees

At 30 June 2020 there were 132,101 ongoing employees making up 87.8% of the APS workforce, a decrease of 117 from 30 June 2019. The proportion of ongoing employees in mid-2020 was the lowest it has been in the last 20 years.

There were 18,373 non-ongoing employees¹³² in the APS, an increase of 3,809 over the 2019–20 financial year, representing 12.2% of the APS.

Most of this increase occurred between 1 January and 30 June 2020 during the bushfire emergency and the COVID-19 outbreak. The number of non-ongoing employees in the APS is the highest it has been in the last 20 years.

Of the non-ongoing employees, 7,755 (42.2%) were employed for a specified term or task and 10,618 (57.8%) were employed casually. The casual workforce currently accounts for 7.1% of the APS workforce, an increase of 6.3 percentage points since 2001.

The largest net additions of employees over the 2019–20 financial year¹³³ were in the following agencies:

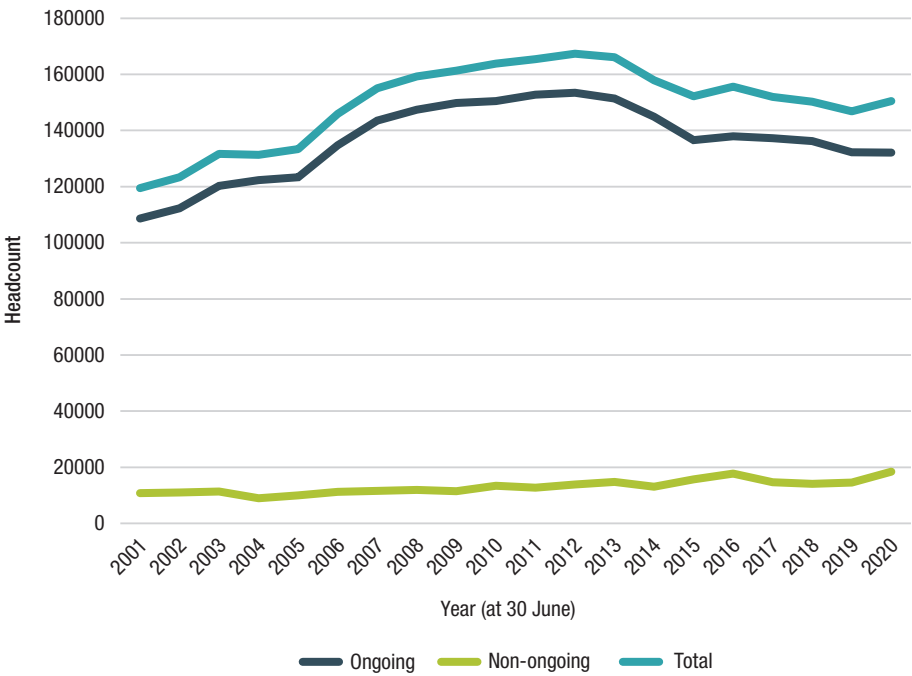
- The ATO increased its workforce by 2,084 employees. This figure includes an increase of 141 ongoing and 1,943 non-ongoing employees
- Services Australia increased by 1,242 employees, driven by an increase of 1,776 non ongoing employees
- The National Disability Insurance Agency which increased its headcount by 906, of which 576 were ongoing employees.

¹³¹ See Appendix 2 for a full list as at 30 June 2020

¹³² Non-ongoing employees consist of 3 sub-groups: specific term, specific task, and irregular or intermittent (casuals).

¹³³ Excluding MoG changes

Figure 3.1: APS employee headcount over time, ongoing/non-ongoing/total (2001 to 2020)

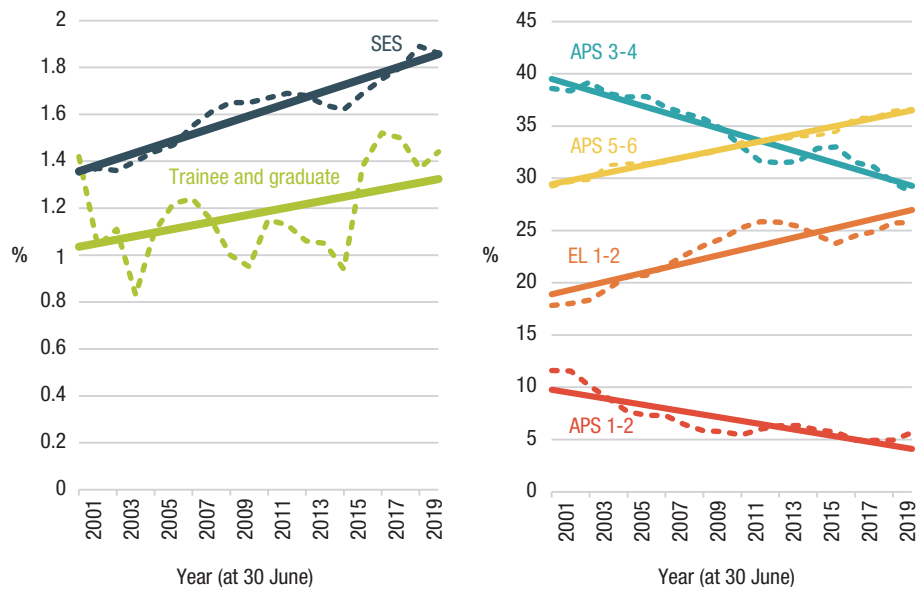


Source: APSED

Classification profile

At 30 June 2020, the most common classification was APS 6. Since 2001, the proportion of APS 6 employees has increased from 17.8% to 22.6% in 2020. In 2001, the most common classification was APS 4 (24.7%). In 2020, this classification represented 18.1% of employees.

Figure 3.2: Changing proportion of employees by classification (2001 to 2020)



Source: APSED

What we do and where we work

The APS is diverse, with wide-ranging functions and responsibilities including policy, program and service delivery and regulatory functions.

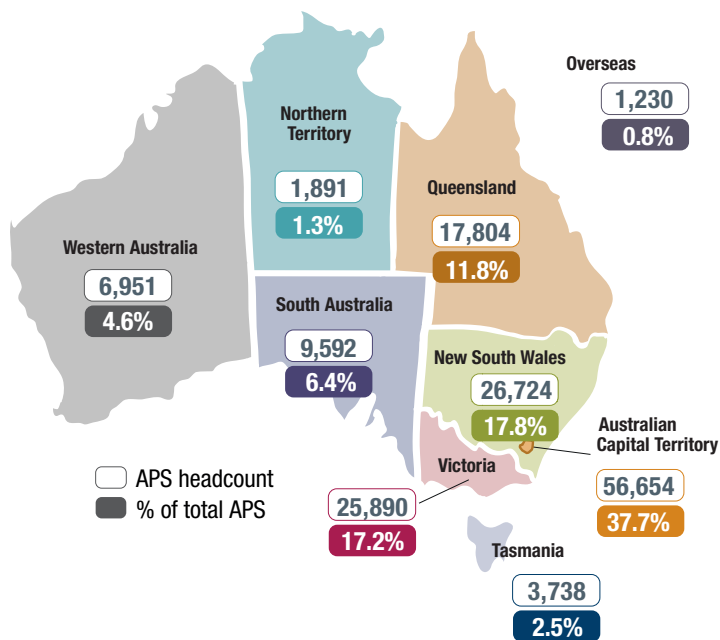
On 1 February 2020, the Government reduced the number of departments from 18 to 14, with the aim of streamlining delivery and fostering greater collaboration on complex policy challenges.¹³⁴ Other major structural changes over 2019–20 included the establishment of the National Indigenous Australians Agency, and the transition of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission to a non-APS agency no longer covered by the *Public Service Act 1999*. In total, over 8,000 employees followed the movement of functions through these changes.

At 30 June 2020, the 4 largest agencies in the APS accounted for 56% (84,217 employees) of the total APS workforce: Services Australia (21.1%), the Australian Taxation Office (13.9%), the Department of Defence (11.6%) and the Department of Home Affairs (9.3%).

¹³⁴ The Hon Scott Morrison MP. (2019). *Media Release: New structure of Government Departments*

More than a quarter of the APS work in service delivery (28.9%). The most common type of work in the APS is in the call or contact centre job role (14.6%). The majority of employees working in service delivery (92.6%) and health (90.3%) job families are located outside of the ACT, reflecting their citizen-facing nature.¹³⁵

Figure 3.3: APS employee numbers by location (30 June 2020)



Source: APSED

At 30 June 2020, 14.0% of APS employees were located in regional areas outside capital cities. While this figure has increased since June 2012 from 12.2%, the proportion has remained constant since 2016. The growth in employee numbers outside of capital cities has predominantly occurred in New South Wales.

The proportion of the APS working in capital cities (apart from Canberra) has declined from 55.0% in 2003 to 47.5% in 2020.

135 Appendix 4 provides more information on the Job Family Model including job roles by location.

Diversity and inclusion

For the APS, a diverse workforce is one way to remain strongly connected to the people of Australia.

A commitment under the APS reform agenda, the APS aims to increase diversity ‘so the APS itself reflects and understands the people and communities it serves, recruiting more people from outside the APS and welcoming different views and perspectives’.¹³⁶

Supporting Australia’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will require policies, services and programs that meet the needs of a diverse community. An APS workforce that incorporates broad perspectives and experiences can facilitate better service design and delivery.

Evidence from the private sector has shown that diverse and inclusive workplaces can improve organisational performance through better decisions and higher levels of innovation.¹³⁷ Demonstrating diversity is also one way of earning a social license to operate, and building public trust in the APS.¹³⁸

Long-term trends show increasing diversity in the APS, with greater proportions of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and those from a non-English speaking background. However, between 2001 and 2020, despite increasing numbers of employees with disability, there has been little change in the proportional representation within the workforce as whole.¹³⁹

APSED data for the 12 months to 30 June 2020¹⁴⁰ shows:

- **women occupy 60% of roles in the APS**, following a long-term trend unfolding over the last 50 years
- **a small drop in the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to 3.5%**, despite long-term growth from 2.9% in 2001 to 3.6% in 2019
- **a small increase in the representation of employees with disability to 4.0%** (up from 3.9%), but stagnant over the long-term
- **the number of employees from a non-English speaking background remained relatively stable.**

136 Commonwealth of Australia. (2019). *Delivering for Australians: A world-class Australian Public Service. The Government’s APS reform agenda*

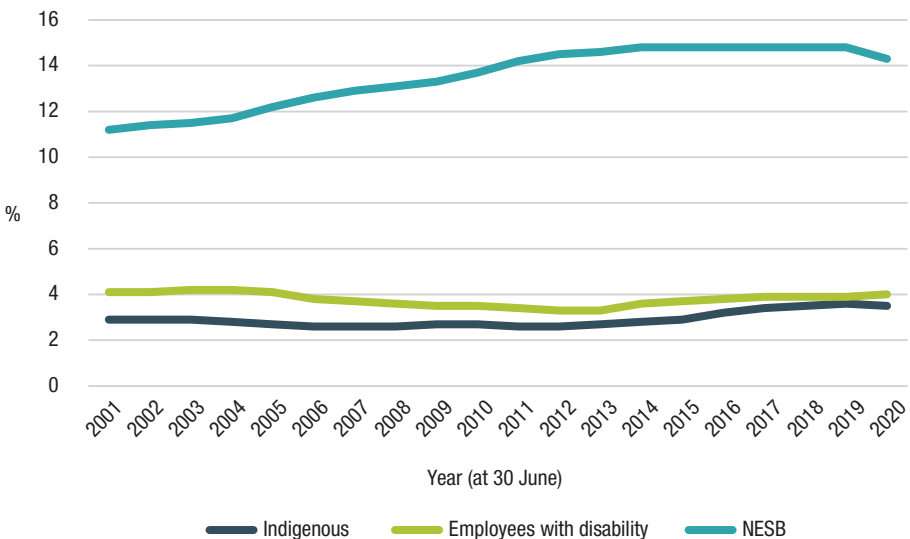
137 McKinsey & Company. (2020). *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*

138 OECD. (2019). *Next generation diversity and inclusion policies in the public service*

139 As reported in agency HR systems. There is suspected under-reporting as 8.4% of employees report living with disability in the 2019 APS employee census

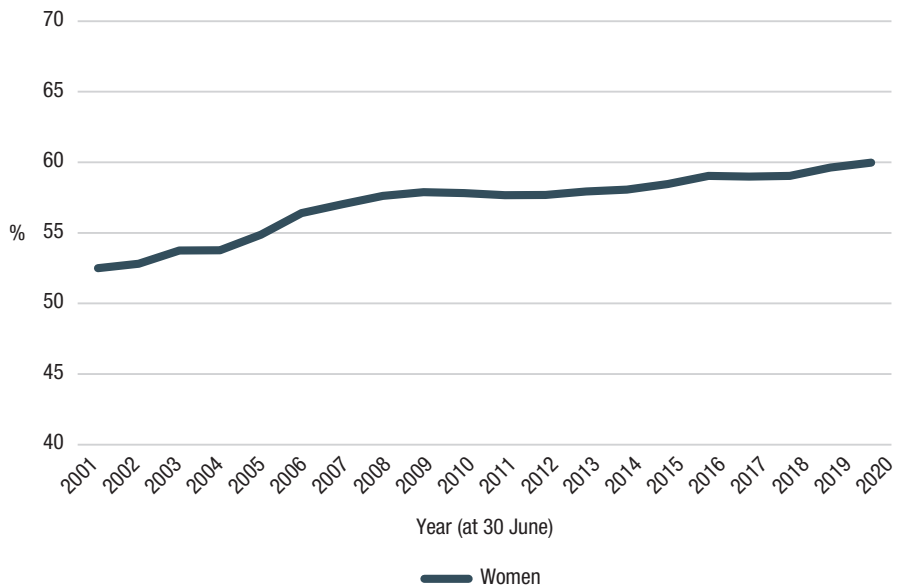
140 Through APSED, the APS collects self-reported data on gender diversity and the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, employees with disability, and those from non-English speaking backgrounds (Appendix 1). Some APS employees choose not to provide this information so the diversity data in this chapter is indicative only. Diversity is also broader than the APS centrally collects and may, for example, relate to educational background and experience in non-APS sectors.

Figure 3.4: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, employees with disability, and employees from a Non-English Speaking Background in the APS (2001 to 2020)



Source: APSED

Figure 3.5: Proportion of women in the APS (2001 to 2020)



Source: APSED

Fostering inclusion

'Inclusion is much more than a 'feel good' exercise—it creates a better work environment which fuels performance.'

Diversity Council of Australia ¹⁴¹

A culture of inclusion is critical for the APS to achieve the benefits a diverse workforce can offer. It ensures APS work benefits from the perspectives and experiences that diversity brings. Inclusion also helps individuals feel valued, supported and respected. It allows their full potential to be realised at work as it minimises any sense they might need to hide or downplay aspects of their identity.¹⁴²

Like its international counterparts, there is room for the APS to foster greater inclusion. A study of public sectors in OECD member countries shows that improvements are typically slow, pay gaps persist, representation at senior levels is lower for diverse cohorts, and employees report unacceptable levels of harassment and bullying.¹⁴³

Representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and employees with disability remain disproportionately low at senior levels, and data also shows low retention rates for these employees.

Increasing diversity and inclusion

Led by the Secretaries Board, the APS is addressing diversity and inclusion at a whole-of-service level through 4 action areas:

- Improving the employee experience for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees across the Commonwealth and enhancing the capabilities of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. The *Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020–24* was launched in July 2020.
- Progressing gender equality across the APS through the APS Gender Equality Strategy refresh (underway).
- Recruiting and retaining more people with disability, and creating accessible and inclusive workplace cultures and environments for employees with disability, through the *APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020–2025*.
- Supporting mature aged workers who want to join and stay in the public service.

¹⁴¹ Diversity Council of Australia. (2020). *Business Case for Inclusion*

¹⁴² Deloitte. (2013). *Uncovering talent: A new model of inclusion*

¹⁴³ OECD. (2019). *Next generation diversity and inclusion policies in the public service*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees

'People can't be what they can't see...the vast amount of lived experience of Indigenous Australians would be such a value asset to the public sector.'

Letitia Hope, Deputy CEO, National Indigenous Australians Agency¹⁴⁴

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures make a unique contribution to Australia, and the APS. This is acknowledged in cultural awareness training and activities, language training, reconciliation action plans, and Indigenous champions embedded in many APS agencies.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders bring unique perspectives and new ways of working, with leadership styles characterised as team-based, consultative, drawing on emotional intelligence and uplifting others.¹⁴⁵

The APS is focused on ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees play a greater role in the work of the APS, through a renewed focus on cultural integrity and career development detailed in the *Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020–24*.

Indigenous Australians make up approximately 3.1% of the Australian working age population¹⁴⁶ and 3.5% of the APS.¹⁴⁷

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the APS has steadily increased over the past 20 years, from 2.9% to 3.5%—an increase of 21% since 2001 (Figure 3.6).

This is good progress, however overall representation dropped in the past 12 months (from 3.6% to 3.5%). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees remain employed in higher proportions at lower classifications and have comparatively high attrition rates.

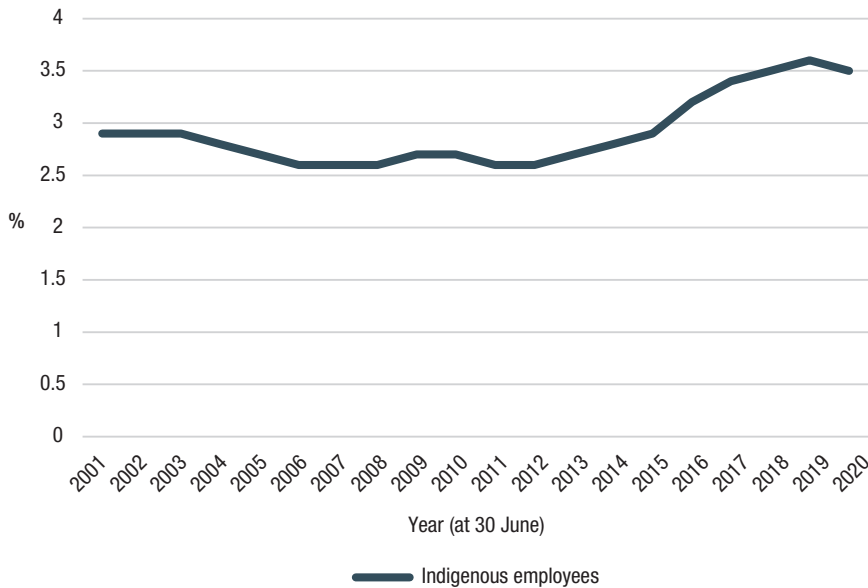
¹⁴⁴ The Sydney Morning Herald. (2020). *New plan boosts Indigenous Australians in senior public sector roles*. 2 July.

¹⁴⁵ Savage. (2017). Indigenous Affairs: finding a way forward for community and public servants. Address to 'Indigenous Affairs and Public Administration: Can't we do better?' conference, 9–10 October 2017, Sydney.

¹⁴⁶ ABS. (2020). *National, state and territory population, March 2020*; ABS. (2020). *Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006 to 2031*

¹⁴⁷ APSED

Figure 3.6: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees (2001 to 2020)



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees—at a glance



67.4%
women



30.0%
are aged between
25-34 years



36.0%
work in regional areas
(non-Indigenous 13.6%)

| Roles | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| | | |
| 43.6% 1,796 work in service delivery (1,234 in call centre roles) | 9.9% Compliance and regulation | 9.3% Administrative roles |

Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020–24

The *Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020–24* was launched on 1 July 2020 by the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP.

The Strategy applies across the Commonwealth public sector, including the Australian Defence Force, the Australian Federal Police and Australia Post.

The Strategy's focus areas are:

- **Cultural integrity:** improving and embedding the understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the workplace to enable culturally-safe workplaces and services, and creating a more inclusive Commonwealth public sector.
- **Career pathways:** diversifying and strengthening the pathways into and across the Commonwealth public sector.
- **Career development and advancement:** individual career development and advancement plans supported by targeted development initiatives and advancement opportunities.

Through the Strategy, all Commonwealth agencies have committed to build a talent pipeline through direct recruitment, professional development and decreasing the relative separation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

All Commonwealth agencies will be collectively accountable, with some taking the lead on solutions and sharing successes more broadly. The success of the strategy will rely on accountability and collaboration achieved through ongoing measurement and monitoring.

The Strategy will continue to be administered by the APSC and implemented in partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency and portfolio Commonwealth agencies.

Read more about the *Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020–24* on the APSC website.

Recruitment and retention

APSED data shows that the APS struggles to retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Annual engagement rates (as a proportion of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees) are high, at around 13% on average over the past 2 decades (compared to 8% for non-Indigenous employees). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees stay in the service for a median 3.9 years as compared to 12.0 years for non-Indigenous employees. This is the largest difference in this metric over the last 20 years (Figure 3.10).

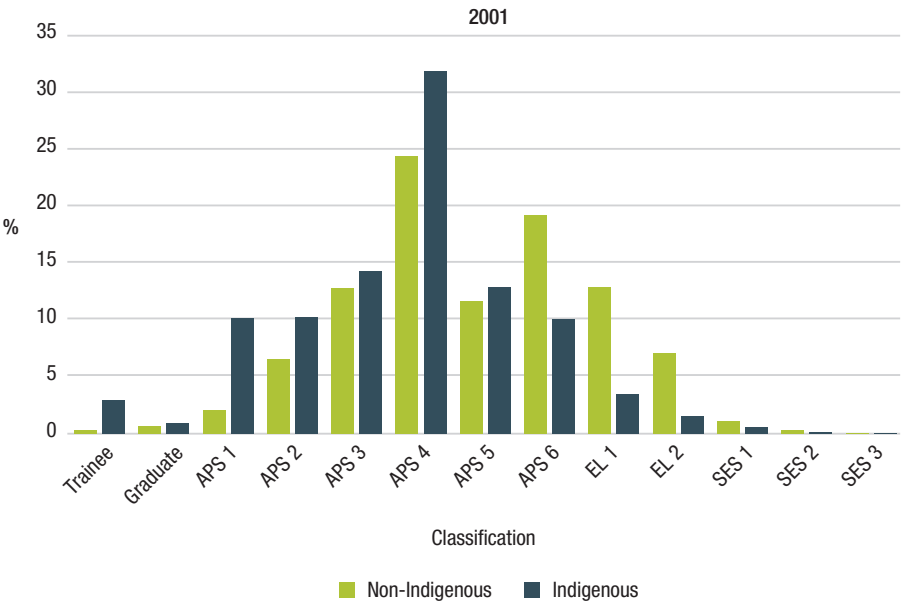
Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are recruited into lower classifications: trainee to APS 4 levels account for 79.4% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee engagements, compared to 50.7% of non-Indigenous employees.

The highest proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are employed at APS 4 (30.4%) and APS 3 (18.1%) levels (Figure 3.8). On 30 June 2020, just 39 members of the 2,805 SES identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (1.4%).

There have been some shifts in the classifications of Indigenous employees over the past 20 years toward higher levels. There are now proportionally fewer Indigenous employees at the APS 1–2 classifications and more at the APS 5–6 and EL classifications. However, as was the case in 2001, almost half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in 2020 worked at the APS 3–4 classifications.

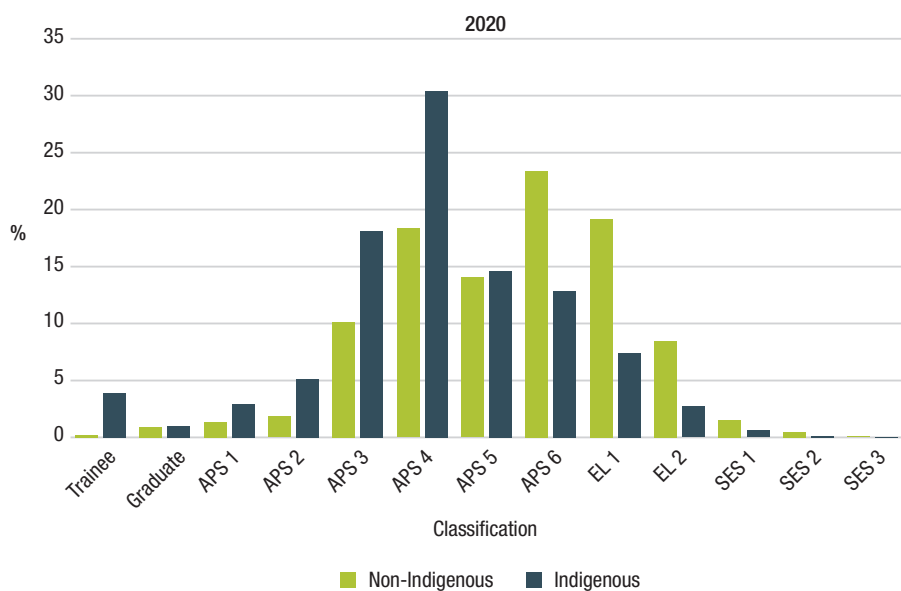
By comparison, the proportion of non-Indigenous employees in lower classifications has dropped across every level from APS 1 to APS 5. This is most marked at the APS 4 level where the proportion for non-Indigenous employees has dropped from 24.5% to 18.3% (Figures 3.7 and 3.8).

Figure 3.7: Proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment by APS classification (30 June 2001)



Source: APSED

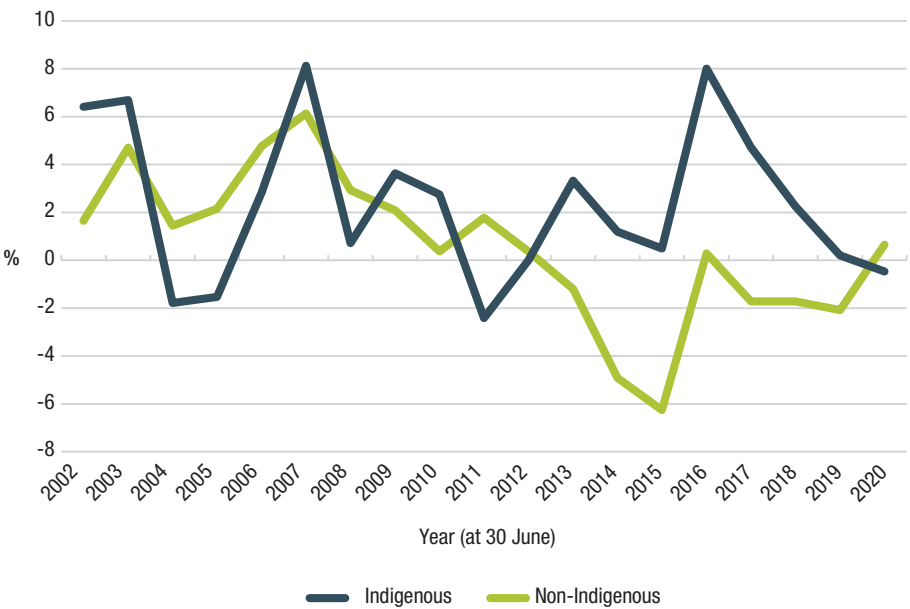
Figure 3.8: Proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment by APS classification (30 June 2020)



Source: APSED

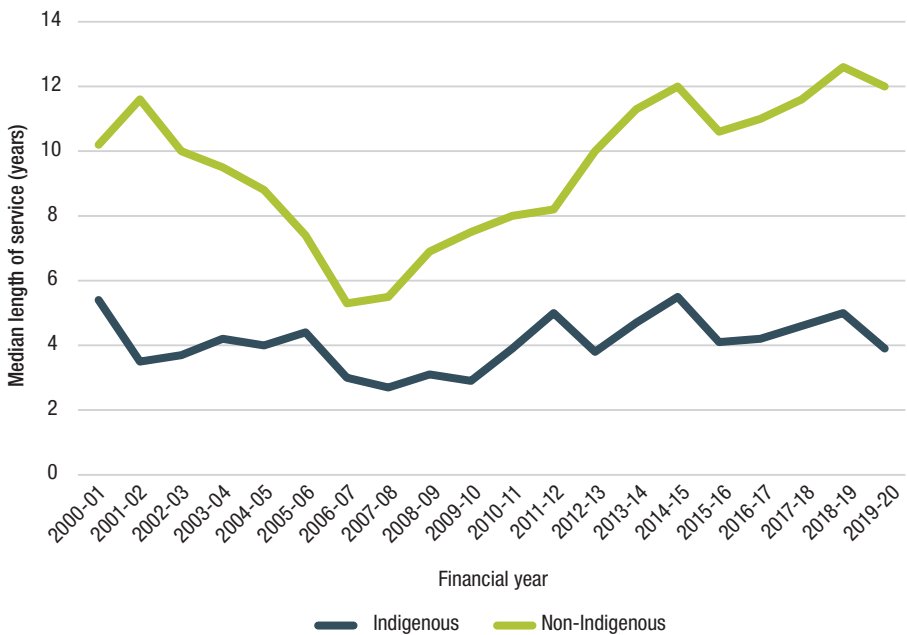
APSED data shows low retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Of current ongoing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees 8.6% were recruited during 2019–20, compared with 6.6% of all non-Indigenous employees. Similarly, the separation rate is also higher for Indigenous employees: 9.1% left the APS within the past year compared to 5.9% of non-Indigenous employees.

Figure 3.9: Net engagement, Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees (2001 to 2020)



Source: APSED

Figure 3.10: Median length of service at separation, Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees (2000–01 to 2019–20)



Source: APSED

Case study

Scholarship success

‘I want to be a senior leader in the APS. The Pat Turner scholarship is a great opportunity to develop Indigenous leaders and bring more knowledge to the APS.’

PJ Bligh was an inaugural Sir Roland Wilson Foundation Pat Turner scholar, and is the first to graduate from the program, completing a Graduate Diploma of Economics from the Australian National University.

PJ had previously studied marine science, but shifted his focus to economics due to its importance for the future of the APS. Returning to study was at times challenging, but PJ was excited to be able to take everything he learned through his studies to apply it in the workplace.

Following completion of his degree, PJ accepted a promotion at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

PJ is also excited to give back as a scholarship alumni and hopes to use his study to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Sir Roland Wilson Foundation Pat Turner scholarship provides high performing Indigenous APS employees a full pay scholarship at either ANU or Charles Darwin University to undertake a postgraduate program.



“

'I'm looking forward to going back into work and applying the lessons I have learned with new people and new challenges.'

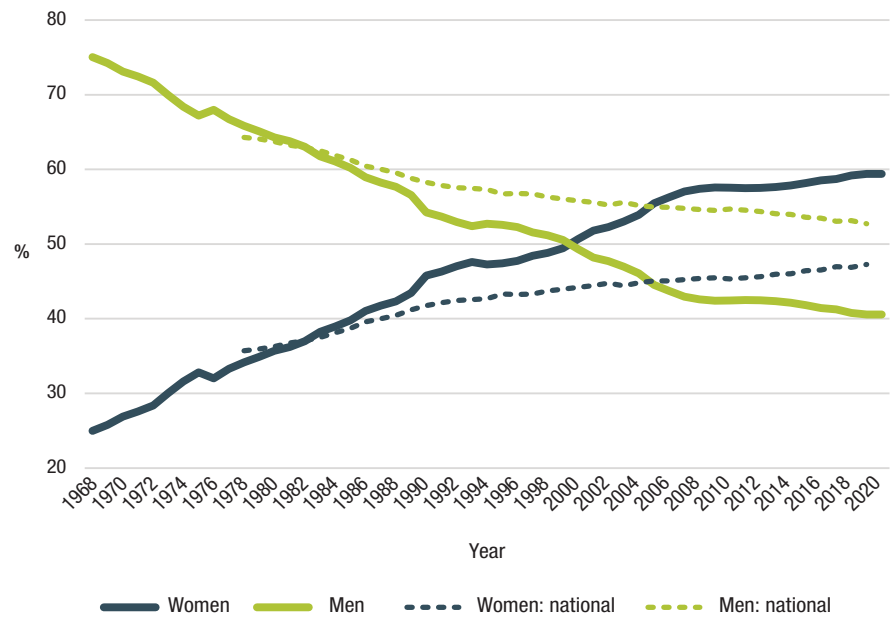


PJ Bligh (left) with Ms Pat Turner AM (centre) and the 2019 Sir Roland Wilson Pat Turner Scholars

Gender diversity

According to the 2019 OECD Government at a Glance, Australia performs above the OECD average in terms of gender equality in public sector employment.¹⁴⁸ In 1968, 2 years after the removal of the marriage bar (where women were forced to leave the APS when married), men dominated the APS. Just 1 in 4 employees were women. Today is almost the opposite (Figure 3.11). Proportionately there are now more women in the APS (60%) compared to their proportion in the Australian labour market (47%).¹⁴⁹ The APS has become an employer of choice for women, where women account for almost 3 in every 5 new ongoing recruits.

Figure 3.11: Proportion of women and men in the APS (ongoing), compared to Australian workforce participation rate (1968 to 2020)



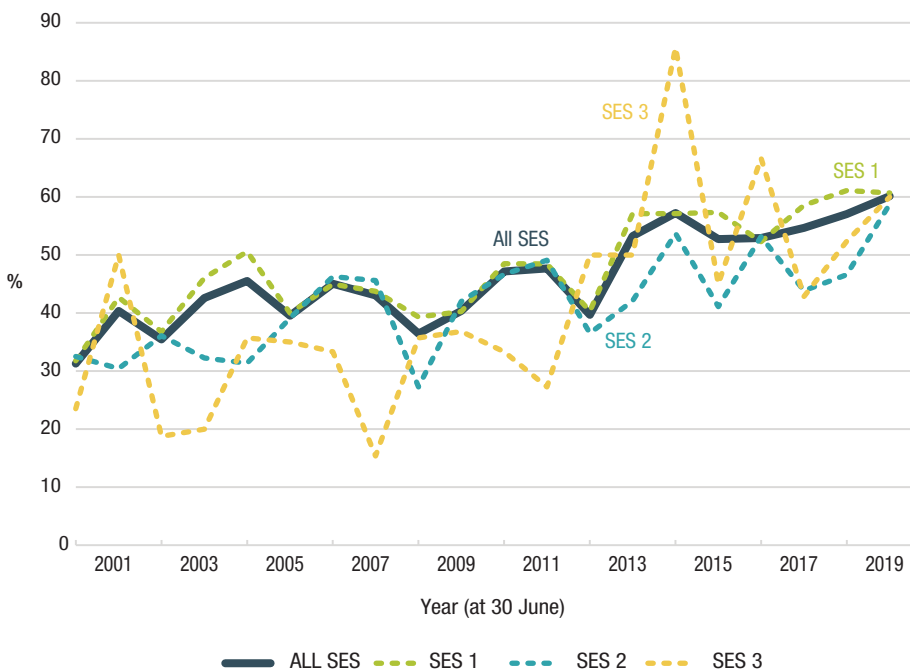
Source: APSED

¹⁴⁸ OECD. (2019). *Government at a Glance*

¹⁴⁹ WGEA. (2020). *Gender workplace statistics at a glance 2020*

Women are well represented at all classification levels in the APS including the SES. The proportion of women in the SES is below 50%, however, this is changing quickly. For the past 6 years the proportion of promotions into and within the SES for women has exceeded 50%, on average (Figure 3.12).¹⁵⁰ In 2019–20, around 60% of promotions at SES 1 (60.7%), SES 2 (58.8%) and SES 3 (60.0%) were women.

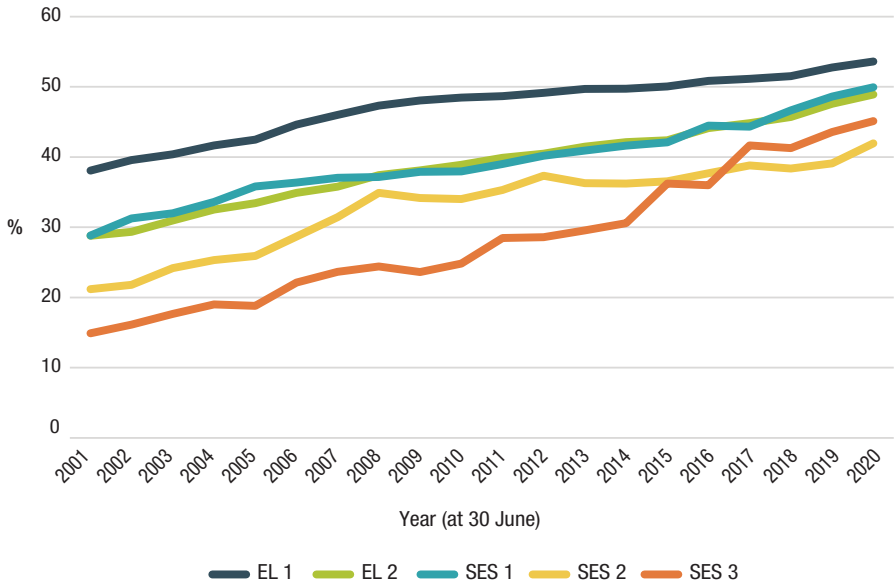
Figure 3.12: Proportion of women promoted into and within the SES (2001 to 2020)



Source: APSED

150 Promotions, as opposed to new hires, account for around 70% of new SES employees.

Figure 3.13: Proportion of women in leadership roles (EL 1–SES 3) (2001 to 2020)



Source: APSED

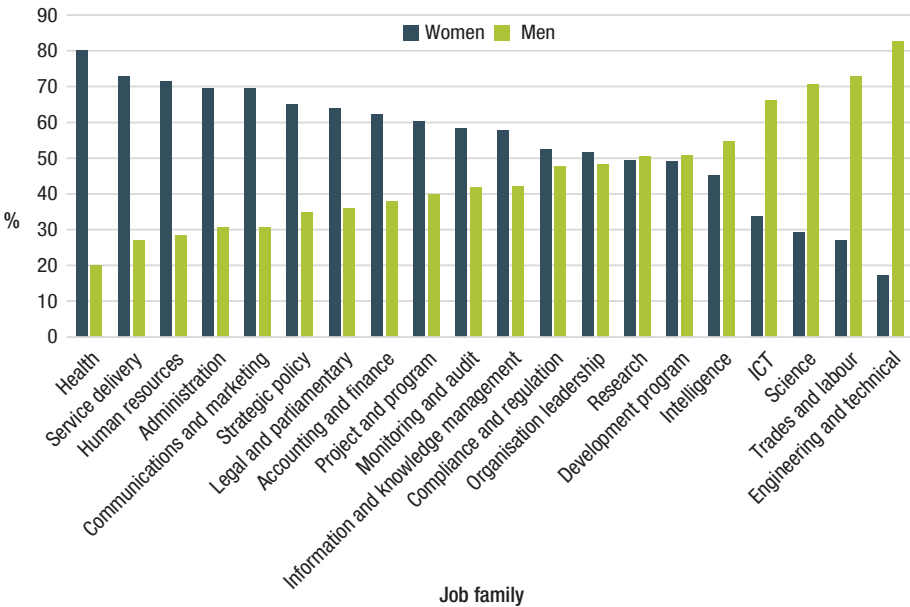
In the APS women are more likely to be working part-time (21.7%) compared to men (5.0%). Both of these figures are significantly lower than their respective proportions in the broader Australian labour market, where 43% of women and 16% of men work part-time.¹⁵¹

In the APS 64.1% of non-ongoing roles are occupied by women. This is slightly higher than the proportion of women in ongoing roles (59.4%).

More women work in health (80.0%), service delivery (72.8%) and human resources (71.5%) roles, and more men work in engineering and technical (82.8%), trades and labour (72.9%) and science (70.7%) roles (Figure 3.14).

151 ABS. (2019). *Gender Indicators, Australia*, 1 November.

Figure 3.14 Proportion of Job Family by Gender (30 June 2020)



Source: APSED

Gender pay gap

There is a gender pay gap of 7.3% in favour of men in the APS,¹⁵² however this has reduced from 9.1% in 2015.¹⁵³

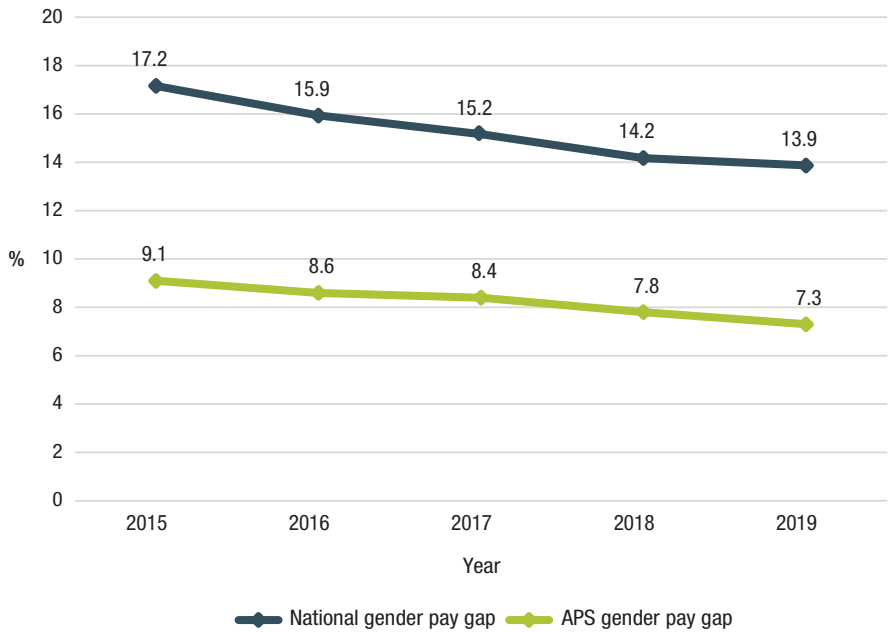
Based on 2019 APS average base salaries for men (\$98,149) and women (\$91,016), the gap in the APS is nearly half the national gender pay gap of 13.9% for the same time period (Figure 3.15).¹⁵⁴ However, it is higher than the gender pay gap for the Public Administration and Safety industry category (6.0%) which is the sector with the lowest pay gap. This demonstrates there is more to be done to reduce the gender pay gap in the APS.

152 Expressed as a percentage of male earnings, the gender pay gap is the difference between men and women employees' average base salaries, APSC. (2020). *Remuneration reports*

153 The APS calculation is based on the methodology used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). Using this methodology allows for the APS gender pay gap to be compared to other benchmarks such as the National Gender Pay Gap and the broader public sector (inclusive of states and territories). *2019 Australian Public Service Remuneration Report 2019*.

154 As calculated by WGEA using seasonally adjusted average weekly earnings data from the ABS. *Australia's Gender Pay Gap Statistics 2020*

Figure 3.15: Average APS gender pay gap trends, compared to national average (2015 to 2019)



Source: 2019 APS Remuneration Report and ABS

In the APS women are considered to be at pay parity for most classification levels with the differences in these classifications in the range of $\pm 1\%$. Graduate, APS 1, SES 2 and SES 3 classifications have slightly higher pay differences.

Better business outcomes

'The case for greater gender equity is not just an issue of fairness and the 'right thing to do'—it is supported by strong causal evidence that more women in leadership leads to better company performance, greater productivity and greater profitability.'¹⁵⁵

Research shows that business outcomes improve when there is greater gender balance in leadership.

In the private sector, organisations with more women in senior leadership positions achieve better performance, productivity and profitability.¹⁵⁶ Gender diversity at the executive level has been associated with greater levels of inclusion through the implementation of policies that are more supportive of LGBTIQ+ employees.¹⁵⁷ Research also indicates women often bring leadership behaviours recognised as improving organisational performance, such as role-modelling and developing the capability of others.¹⁵⁸

These successes are attributed to open, collegiate management approaches more often observed in women, including the ability to build consensus and inclusiveness by encouraging all voices at the table to be heard.¹⁵⁹ Leadership research shows that gender does not determine competency; women in leadership positions are equally competent as others.¹⁶⁰

These attributes apply to the public sector. APS departments with higher rates of women at the SES level are reported to emphasise communication and networking skills, collaboration, collegiality and a focus on relationships.¹⁶¹ They reduce barriers to women's progress to senior levels¹⁶² through a wider range of leadership styles and offering more opportunities for women to take on challenging or high-profile work.

Sustained effort toward equal representation, as well as actions to promote and embed inclusive behaviours and cultures will ensure barriers to economic participation do not re-emerge, and continue to make gains where barriers remain, including for women who are members of other diversity cohorts, or due to the impacts of COVID-19.

¹⁵⁵ Cassells & Duncan. (2020). *Gender Equity Insights 2020: Delivering the Business Outcomes*

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.; McKinsey & Company. (2020). *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*

¹⁵⁷ Fine, C., Sojo, V., & Lawford-Smith, H. 2020. Why does workplace gender diversity matter? Justice, organizational benefits, and policy. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 14(1), pp. 36–72.

¹⁵⁸ McKinsey & Company. 2008. *Women Matter 2: Female leadership, a competitive edge for the future.*

¹⁵⁹ Ross (2008) and Caliper (2014) in Morris. (2016). *Women's Leadership Matters: The impact of women's leadership in the Canadian federal public service*

¹⁶⁰ Zenger and Folkman. (2019). *Research: Women Score Higher Than Men in Most Leadership Skills*

¹⁶¹ Meredith Edwards, Bill Burmester, Mark Evans, Max Halupka and Deborah May (2013). *Not yet 50/50: Barriers to the Progress of Senior Women in the Australian Public Service*

¹⁶² Ibid.



Case study

Women in STEM at the Department of Defence

‘To enable us to meet the Defence and national security challenges of today and the future, it’s critical that we build a world-leading STEM-capable workforce. And we can only [do that] if we increase the depth and diversity of the talent pool. Increasing the participation rate of women is critical to achieving that.’

Professor Tanya Monro, Chief Defence Scientist ¹⁶³

The Department of Defence has been working to progress gender equity in its workforce, with a strong focus on STEM skills. Women are underrepresented in STEM roles across the APS. Women make up 17.2% of engineering and technical roles, 33.9% of ICT roles and 29.3% of science roles across the APS.¹⁶⁴

In February 2020 the Department of Defence partnered with the Australian Academy of Science to support the inaugural Catalysing Gender Equity 2020 conference. The event focused on tangible actions and initiatives that can bring about change, aiming to accelerate transformative and sustained change within the STEM sector to achieve true gender equality.

The Department of Defence has also signed up to be a champion of the Australian Academy of Science’s Women in STEM Decadal Plan, committing to supporting an industry-wide effort to drive gender equity in the STEM ecosystem.

The Department of Defence has been recognised for its commitment to advancing the careers of women, not only in STEM but across all groups and services, with the Department’s Science and Technology Group awarded the Athena Scientific Women’s Academic Network Institutional Bronze Award at the Science in Australia Gender Equity Awards. The proportion of women in Defence working in STEM roles has increased from 25.7% in 2016 to 29.8% in 2020.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Department of Defence. (2020). *Defence Affirms Commitment to Gender Equity*

¹⁶⁴ APSED

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.



Australian Army officer Lieutenant Chloe Barker-Smith (right) mentors Defence Civilian Chloe Soklevski in the Fly Army virtual reality helicopter simulator experience in Canberra.

“

‘Addressing gender equity and diversity strengthens an organisation’s intellectual capital, and its capacity for problem-solving and innovation. This means better outcomes for people and business, and the long-term success of an organisation. It is not only the right thing for us to do in Defence—it is the smart thing for us to do. This award demonstrates the priority and value Defence places on gender and talent diversity in STEM disciplines.’

Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC¹⁶⁶

166 Senator the Hon Linda Reynolds CSC. (2020). *Defence commitment to gender equity in STEM recognised*

APS Gender Equality Strategy

How might we...drive and embed inclusive workplace practices to enable all genders to fully participate so that the APS can deliver at its best?

The APS is committed to continue to improve the gender balance of its workforce through the *APS Gender Equality Strategy*. A refresh of the Strategy is underway, drawing on an independent evaluation of *Balancing the Future: the APS Gender Equality Strategy 2016–19*.¹⁶⁷ The evaluation included insights into implementation challenges, the need for better data, a sustained focus on culture change and leadership engagement, and flexibility in work practices. It concludes that the Strategy was a valuable tool to drive change but that ongoing efforts are required to embed positive changes, including lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The refresh will be informed by broad consultation and APS-wide engagement, including in-depth interviews; virtual design hubs (in partnership with Services Australia) to consider practical, targeted solutions; and a deep-dive into the APSC data to look at the evidence base and check assumptions.

Led by the APSC in partnership with the Office for Women in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and a cross-APS project team, it will analyse success factors and future focus areas to progress gender equality in the APS, and is due for implementation in 2021.

Diversity of gender and sexuality

When employees feel respected and valued they perform at their best. Research indicates that LGBTIQ+ employees have increased job satisfaction, a greater commitment to their work and improved health outcomes when employed by an organisation with LGBTIQ+ supportive workplace policies.¹⁶⁸

In 2019, 4.8% of APS employee census respondents identified as LGBTIQ+ up from 4.4% in 2018 and 4.1% in 2017.¹⁶⁹ As at 30 June 2020, 112 people identified in their HR systems as Gender X (indeterminate/intersex/unspecified).¹⁷⁰

167 Australian Government. (2016). *Balancing the Future: the APS Gender Equality Strategy 2016–19*

168 Badgett, M.V.L., Durso, L.E., Kastanis, A. & Mallory, C. (2013). *The business impact of LGBT-supportive workplace policies*

169 Due to the change in timeframes of the 2020 APS employee census, the most recent data on representation of APS employees who identify as LGBTIQ+ is from the 2019 APS employee census.

170 APSED

It is difficult to compare the proportion of APS employees who identify as LGBTIQ+ with the wider population of Australia, as studies rely on small sample sizes. Several sources estimate figures between 3% and 11%.¹⁷¹

In the 2019 APS employee census, employees who identified as LGBTIQ+ had similar levels of employee engagement, wellbeing, innovation, workplace inclusion, and job satisfaction compared to employees who did not. There was also no real difference in results between LGBTIQ+ employees who are 'out' in the workplace and those who are not. However, employees who identified as LGBTIQ+ perceived discrimination, bullying and harassment in larger proportions than those who did not identify as LGBTIQ+.

¹⁷¹ Most studies into the populations of LGBTIQ+ people focus on smaller subgroups, such as estimating the proportion of the population that is lesbian, or homosexual, or bisexual, rather than the entire LGBTIQ+ population as a cohort. It's difficult to compare these results with the APS results since individuals may identify with more than one subgroup of the LGBTIQ+ population, or with subgroups that are not investigated by these studies.

Case study

ATO Making Inclusion Count

“We have an energised committee and membership that ensure every employee at the ATO feels they can bring their authentic whole self to work each day.”

Christopher Healey, ATO Assistant Commissioner and
SES Champion of the ATOMIC network

Launched in March 2016, the ATO’s LGBTIQ+ network, ATOMIC: ATO Making Inclusion Count has grown from 100 to 2,100 members in less than 5 years.

ATOMIC has identified innovative ways to support emerging LGBTIQ+ issues, including the establishment of the Gender Diverse Think Tank (GDTT). The GDTT has provided the opportunity to network, share experiences, and to identify and drive initiatives to improve policies such as the ATO’s Gender Transition Guide, and inclusion for ATO employees and clients.

In 2019, the ATO won a Gold Employer ranking at the Australian Workplace Equality Awards for the third year in a row. Gold Employer ranking is recognition of a substantial amount of work and activity in the area of LGBTIQ+ inclusion over the calendar year. ATOMIC’s success was recognised further with being awarded the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) Michael Kirby Inclusion Award in 2019.

The challenges of COVID-19 has meant the ATOMIC network needed to rethink how to celebrate days of importance, educate staff on LGBTIQ+ topics, and maintain an active presence in the ATO in the absence of face-to-face events. Large scale events including International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia, and Wear it Purple Day, were adapted for the ATO’s online collaboration platform and internal communications. Mental health services and support for network members during the pandemic were also promoted.



ATOMIC
The power of diversity

AUSTRALIAN
TAXATION
OFFICE MAKING
INCLUSION
COUNT

ATOMIC's Co-Chairs Andrea Ross and Jan Lowe said:

”

'We have been delighted and honoured to lead the ATOMIC network and work towards achieving our aims of creating an inclusive environment, promoting respectful, supportive and equitable culture for LGBTIQ+ employees and to provide forums for employees to support one another through sharing experiences and information.'

By successfully connecting business objectives and the needs of employees, ATOMIC has driven cultural change across the ATO and the APS, delivering a sustainable LGBTIQ+ diversity program and an inclusive workplace environment, where all employees are valued and respected.



Disability

In Australia, the number of people living with disability is estimated to be about one-fifth of the population, and 2.1 million Australians of working age (15–64 years) have a disability.¹⁷² The proportion of people with disability in the Australian labour force has not changed over the past 10 years,¹⁷³ comprising 8.8% of the total labour market in 2012.¹⁷⁴ Those of working age are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to people without disabilities.¹⁷⁵

The proportion of APS employees with disability reported in agency HR systems is 4%, roughly half that of the broader Australian labour market.¹⁷⁶ This figure may be underreported, with 8.4% of employees reporting as having a disability in the 2019 APS employee census.¹⁷⁷

The proportion of APS employees with disability increased from a low of 3.3% in June 2013 to 4.0% in June 2020 (Figure 3.16). In the year to 30 June 2020 there was a small increase in employees with disability (323 employees) to 6,004 employees in total.¹⁷⁸

Attracting and retaining more people with disability and creating accessible, inclusive workplaces is the focus of the *APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020–2025*.

172 Australian Network on Disability. (2019). *Disability statistics*

173 ABS. (2020). *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018*

174 ABS. (2015). *Disability and Labour Force Participation, 2012*

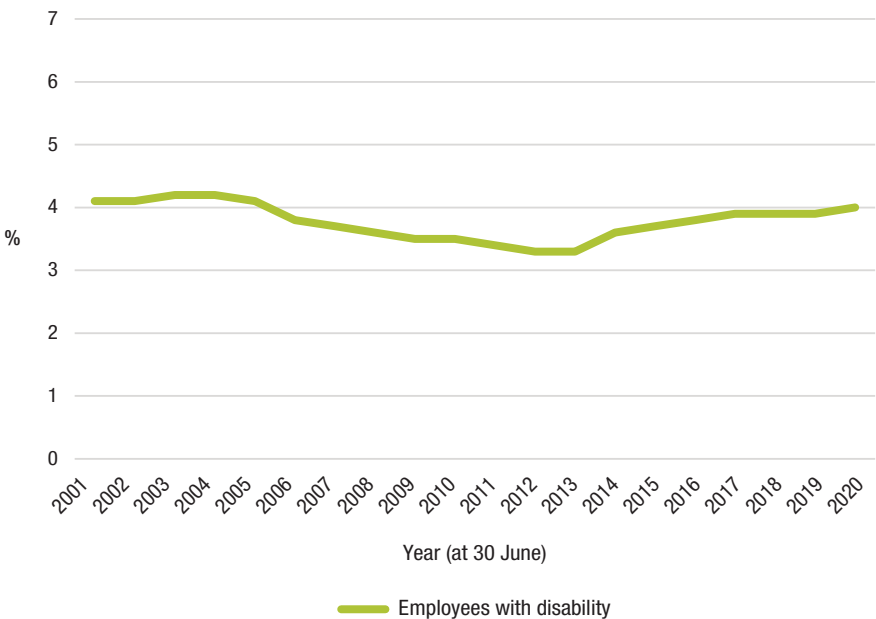
175 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2019). *People with disability in Australia: in brief*

176 The definition of 'disability' used in the APS is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. More information is available at: APSC. (2019). *Definition of disability*

177 Under-reporting may be due to an unwillingness to disclose in departmental systems (responses to the APS employee census are de-identified) or disability acquired since an employee's time of recruitment may not be updated in systems.

178 APSED

Figure 3.16: Proportion of employees with disability (2001 to 2020)

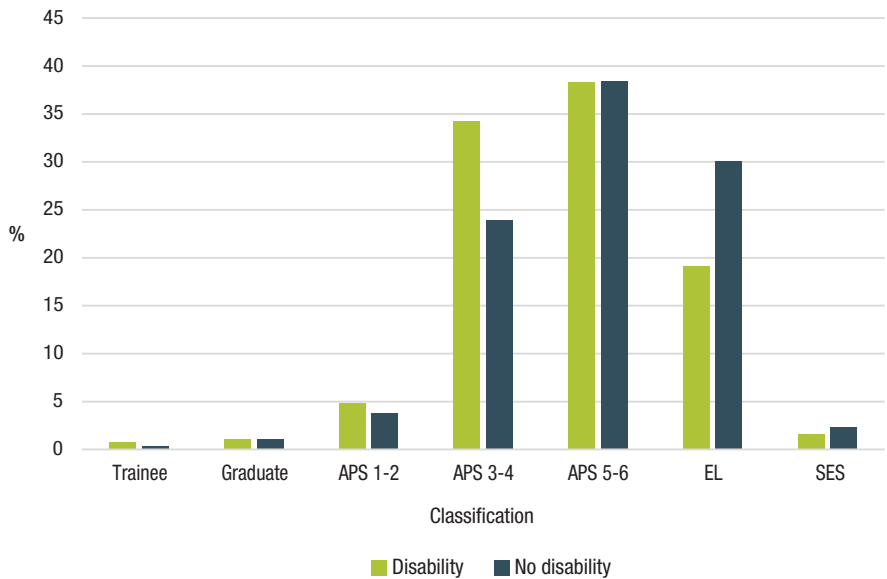


Source: APSED

Agencies that employed a high proportion of employees with disability at 30 June 2020 were the National Disability Insurance Agency (11.1%), the Australian Public Service Commission (8.6%), Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (8.2%), Safe Work Australia (7.4%), and the Department of Social Services (7.3%).

At 30 June 2020, the classification distribution of employees with disability largely mirrored that of employees without disability, with the exception of APS 3–4 and EL classifications (Figure 3.17). At the APS 3–4 classification, employees with disability were in greater relative proportion than employees without disability, while at the EL level the reverse is true. This difference may be explained by the high proportion of employees with disability working in service delivery where most roles are at the APS 3–4 classification.

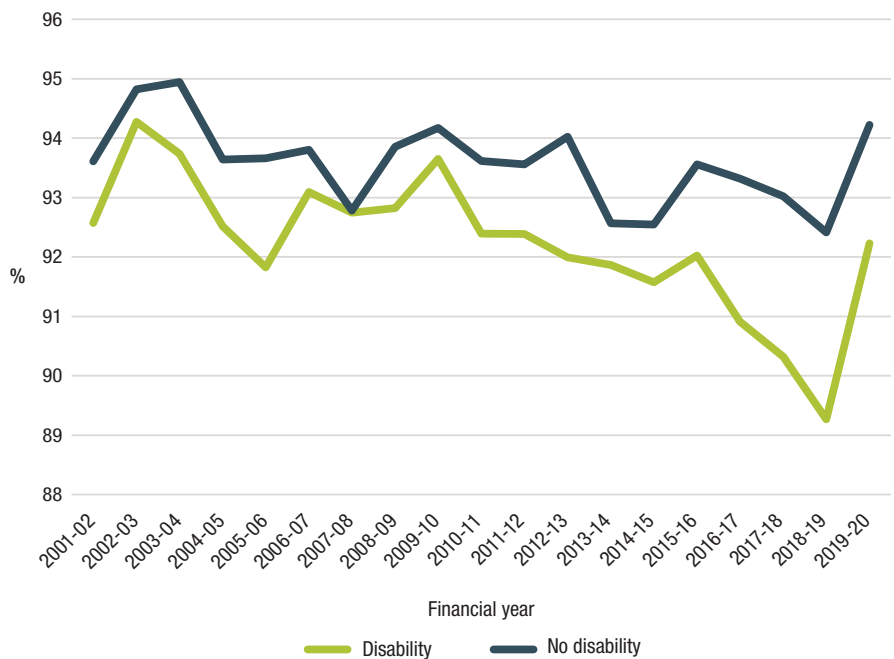
Figure 3.17: Classification by disability status (30 June 2020)



Source: APSED

Over the last 20 years, employees with a disability have consistently had a lower retention rates than employees without disability (Figure 3.18).

Figure 3.18: Retention rate of employees with and without disability (2001–02 to 2019–20)



Source: APSED

The APS has higher rates of employees with disability (4.0%) than the Victorian Public Service (3.7%), Queensland public sector (2.8%) and Northern Territory Public Service (1.2%).

The need for ambitious employment targets for people with disability is also recognised across state and territory public sectors. For example, as part of their most recent Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy, the Western Australia Public Sector has developed the *People with Disability: Action Plan*. The plan aims to increase the representation of people with disability from 1.5% where it has remained stagnant for some years, to the target of 5%.¹⁷⁹

179 WA Government. (2020). *People with Disability: Action Plan to Improve WA Public Sector Employment Outcomes 2020–2025*

APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020–2025

In May 2019, the Australian Government committed to a new APS employment target for people with disability of 7% by 2025. This equates to employing at least an additional 5,000 people with disability.

The APSC partnered with the Department of Social Services to develop the *APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020–2025*.

A broad range of stakeholders across the public and private sector and those with lived experience of disability helped develop the Strategy.

The Strategy has 2 focus areas, each with a number of key actions:

- attract, recruit and retain more people with disability
- create accessible and inclusive workplace cultures and environments.

The new Strategy sets an ambitious agenda for cultural change. To meet the employment target, the APS will need to not only increase recruitment activity, but to create a more inclusive culture. The APS needs to make working environments more accessible and take a more flexible approach to job design. Actions under the Strategy will also encourage employees to share their disability status with their agencies so that, where appropriate, arrangements can be made to maximise their job satisfaction, engagement and productivity.

The Strategy's successful implementation will require broad agency commitment and collaboration between senior leaders and APS employees to deliver real progress.

Coming full circle—from intern to host



'I remember coming home after day one and I was thinking
"this is it—I am a part of the Australian workforce!"'



In 2005 Deb Heron, currently an Assistant Director at the Disability Royal Commission, applied for the *Stepping Into* internship. Deb had previously applied for many internships, but was unsuccessful. She was concerned she was getting overlooked for opportunities due to her disability.

Hoping there were internships that catered to people with disability, Deb searched online for 'internships disability' and discovered the Australian Network on Disability's *Stepping Into* program. She applied and expressed an interest in tax law, and a week later was contacted for an interview with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Although she was nervous at the beginning of the interview, she was put at ease when the interviewers did not comment or draw attention to her disability. This was a first for Deb.

One of the most important things Deb gained from her internship at the ATO was confidence. The ATO provided an inclusive workplace by asking Deb what support she might need to effectively fulfil her role. On her first day as a *Stepping Into* intern, Deb had a workplace assessment with a physiotherapist who suggested equipment to reduce the pain caused by her disability. This allowed her to work as productively as possible.

From the confidence, empowerment and growth of her capabilities, Deb's career advanced to a second placement at the ATO, then into the ATO's graduate program. Her career has since taken her to the Northern Territory Government, a change in career paths to Perth, work for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and to her current position at the Disability Royal Commission.

Now with a well-established career, Deb is once again participating in the *Stepping Into* program, but this time as host to an intern. Deb believes the *Stepping Into* program has opened many doors for her, and is seeking to give someone else the opportunities she had.

The Australian Government has a long history of hosting interns through the *Stepping Into* internship program. Since mid-2017, the APS has hosted 164 interns in 21 agencies. Many former *Stepping Into* interns continue on to permanent roles, and have long and successful careers in the APS.



Case study

Culturally and linguistically diverse

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups describe those who were born overseas, have a parent born overseas or speak a variety of languages.¹⁸⁰

Organisations with culturally and linguistically diverse workforces benefit from increased levels of cultural competency, innovation and creativity.¹⁸¹ For the APS, bringing diverse perspectives and the potential for improved relationships with communities and stakeholders,¹⁸² will strengthen the Government's policies and services.

In the private sector, there are demonstrated financial benefits of supporting cultural diversity in the workplace. A study of more than 1,000 companies across 12 countries and multiple industries found that companies with the greatest proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse executives were 33% more likely to outperform other companies.¹⁸³ Research within the U.S. federal government workforce found greater cultural diversity was associated with higher organisational performance.¹⁸⁴

In Australia in 2019, 29.7% of Australians were born overseas and 21.4% were from a culturally and linguistic diverse country.¹⁸⁵ At 30 June 2020, 22.1% of APS employees were born overseas with 15.9% from non-English speaking countries. Since 2000, there has been an increase in the proportion of APS employees born overseas, especially those coming from non-English speaking countries (Figure 3.19).

180 Country of birth, first language spoken, mother's and father's first language, language spoken at home and year of arrival in Australia data elements are collected in the APSED. The ABS defines the CALD population mainly by country of birth, language spoken at home, self-reported English proficiency, or other characteristics including year of arrival in Australia, parents' country of birth and religious affiliation. The APSC is currently reviewing its data collection to move towards metrics that more closely align with the CALD metrics used by the ABS. *ABS Standard for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (ABS cat. No. 1289.0) 1999*

181 SGS Economics & Planning. (2017). *Planning in Australia: economic benefits of cultural diversity*

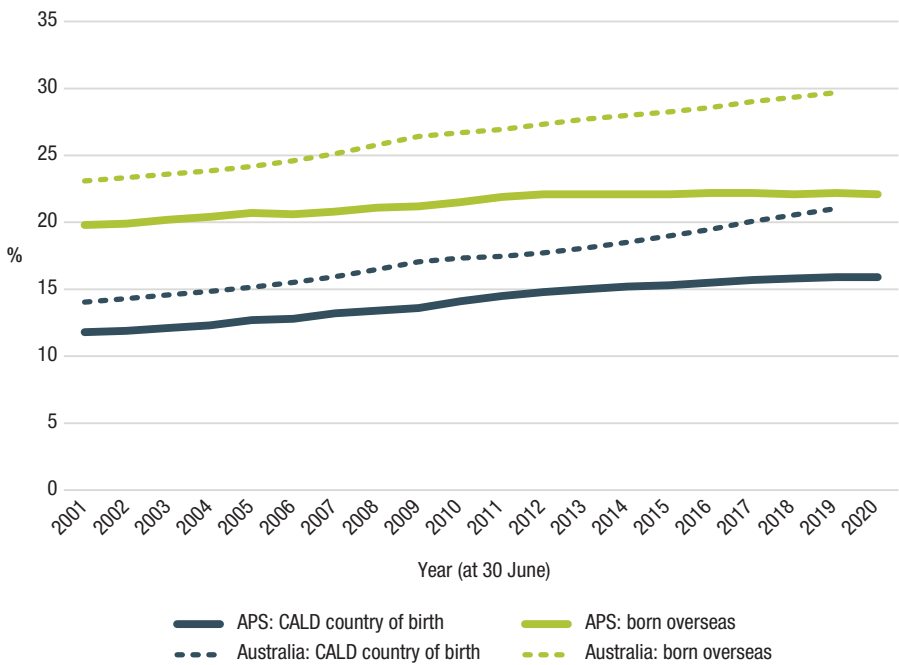
182 Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia. (2013). *Harmony in the workplace: Delivering the diversity dividend: Maximising the value of cultural diversity*

183 Hunt, V., Prince, S., Dixon-Fyle, S. & Yee, L. (2018). *Delivering through diversity*

184 Moon, K. K., & Christensen, R. K. (2020). Realizing the performance benefits of workforce diversity in the US Federal Government: The moderating role of diversity climate. *Public Personnel Management*, 49(1), pp. 141–165.

185 ABS. (2020). *Migration, Australia 2018–19*

Figure 3.19: Proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse employees, APS and Australia (2001 to 2020)



Source: APSED¹⁸⁶

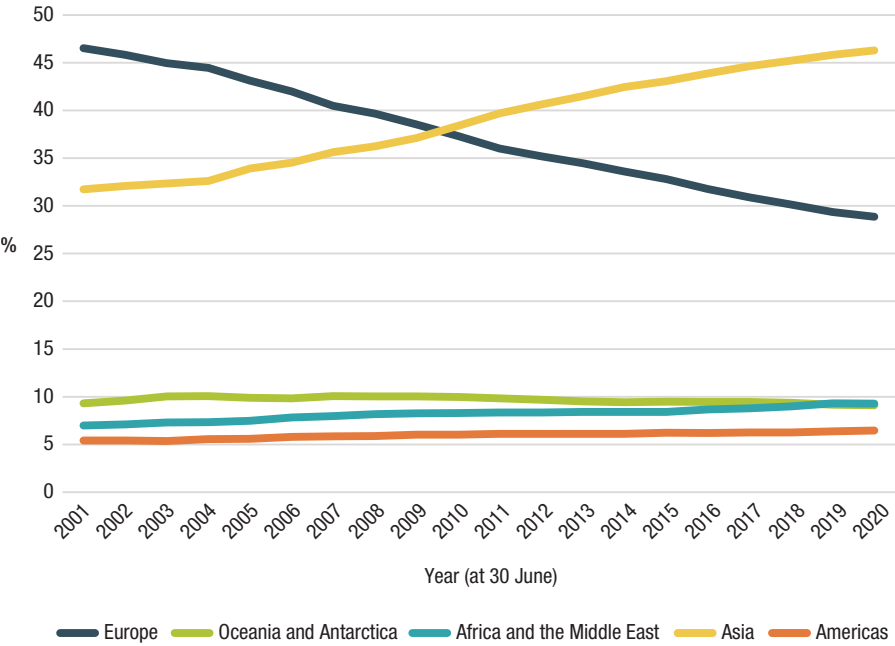
While long-term trends mirror the Australian population, the proportion of APS employees born overseas is consistently lower than that of the Australian population. In recent years, employment of culturally and linguistically diverse employees in the APS has been slowing.

In 2010, the number of APS employees born in Asia outnumbered those born in Europe for the first time. This year, of those born overseas, most employees were born in either Asia (46.3%) or Europe (28.8%) (Figure 3.20).

Other country of birth regions make up less than 10% each and have only changed marginally over the last 2 decades. Compared to the Australian population, the proportion of APS employees born in Asia is relatively higher while all other regions have a slightly lower representation.

186 A CALD country is defined as a country that is not in the list of Main English-Speaking Countries as described by the ABS.

Figure 3.20: Region of birth for APS employees born overseas (2001 to 2020)



Source: APSED

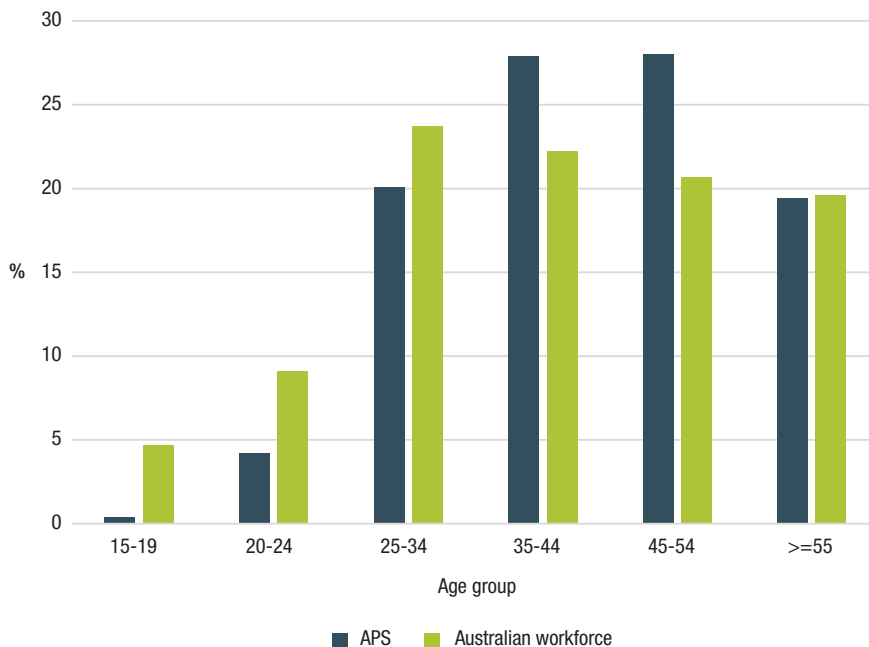
Multi-generational

The makeup of Australia's population is changing. The population is ageing¹⁸⁷ and the APS workforce is becoming more age-diverse. There are a number of benefits of an age-diverse workforce, including a stronger pipeline of talent, employee engagement, performance, and workforce stability.

The average age of APS employees was 43.5 years at 30 June 2020, increasing steadily from 40 years in 2001. This is in line with the trends in ageing across the general Australian workforce.

The proportion of the APS population that is 50 years or older has increased from 20.2% in 2001 to 32.8% in 2020. At 30 June 2020, 8.3% of APS employees were aged 60 years and over. The number of employees under the age of 30 has declined from 18.2% in 2001 to 13.3% in 2020.

Figure 3.21: Age distribution comparison between APS and Australian workforce (30 June 2020)



Source: APSED

187 ABS. (2018). *Population Projections, Australia, 2017 (base) – 2066*

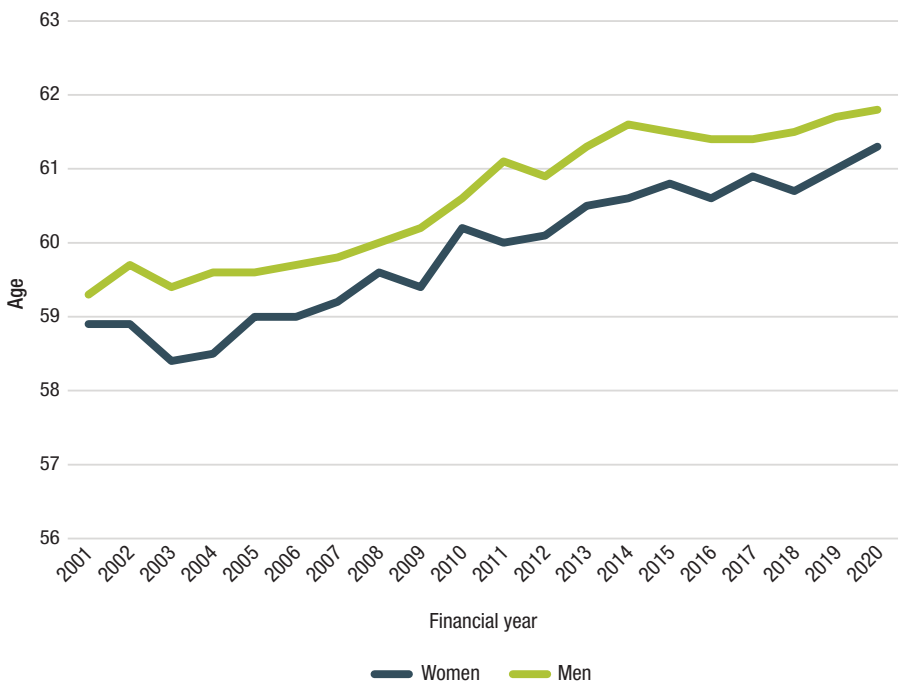
As the proportion of Australians aged 65 years and over continues to increase, from 15% in 2017 to a projected 22% in 2066,¹⁸⁸ participation rates for this cohort are expected to strongly increase.

Age of retirement

The APS does not have a maximum retirement age; employees choose when to retire. The average retirement age within the APS has been increasing over time, from 59.1 years of age in 2000–01, to 61.5 in 2019–20. This remains lower than the national average age of 65.5 years in 2018–19 for people who were intending to retire.¹⁸⁹

The rise in average retirement age of APS employees may be linked with the phasing out of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme (CSS) and the Public Sector Superannuation Scheme (PSS).¹⁹⁰ From 2015 to 2019 the proportion of employees with a CSS scheme declined from 3.6% to 1.5%, and the proportion with a PSS scheme declined from 46.4% to 36.8%.

Figure 3.22: APS Average Retirement Age by Gender (2001 to 2020)



Source: APSED

188 Ibid.

189 ABS. (2020). *Retirement and Retirement Intentions, Australia, 2018–19*

190 APSC. (2020). *Remuneration Report 2019: Chapter 4: Total Remuneration Package*

Impact of COVID-19 on employees from diverse groups

It has been widely recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable people, including people from diverse groups.¹⁹¹ This is a global issue, and is not unique to the APS or Australia.

Many individual employees are also more vulnerable to the health impacts of COVID-19. Groups that are at greater risk of more serious illness if they contract COVID-19 include Aboriginal and Torres Islander people, older people, people with chronic health conditions and people with disability.¹⁹²

During May 2020, 76% of Australians with children in their household kept them home from school or childcare due to pandemic. In this period, Australian women were almost 3 times as likely as men to look after children full-time on their own (46% compared with 17%).¹⁹³ While there is no APS COVID-19 related childcare data available, of the 41% of APS employee census respondents in 2019 who reported having caring responsibilities (including care of children), 63% were women and 32% men.¹⁹⁴

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had significant mental health impacts on Australians. People with pre-existing mental health problems are at increased risk of experiencing significant anxiety and distress during a disease outbreak.¹⁹⁵ Mental health support and national crisis services such as Lifeline and Beyond Blue have seen a surge in demand during the pandemic. Internal APS agency employee survey results conducted during the pandemic indicate mixed outcomes for the mental wellbeing of APS employees which will continue to be monitored closely.

Despite the many challenges faced, the COVID-19 pandemic has also had positive impacts for some APS employees from diverse groups.

Anecdotally, increased flexibility and working from home arrangements have been beneficial for some employees with disability. For example, some neurodiverse employees have reported increased job satisfaction while working from home as compared to working in an office, as they have been able to control and adjust environmental factors such as noise and light.¹⁹⁶

191 KPMG. (2020). *The global coronavirus pandemic is exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and creating new ones*. 7 May.

192 Department of Health. (2020). *Advice for people at risk of coronavirus (COVID-19)*

193 ABS. (2020). *4940.0 – Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey, 12–15 May 2020*

194 2019 APS employee census

195 Black Dog Institute. (2020). *Mental Health Ramifications of COVID-19: The Australian context*

196 Insights from conversations with APS employees

Through COVID-19, APS managers and leaders report they have learned a great deal about the unique needs of their colleagues and teams.¹⁹⁷ More than ever, the APS remains committed to an inclusive culture, with a strong focus on wellbeing and flexibility that supports the needs of all employees.

¹⁹⁷ COO interviews [unpublished]



Appendixes



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APPENDIX 1: APS workforce data

APS Employment Database

The Australian Public Service Employment Database (APSED) contains employment, diversity and education details for all people employed in the APS under the authority of the *Public Service Act 1999* (Cth).

Information on staffing, including trends in the size, structure and composition of the APS, contributes to research and evaluation work on the changing nature of the APS. This, in turn, assists agencies to formulate their people management policies and practices.

APSED is the definitive source of APS employment data, supporting strong evidence-based APS workforce policy, people management and advice.

APSED scope and collection methodology

APSED stores the employment data of all current and former APS employees. The database was established in 1999 but contains data on APS employees from 1966. The most recent snapshot, conducted on 30 June 2020, contains records relating to 150,474 employees.

APSED is maintained by the APSC and the data is supplied to APSED from the HR systems of APS agencies.

Two types of data files are used to update and maintain APSED: movement files and snapshot files. In general, both file types contain the same data items, but they differ in purpose.

1. Movement files are provided to the APSC from each agency every month. They are used to document changes in employment history (for example, engagements, promotions and maternity leave) for all people employed under the *Public Service Act 1999* on a monthly basis.

Changes in employment characteristics every month are recorded using movement codes. Movement files contain a record for every movement relevant to updating and maintaining employee records in APSED that has been processed in an agency's HR system during the month. Therefore, if an employee undertakes multiple movements within a reference period, the corresponding movement files will contain multiple records for that employee. Conversely, if an employee has no movements during the reference period, they will not appear in the movement file.

2. Snapshot files are provided to the APSC from each agency on a six-monthly basis. They are used to verify that the information stored in APSED, as provided by each agency in the monthly movement files, is correct and current at 31 December and 30 June each year. Snapshot files contain a single record for every APS employee employed by a particular agency on 31 December and 30 June.

APSED items

Agency HR systems supply APSED with unit records containing this personal information:

- Personal particulars: Australian Government Staff number, name, and date of birth.
- Diversity data: gender, Indigenous identification, country of birth, year of arrival, first and main languages spoken, parents' first languages, disability status.
- Employment data: classification, email address, date of engagement, employment status, standard hours, workplace postcode, movement codes and dates, operative status, previous employment, job family code, agency.
- Educational qualifications and main fields of study.

Under Section 50 of the *Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2016*, an Agency Head must ensure measures are in place to collect information from each employee in the agency and give collected information to the Australian Public Service Commissioner. While individuals do not explicitly consent to the collection of their movement and employment data, they can choose to supply or withhold all diversity data except gender data. In relation to these items, Section 50 states that an agency head must allow APS employees to provide a response of 'choose not to give this information'.

Management and administration

Agency HR systems collect relevant data items through movement and snapshot files, and supply these to the APSC through secure or encrypted means. Agencies are responsible for the collection, security, quality, storage, access, use, and disclosure of their HR data as well as compliance with the Australian Privacy Principles. While agency HR systems capture detailed information on each APS employee's pay, leave history and entitlements, these are out of scope for APSED. Only data fields supplied to the APSC are in scope.

Upon receipt, each data file is corrected in an iterative process. Once validated and transferred to the APSC, error checks on the new files are performed by the APSC against the extant data in APSED. The APSC and the agency work together to resolve these differences. Once resolved, cleaned data is incorporated.

APSED data is stored on a secure information technology system that is password protected and accessible only by a small team in the APSC who have been granted access by team supervisors and trained in protecting and using these collections. Standard operating procedures dictate when personal information can be added or changed. All changes to the database are logged in an audit file.

Privacy and confidentiality

APSED is fully compliant with the APSC's privacy policy, which sets out the kinds of information collected and held, how this information is collected and held, its purposes, and authority for its collection. The full APSC privacy policy, which includes specific information related to APSED collection, is available at www.apsc.gov.au/apsc-complete-privacy-policy. The APSC has undertaken a detailed privacy impact assessment in relation to APSED, concluding that it complies with all relevant Australian Privacy Principles.

Data protections within APSED include secure transfer of information between agencies and the APSC, storage of data on APSC servers requiring individual logins to access, restriction of access to a small number of authorised users, and ensuring public release of data is undertaken in aggregate format only.

APS employee census

The APS employee census is an annual employee perception survey of the APS workforce. All eligible personnel employed under the *Public Service Act 1999* are invited to participate. The census has been conducted since 2012 and collects APS employee opinions and perspectives on important issues, including employee engagement, wellbeing, performance management, leadership, and general impressions of the APS.

2020 APS employee census

Previous years' State of the Service Reports were informed by the results of the annual APS employee census. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the workforce, the 2020 APS employee census was postponed from its usual May to June delivery timeframe and deployed from October to November. This change in timeframes meant that 2020 APS employee census results were not available for reporting in time for publication within this State of the Service Report.

Collection of diversity data

Concise demographic information enables the APS to produce accurate workforce descriptions to support the management of its workforce. The APSC collects personal data including diversity information concerning all employees employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*. On engagement to the APS, employees provide personal information to their employing agencies. This information is provided to the APSC to enable the execution of the APS Commissioner's functions.

With the exception of gender, the provision of diversity data is voluntary for APS employees. As a result, diversity rates represent the proportion of employees who identify as belonging to that diversity group, and actual diversity rates may be underestimated. The APS employee census, which is anonymous, records higher rates for some diversity groups.

This difference is historically largest for the proportion of employees with ongoing disability. The employee census likely attracts higher disclosure rates as responses are not readily identifiable to individual employees, unlike the more formal HR system. Many people are likely to regard their diversity information as sensitive information and it has long been established that people avoid reporting details they regard as sensitive.¹⁹⁸ Employees may decide to withhold information when they believe it does not affect their ability to carry out their role. Some may have concerns about possible impacts to their future employment or how it will affect them socially within the workplace. The APS takes pride in its ability to foster inclusive workplaces but also respects employees' rights to privacy regarding personal information.

Collecting gender information

Individuals may identify and be recognised within the community as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth or during infancy, or as a gender which is not exclusively male or female. Therefore, where gender information is collected and recorded in a personal record, individuals should be given the option to select M (Male), F (Female) or X (Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified).

198 Tourangeau R, Yan T. (2007). Sensitive questions in surveys. *Psychological bulletin*. 133(5):859.

APS Agency Survey

The APS Agency Survey is conducted annually and collects information on a range of workforce initiatives, strategies and compliance matters, including the number and type of APS Code of Conduct breaches. APS agencies with at least 20 APS employees complete the survey. The information collected through the APS Agency Survey is used to inform workforce strategies and for other research and evaluation purposes.

Since 2002, the APS Agency Survey has been administered to APS agencies with employees employed under the *Public Sector Act 1999*. The survey assists the Australian Public Service Commissioner to fulfil a range of duties as specified in the Act. These include, but are not limited to:

- informing the annual State of the Service Report
- strengthening the professionalism of the APS and facilitating continuous improvement in its workforce management
- monitoring, reviewing and reporting on APS capabilities.

APS Agency Survey collection methodology

In 2020, the APS Agency Survey was administered to 95 agencies during 22 June to 31 July 2020. The response rate for 2020 was 100%, which is typical for this survey.

Each year the APS Agency Survey is sent to the contact officers nominated for each agency. These contact officers are responsible for coordinating the input from relevant areas and uploading responses to an APS Agency Survey portal managed by ORIMA Research. The survey requires each Agency Head to verify the agency's submission for completeness and accuracy of responses.

APS Agency Survey management and administration

The APSC's Strategic Policy and Research Group manages and coordinates the APS Agency Survey. The APSC contracts an external service provider to support survey administration. ORIMA Research was this service provider in 2020.

Privacy

All APS Agency Survey data are stored in a secure password-protected environment. Where results are included in reporting, agency results are de-identified or aggregated.

Whole-of-APS working from home data

The APSC collects working from home data from individual agencies. This data is then aggregated and weighted proportionate to the number of employees at each agency.

Internal APS agency employee surveys

Between April and June 2020, numerous agencies administered internal surveys of their workforces. Questions included within these surveys differed between agencies—and are not comparable APS-wide—but covered themes of wellbeing, technology, home-based work and managing dispersed teams. In total, 8 agencies provided results of their internal employee surveys to the APSC for analysis.

In addition, 12 agencies—comprising a response sample of more than 23,000 employees—included a set of 5 questions from the 2019 APS employee census in their internal employee surveys. These questions focused on employee engagement and productivity-related measures and enable comparisons with 2019 APS employee census results.

APPENDIX 2: APS agencies

This appendix covers a range of data about APS agencies.

Table A2.1 lists all APS agencies and employee numbers and reflects data in APSED as at 30 June 2020. These are headcount numbers and include ongoing, non-ongoing and casual (intermittently engaged) employees.

APS agencies are grouped into ‘functional clusters’ to allow comparisons to be made between agencies with similar primary functions. The functional clusters applied to APS agencies are:

- Policy: agencies involved in the development of public policy.
- Smaller operational: agencies with fewer than 1,000 employees involved in the implementation of public policy.
- Larger operational: agencies with 1,000 employees or more involved in the implementation of public policy.
- Regulatory: agencies involved in regulation and inspection.
- Specialist: agencies providing specialist support to government.

Table A2.1: List of APS agencies by portfolio

This list contains 98 agencies and 9 Category E entities. The list can also be found at www.apsc.gov.au/aps-agency-listing-agencies-covered-public-service-act-1999

| Agency Name | Functional cluster | Headcount |
|--|---------------------|--------------|
| Agriculture, Water and the Environment | Policy | 7 201 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | Regulatory | 156 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | Regulatory | 175 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | Larger operational | 1 589 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | Specialist | 247 |
| Murray Darling Basin Authority | Policy | 283 |
| Attorney-General's | Policy | 1 347 |
| Administrative Appeals Tribunal | Smaller operational | 691 |
| Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency | Specialist | 13 |

| Agency Name | Functional cluster | Headcount |
|--|---------------------------|---------------|
| Australian Building and Construction Commission | Regulatory | 158 |
| Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity | Specialist | 49 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | Smaller operational | 466 |
| Australian Government Solicitor | Policy | 655 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | Specialist | 137 |
| Australian Law Reform Commission | Policy | 14 |
| Comcare | Smaller operational | 626 |
| Commonwealth Ombudsman | Specialist | 230 |
| Fair Work Commission | Smaller operational | 300 |
| Federal Court Statutory Agency | Larger operational | 1 184 |
| National Archives of Australia | Specialist | 389 |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | Specialist | 105 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | Regulatory | 119 |
| Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions | Smaller operational | 424 |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | Regulatory | 897 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security | Specialist | 33 |
| Safe Work Australia | Policy | 94 |
| Defence | Larger operational | 17 421 |
| Defence Housing Australia | Smaller operational | 579 |
| Education, Skills and Employment | Policy | 3 573 |
| Australian Research Council | Specialist | 147 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | Regulatory | 200 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | Regulatory | 85 |
| Finance | Policy | 1 724 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | Smaller operational | 1 823 |

| Agency Name | Functional cluster | Headcount |
|--|---------------------------|---------------|
| Future Fund Management Agency | Specialist | 188 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | Specialist | 60 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | Policy | 3 851 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | Specialist | 56 |
| Australian Trade and Investment Commission | Specialist | 629 |
| Health | Policy | 3 514 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | Regulatory | 515 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | Specialist | 93 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | Smaller operational | 64 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | Specialist | 368 |
| Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency | Specialist | 142 |
| Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority | Regulatory | 297 |
| Cancer Australia | Specialist | 76 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | Regulatory | 111 |
| National Blood Authority | Specialist | 63 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | Specialist | 202 |
| National Health Funding Body | Specialist | 21 |
| National Mental Health Commission | Specialist | 35 |
| Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme | Policy | 127 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | Specialist | 23 |
| Professional Services Review | Regulatory | 26 |
| Therapeutic Goods Administration | Policy | 657 |
| Home Affairs | Larger operational | 14 019 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | Specialist | 777 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC) | Regulatory | 411 |

| Agency Name | Functional cluster | Headcount |
|---|---------------------|--------------|
| Industry, Science, Energy and Resources | Policy | 3 128 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | Regulatory | 347 |
| Climate Change Authority | Specialist | 10 |
| Geoscience Australia | Specialist | 616 |
| IP Australia | Larger operational | 1 152 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety And Environmental Management Authority | Regulatory | 124 |
| Questacon | Policy | 286 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications | Policy | 1 550 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | Regulatory | 461 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | Specialist | 120 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | Specialist | 103 |
| National Capital Authority | Specialist | 68 |
| National Faster Rail Agency | Specialist | 9 |
| National Film and Sound Archive | Specialist | 174 |
| National Library of Australia | Specialist | 382 |
| National Museum of Australia | Specialist | 274 |
| National Portrait Gallery | Specialist | 56 |
| North Queensland Water Infrastructure Authority | Specialist | 2 |
| Screen Australia | Specialist | 6 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | Policy | 1 077 |
| Aboriginal Hostels Ltd. | Smaller operational | 464 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies | Specialist | 134 |
| Australian National Audit Office | Specialist | 335 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | Policy | 266 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | Policy | 1 288 |

| Agency Name | Functional cluster | Headcount |
|--|---------------------------|----------------|
| National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency | Policy | 55 |
| Office of National Intelligence | Specialist | 261 |
| Old Parliament House | Specialist | 105 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | Specialist | 156 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | Specialist | 31 |
| Social Services | Policy | 2 333 |
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | Specialist | 96 |
| Digital Transformation Agency | Smaller operational | 245 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | Larger operational | 4 394 |
| NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission | Regulatory | 219 |
| Services Australia | Larger operational | 31 808 |
| Treasury | Policy | 1 132 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | Specialist | 2 892 |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | Regulatory | 1 272 |
| Australian Office Of Financial Management | Specialist | 47 |
| Australian Taxation Office | Larger operational | 20 969 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | Specialist | 23 |
| Infrastructure and Project Financing Agency | Specialist | 22 |
| Office of the Inspector-General of Taxation | Specialist | 26 |
| Productivity Commission | Specialist | 166 |
| Royal Australian Mint | Specialist | 251 |
| Veterans' Affairs (Defence portfolio) | Larger operational | 1 746 |
| Australian War Memorial | Specialist | 334 |
| Total | | 150 474 |

Source: APSED

Appendix 3: Workforce trends

This appendix summarises some overall trends in APS employment for 2019–20, and over the past 10 years. The primary source of data is the APSED.

While this appendix briefly summarises APS workforce trends, the June 2020 APS employment data release provides detailed data. Each published report provides current data and data from the previous years. The historical data is often adjusted at this time to pick up information that affects previously reported data. For this reason, the current publication is always the most accurate data source for APS employment data, including for historical data.

APS employment trends

As at 30 June 2020, there were 150,474 employees in the APS, comprising:

- 132,101 ongoing employees, down by 0.1% from 132,218 ongoing employees in June 2019
- 18,373 non-ongoing employees, up by 26.2% from 14,564 non-ongoing employees in June 2019.

During 2019–20:

- 9,646 ongoing employees were engaged, up by 12.73% from 8,557 ongoing engagements in 2019
- 9,750 ongoing employees separated from the APS, down by 19.49% from 12,110 separations of ongoing employees in 2019.

Job families

The APSC Job Family Model groups functionally similar jobs that perform related tasks and require similar or related skills and knowledge. The model classifies jobs at 3 levels: family, function and role. There are 20 job families, which are broken down into clusters of job functions and further into job roles.

As at 30 June 2020, 34 agencies supplied job family data relating to 124,819 (83.0%) of APS employees.

Engagements and separations

Engagement numbers have fluctuated over the last 10 years, ranging from 12,829 in 2010–11, to 2,367 in 2014–15 and back up to 9,646 in 2019–20.

Tables A3.1 and A3.2 cover ongoing APS engagements by classification and by age group. Table A3.3 covers ongoing APS separations by classification.

Table A3.1: Ongoing APS engagements by classification (2010–11 to 2019–20)

| Classification | 2010 –11 | 2011 –12 | 2012 –13 | 2013 –14 | 2014 –15 | 2015 –16 | 2016 –17 | 2017 –18 | 2018 –19 | 2019 –20 |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Trainee | 278 | 299 | 283 | 251 | 130 | 584 | 558 | 641 | 441 | 435 |
| Graduate | 1 494 | 1 398 | 1 237 | 1 152 | 1 037 | 1 435 | 1 484 | 1 243 | 1 199 | 1 375 |
| APS 1 | 369 | 160 | 130 | 181 | 36 | 47 | 57 | 44 | 47 | 70 |
| APS 2 | 707 | 458 | 271 | 281 | 151 | 486 | 456 | 172 | 166 | 183 |
| APS 3 | 3 048 | 2 019 | 1 298 | 533 | 247 | 2 495 | 1 631 | 2 088 | 777 | 1 493 |
| APS 4 | 1 767 | 1 768 | 1 222 | 462 | 142 | 2 021 | 1 544 | 1 522 | 1 567 | 1 666 |
| APS 5 | 1 545 | 1 600 | 880 | 427 | 157 | 1 317 | 1 065 | 1 071 | 1 528 | 1 373 |
| APS 6 | 1 875 | 1 832 | 1 148 | 673 | 241 | 1 321 | 1 305 | 1 213 | 1 633 | 1 787 |
| EL 1 | 1 238 | 1 215 | 778 | 467 | 140 | 787 | 685 | 672 | 795 | 848 |
| EL 2 | 441 | 437 | 346 | 185 | 58 | 360 | 292 | 268 | 322 | 341 |
| SES 1 | 47 | 51 | 44 | 24 | 17 | 157 | 48 | 47 | 57 | 47 |
| SES 2 | 16 | 26 | 13 | 12 | 9 | 31 | 17 | 26 | 15 | 25 |
| SES 3 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 6 | 6 | 10 | 3 |
| Total | 12 829 | 11 272 | 7 651 | 4 649 | 2 367 | 11 050 | 9 148 | 9 013 | 8 557 | 9 646 |

Source: APSED

Table A3.2: Ongoing APS engagements by age group (2010–11 to 2019–20)

| Age group (years) | 2010 –11 | 2011 –12 | 2012 –13 | 2013 –14 | 2014 –15 | 2015 –16 | 2016 –17 | 2017 –18 | 2018 –19 | 2019 –20 |
|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Under 20 | 231 | 232 | 152 | 108 | 74 | 158 | 169 | 126 | 149 | 139 |
| 20–24 | 2 781 | 2 368 | 1 691 | 1 095 | 702 | 2 020 | 1 811 | 1 751 | 1 477 | 1 761 |
| 25–29 | 2 890 | 2 481 | 1 716 | 1 034 | 632 | 2 533 | 2 101 | 1 939 | 1 836 | 2 098 |
| 30–34 | 1 873 | 1 624 | 1 148 | 674 | 317 | 1 796 | 1 360 | 1 428 | 1 286 | 1 450 |
| 35–39 | 1 378 | 1 276 | 838 | 470 | 166 | 1 297 | 1 001 | 1 097 | 1 043 | 1 210 |
| 40–44 | 1 205 | 1 134 | 732 | 380 | 163 | 1 062 | 873 | 878 | 859 | 934 |
| 45–49 | 1 069 | 896 | 553 | 339 | 130 | 893 | 718 | 744 | 773 | 834 |
| 50–54 | 751 | 660 | 420 | 254 | 103 | 685 | 591 | 535 | 560 | 620 |
| 55–59 | 458 | 411 | 278 | 187 | 55 | 425 | 380 | 341 | 372 | 415 |
| 60 and over | 193 | 190 | 123 | 108 | 25 | 181 | 144 | 174 | 202 | 185 |
| Total | 12 829 | 11 272 | 7 651 | 4 649 | 2 367 | 11 050 | 9 148 | 9 013 | 8 557 | 9 646 |

Source: APSED

In 2019–20 there were 9,750 ongoing separations (Table A3.3). The number of separations decreased from 12,110 at 30 June 2019. Unlike engagements, separations have remained relatively steady over time.

Table A3.3: Ongoing APS separations by classification (2010–11 to 2019–20)

| Classification | 2010 –11 | 2011 –12 | 2012 –13 | 2013 –14 | 2014 –15 | 2015 –16 | 2016 –17 | 2017 –18 | 2018 –19 | 2019 –20 |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Trainee | 36 | 52 | 40 | 44 | 38 | 59 | 61 | 75 | 120 | 79 |
| Graduate | 85 | 76 | 55 | 60 | 38 | 42 | 60 | 59 | 91 | 114 |
| APS 1 | 143 | 135 | 123 | 100 | 85 | 59 | 61 | 69 | 51 | 49 |
| APS 2 | 375 | 363 | 315 | 328 | 331 | 279 | 241 | 306 | 246 | 248 |
| APS 3 | 1 575 | 1 452 | 1 235 | 1 273 | 1 139 | 991 | 1 190 | 1 219 | 1 047 | 905 |
| APS 4 | 2 074 | 1 768 | 1 627 | 1 800 | 1 748 | 1 554 | 1 689 | 1 888 | 2 225 | 1 550 |
| APS 5 | 1 465 | 1 436 | 1 354 | 1 422 | 1 391 | 1 285 | 1 434 | 1 479 | 1 786 | 1 278 |
| APS 6 | 2 167 | 2 161 | 2 052 | 2 272 | 2 302 | 1 911 | 2 123 | 2 319 | 2 886 | 2 224 |
| EL 1 | 1 588 | 1 842 | 1 736 | 2 375 | 2 191 | 2 275 | 1 756 | 1 733 | 2 226 | 1 836 |
| EL 2 | 843 | 951 | 931 | 1 363 | 1 148 | 1 082 | 882 | 920 | 1 175 | 1 238 |
| SES 1 | 119 | 130 | 142 | 188 | 170 | 177 | 174 | 159 | 178 | 147 |
| SES 2 | 44 | 57 | 47 | 78 | 72 | 70 | 65 | 65 | 64 | 69 |
| SES 3 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 14 | 20 | 18 | 15 | 13 |
| Total | 10 528 | 10 438 | 9 672 | 11 316 | 10 666 | 9 798 | 9 756 | 10 309 | 12 110 | 9 750 |

Source: APSED

Classification structures

At June 30 2020, the most commonly engaged classification was at the APS 6 level. This continues the trend of the last decade since APS 6 became the most common classification in 2011.

Table A3.4: Number of APS employees by base classification at 30 June (2011 to 2020)

| Classification | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Trainee | 311 | 367 | 356 | 346 | 221 | 581 | 618 | 764 | 564 | 544 |
| Graduate | 1 595 | 1 528 | 1 413 | 1 318 | 1 196 | 1 571 | 1 685 | 1 485 | 1 447 | 1 618 |
| APS 1 | 2 692 | 4 010 | 5 262 | 4 945 | 4 351 | 3 899 | 2 904 | 2 679 | 2 852 | 2 247 |
| APS 2 | 6 282 | 5 994 | 5 224 | 5 071 | 4 671 | 5 002 | 4 603 | 4 701 | 4 413 | 6 272 |
| APS 3 | 22 477 | 20 909 | 20 468 | 19 203 | 19 400 | 20 765 | 18 423 | 17 215 | 15 334 | 15 823 |
| APS 4 | 32 211 | 32 010 | 31 856 | 30 707 | 30 638 | 30 578 | 29 497 | 29 481 | 28 096 | 27 287 |
| APS 5 | 22 181 | 22 547 | 22 243 | 21 241 | 20 672 | 20 932 | 21 234 | 20 848 | 20 578 | 21 118 |
| APS 6 | 33 150 | 33 905 | 33 679 | 32 406 | 31 247 | 32 669 | 33 121 | 32 975 | 32 974 | 33 997 |
| EL 1 | 28 443 | 29 539 | 29 308 | 27 568 | 25 852 | 25 485 | 25 544 | 25 661 | 26 022 | 26 946 |
| EL 2 | 13 367 | 13 702 | 13 552 | 12 543 | 11 523 | 11 488 | 11 665 | 11 753 | 11 728 | 11 817 |
| SES 1 | 2 033 | 2 096 | 2 055 | 1 919 | 1 822 | 1 965 | 1 978 | 2 024 | 2 051 | 2 069 |
| SES 2 | 586 | 592 | 598 | 552 | 531 | 544 | 559 | 555 | 583 | 603 |
| SES 3 | 144 | 140 | 132 | 121 | 116 | 125 | 120 | 126 | 140 | 133 |
| Total | 165 472 | 167 339 | 166 146 | 157 940 | 152 240 | 155 604 | 151 951 | 150 267 | 146 782 | 150 474 |

Source: APSED

Age profile

Between June 2019 and June 2020 the average age of APS employees dropped from 43.6 to 43.5. Most APS employees are still aged between 35 and 55 however in the last year the proportion of employees under 30 and over 60 increased while the proportion of those between 30 and 60 decreased slightly (Table A3.5).

Table A3.5: Number of APS employees by age group at 30 June (2011 to 2020)

| Age group (years) | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Under 20 | 635 | 659 | 725 | 469 | 457 | 578 | 407 | 456 | 431 | 569 |
| 20–24 | 8 208 | 7 730 | 7 042 | 5 643 | 5 238 | 5 883 | 5 507 | 5 527 | 5 309 | 6 305 |
| 25–29 | 19 318 | 18 889 | 18 050 | 15 834 | 14 392 | 14 320 | 13 649 | 12 944 | 12 587 | 13 147 |
| 30–34 | 21 410 | 21 895 | 21 984 | 21 030 | 20 149 | 20 263 | 19 181 | 18 437 | 17 219 | 17 061 |
| 35–39 | 22 336 | 22 221 | 21 897 | 21 144 | 20 588 | 21 305 | 21 257 | 21 126 | 20 680 | 20 979 |
| 40–44 | 22 555 | 23 088 | 23 136 | 22 438 | 22 086 | 21 981 | 21 282 | 20 852 | 20 755 | 20 984 |
| 45–49 | 23 973 | 23 460 | 22 840 | 21 837 | 21 059 | 21 704 | 21 787 | 21 905 | 21 708 | 22 012 |
| 50–54 | 23 245 | 23 860 | 24 036 | 23 184 | 22 353 | 22 174 | 21 262 | 20 635 | 19 977 | 20 153 |
| 55–59 | 14 759 | 15 330 | 15 664 | 15 582 | 15 410 | 16 168 | 16 361 | 16 700 | 16 407 | 16 764 |
| 60 and over | 9 033 | 10 207 | 10 772 | 10 779 | 10 508 | 11 228 | 11 258 | 11 685 | 11 709 | 12 500 |
| Total | 165 472 | 167 339 | 166 146 | 157 940 | 152 240 | 155 604 | 151 951 | 150 267 | 146 782 | 150 474 |

Source: APSED

The age of APS employees generally increases with seniority with the exception of APS 1 employees.

APS 1 employees are considerably older on average than all classifications below EL 2. The average age of women at the APS 1 classification (48.1 years) was only younger than that of SES Band 2 and 3. In general, men at the APS 6 classification and above are older than women at the same level.

Gender

The gender profile of the APS has been skewed towards women since 1999, when they became the majority of employees. However, in the last 10 years the proportion of women has grown from 57.7% to 60.0% (Table A3.6).

Table A3.6: Gender representation in the APS at 30 June (2011 to 2020)

| Gender | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Men | 70 026 | 70 793 | 69 861 | 66 215 | 63 225 | 63 703 | 62 292 | 61 498 | 59 173 | 60 127 |
| Women | 95 427 | 96 525 | 96 261 | 91 699 | 88 988 | 91 872 | 89 630 | 88 720 | 87 536 | 90 235 |
| X | . | . | . | . | . | . | 29 | 49 | 73 | 112 |
| Total | 165 472 | 167 339 | 166 146 | 157 940 | 152 240 | 155 604 | 151 951 | 150 267 | 146 782 | 150 474 |

Source: APSED

There remains a lower proportion of women at EL 2 and SES levels compared to men. However, the numbers at these levels continue to rise (Table A3.7).

Table A3.7: Gender representation by classification at 30 June (2011 to 2020)

| Classification | Gender | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Trainee | Men | 139 | 187 | 146 | 152 | 112 | 275 | 321 | 406 | 252 | 250 |
| | Women | 172 | 180 | 210 | 194 | 109 | 306 | 297 | 356 | 312 | 293 |
| Graduate | Men | 794 | 778 | 657 | 677 | 628 | 792 | 831 | 753 | 743 | 826 |
| | Women | 801 | 750 | 755 | 641 | 568 | 779 | 853 | 731 | 700 | 789 |
| APS 1 | Men | 989 | 1 332 | 1 833 | 1 728 | 1 453 | 1 220 | 968 | 897 | 911 | 730 |
| | Women | 1 703 | 2 678 | 3 429 | 3 217 | 2 898 | 2 679 | 1 936 | 1 782 | 1 940 | 1 514 |
| APS 2 | Men | 2 127 | 2 226 | 1 948 | 1 930 | 1 802 | 1 976 | 1 835 | 1 866 | 1 745 | 2 435 |
| | Women | 4 153 | 3 767 | 3 275 | 3 141 | 2 869 | 3 026 | 2 768 | 2 833 | 2 664 | 3 833 |
| APS 3 | Men | 7 833 | 7 078 | 6 908 | 6 442 | 6 506 | 7 001 | 6 237 | 5 829 | 5 261 | 5 337 |
| | Women | 14 643 | 13 829 | 13 557 | 12 757 | 12 890 | 13 759 | 12 181 | 11 372 | 10 047 | 10 448 |
| APS 4 | Men | 9 717 | 9 781 | 9 920 | 9 553 | 9 574 | 9 387 | 9 058 | 9 182 | 8 727 | 8 497 |
| | Women | 22 490 | 22 223 | 21 931 | 21 147 | 21 056 | 21 184 | 20 431 | 20 284 | 19 356 | 18 769 |
| APS 5 | Men | 9 195 | 9 252 | 9 059 | 8 604 | 8 321 | 8 341 | 8 382 | 8 171 | 7 900 | 7 953 |
| | Women | 12 984 | 13 293 | 13 182 | 12 635 | 12 349 | 12 589 | 12 852 | 12 675 | 12 669 | 13 149 |
| APS 6 | Men | 14 882 | 15 259 | 15 041 | 14 461 | 13 825 | 14 267 | 14 242 | 14 088 | 13 710 | 14 115 |
| | Women | 18 263 | 18 642 | 18 633 | 17 940 | 17 417 | 18 396 | 18 873 | 18 882 | 19 257 | 19 869 |
| EL 1 | Men | 14 596 | 15 021 | 14 732 | 13 854 | 12 902 | 12 516 | 12 470 | 12 431 | 12 289 | 12 488 |
| | Women | 13 843 | 14 513 | 14 570 | 13 707 | 12 943 | 12 962 | 13 067 | 13 223 | 13 725 | 14 447 |
| EL 2 | Men | 8 033 | 8 155 | 7 930 | 7 259 | 6 637 | 6 419 | 6 436 | 6 380 | 6 148 | 6 039 |
| | Women | 5 334 | 5 547 | 5 622 | 5 284 | 4 886 | 5 068 | 5 228 | 5 373 | 5 580 | 5 778 |
| SES 1 | Men | 1 239 | 1 253 | 1 213 | 1 119 | 1 054 | 1 090 | 1 101 | 1 080 | 1 054 | 1 035 |
| | Women | 793 | 842 | 841 | 799 | 767 | 874 | 877 | 944 | 997 | 1 033 |
| SES 2 | Men | 379 | 371 | 381 | 352 | 337 | 339 | 341 | 341 | 354 | 349 |
| | Women | 207 | 221 | 217 | 200 | 194 | 205 | 217 | 213 | 228 | 253 |
| SES 3 | Men | 103 | 100 | 93 | 84 | 74 | 80 | 70 | 74 | 79 | 73 |
| | Women | 41 | 40 | 39 | 37 | 42 | 45 | 50 | 52 | 61 | 60 |

Source: APSED

Table A3.8 presents the proportion of APS employees belonging to each diversity group.

Table A3.8: Proportion of APS employees by diversity group (2011 to 2020)

| Diversity group | 2011 (%) | 2012 (%) | 2013 (%) | 2014 (%) | 2015 (%) | 2016 (%) | 2017 (%) | 2018 (%) | 2019 (%) | 2020 (%) |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Women | 57.7 | 57.7 | 57.9 | 58.1 | 58.5 | 59.0 | 59.0 | 59.0 | 59.6 | 60.0 |
| Indigenous | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 3.5 |
| People with disability | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 4.0 |
| Non-English speaking background | 14.2 | 14.5 | 14.5 | 14.8 | 14.8 | 14.8 | 14.8 | 14.8 | 14.8 | 14.3 |

Source: APSED

APPENDIX 4: Supporting statistics to the report

This appendix presents additional data that supports the content included in the main chapters of this report.

Machinery of Government changes

Machinery of Government (MoG) changes involve the movement of functions, resources and people from one agency to another and are executed by Government decisions; predominantly through Administrative Arrangement Orders (AAOs), the engagement of employees under the *Public Service Act 1999* or the compulsory movement of employees outside of the APS.

In total, there were 20 MoGs executed over the 2019–20 financial year, including the decisions to reduce the number of departments from 18 to 14.¹⁹⁹ The most significant changes were:

- Employment and skills functions (2,190 employees) transferring to the renamed Department of Education, Skills and Employment (previously the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business).
- Agriculture functions (5,084 employees) transferring to the renamed Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (previously the Department of Agriculture).
- Communications and arts functions (568 employees) transferring to the renamed Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (previously the Department of Communications and the Arts).
- The Department known as Services Australia was abolished and established as a new Executive Agency within the Social Services Portfolio.

¹⁹⁹ The Hon Scott Morrison MP. (2019). *New Structure of Government Departments*. 5 December.

Table A4.1: Machinery of Government changes (2019–20)

| Date | AAO |
|------------------|---|
| 1 July 2019 | <p>The National Indigenous Australians Agency was established and 1,105 employees were moved from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to the National Indigenous Australians Agency.</p> <p>The Department of Social Services moved 92 employees to the Department of Home Affairs.</p> <p>The Department of Education moved 17 employees to the Department of Home Affairs.</p> <p>1,973 employees from the Australian Securities and Investments Commission left coverage of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i>.</p> |
| 8 July 2019 | The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet moved a further 2 employees to the National Indigenous Australians Agency |
| 25 July 2019 | <p>The Department of Education moved 472 employees to the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business.</p> <p>The Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business moved 362 employees to the Attorney-General's Department.</p> |
| 1 August 2019 | The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet moved 92 employees to the National Indigenous Australians Agency. |
| 17 October 2019 | One employee was moved under the employment coverage of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> in the National Disability Insurance Agency. |
| 11 November 2019 | Six employees were moved under the employment coverage of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> in the National Disability Insurance Agency. |
| 25 November 2019 | Three employees were moved under the employment coverage of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> in the National Disability Insurance Agency. |
| 1 January 2020 | The Department of Health moved 67 employees to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, which established on that day. |
| 20 January 2020 | Three employees were moved under the employment coverage of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> in the National Disability Insurance Agency. |
| 23 January 2020 | <p>The Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business moved 3 employees to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.</p> <p>The Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business moved 86 employees to the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.</p> <p>The Department of Environment and Energy moved 522 employees following the transfer of energy functions to Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.</p> |
| 1 February 2020 | <p>The Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business moved 2,190 employees following the transfer of employment and skills functions to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.</p> <p>The Department of Agriculture moved 5,084 employees following the transfer of agriculture functions to the renamed Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.</p> <p>The Department of Communications and the Arts moved 568 employees following the transfer of communications and arts functions to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.</p> <p>The Department known as Services Australia (formerly known as the Department of Human Services) was abolished. Services Australia was established as an Executive Agency within the Social Services Portfolio.</p> |

| Date | AAO |
|-----------------|---|
| 6 February 2020 | Services Australia moved 47 employees to the Department of Social Services. The Department of Social Services moved 206 employees to Services Australia. |
| 14 April 2020 | One employee was moved under the employment coverage of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> , in the National Disability Insurance Agency. |
| 11 May 2020 | One employee was moved under the employment coverage of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> , in the National Disability Insurance Agency. |
| 14 May 2020 | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet moved 36 employees to the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency (previously North Queensland Livestock Industry Recovery Agency). |

Code of Conduct

Breaches of the APS Code of Conduct

Table A4.2 presents the number of APS employees investigated by agencies for suspected breaches of individual elements of the APS Code of Conduct and the number of breach findings in 2019–20. One employee can be investigated for multiple elements of the Code of Conduct of the *Public Service Act 1999*.

Table A4.2: Number of APS employees investigated and found in breach of elements of the APS Code of Conduct (2019–20)

| Element of Code of Conduct | Investigated | Breached |
|--|--------------|----------|
| Behave honestly and with integrity in connection with APS employment (s. 13(1)) | 325 | 269 |
| Act with care and diligence in connection with APS employment (s. 13(2)) | 206 | 167 |
| When acting in connection with APS employment, treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment (s. 13(3)) | 139 | 104 |
| When acting in connection with APS employment comply with all applicable Australian laws (s. 13(4)) | 34 | 16 |
| Comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given by someone in the employee's Agency who has authority to give the direction (s. 13(5)) | 195 | 142 |
| Maintain appropriate confidentiality about dealings that the employee has with any Minister or Minister's member of staff (s. 13(6)) | 1 | 0 |

| Element of Code of Conduct | Investigated | Breached |
|---|--------------|----------|
| Take reasonable steps to avoid any conflict of interest (real or apparent), and disclose details of any material personal interest of the employee, in connection with the employee's APS employment (s. 13(7)) | 87 | 69 |
| Use Commonwealth resources in a proper manner and for a proper purpose (s. 13(8)) | 138 | 104 |
| Not provide false or misleading information in response to a request for information that is made for official purposes in connection with the employee's APS employment (s. 13(9)) | 66 | 51 |
| Not make improper use of: inside information, or the employee's duties, status, power or authority, in order to: a) gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for the employee or any other person; or b) cause, or seek to cause, a detriment to the employee's Agency, the Commonwealth or any other person (s. 13(10)) | 63 | 43 |
| At all times behave in a way that upholds the APS Values and APS Employment Principles, and the integrity and good reputation of the employee's Agency and the APS (s. 13(11)) | 495 | 434 |
| While on duty overseas, at all times behave in a way that upholds the good reputation of Australia (s. 13(12)) | 3 | 2 |
| Comply with any other conduct requirement that is prescribed by the regulations (s. 13(13)) | 1 | 1 |

Source: 2020 APS agency survey

Sources of reports

Table A4.3 presents the number of APS employees investigated for suspected breaches of the APS Code of Conduct during 2019–20 that resulted from each type of report.

Table A4.3: Type of reports leading to finalised APS Code of Conduct investigations (2019–20)

| Type of report | Number of employees |
|---|---------------------|
| A report generated by a compliance/monitoring system (e.g. audit) | 264 |
| A report made to a central conduct or ethics unit or nominated person in a human resources area | 263 |
| A report made to an email reporting address | 53 |
| A report made to a fraud prevention and control unit or hotline | 36 |
| A Public Interest Disclosure | 16 |
| A report made to an employee advice or counselling unit | 7 |
| A report made to another hotline | 2 |
| Other | 19 |

Source: 2020 APS agency survey

Outcomes of reports

Table A4.4 presents the outcomes for APS employees investigated for suspected breaches of the APS Code of Conduct during 2019–20.

Table A4.4: Outcome of investigations into suspected breaches of the APS Code of Conduct (2019–20)

| Outcome | Number of employees |
|--|---------------------|
| Breach found and sanction applied | 390 |
| Breach found but no sanction applied: employee resigned prior to sanction decision | 90 |
| No breach found (for any element of the Code) | 90 |
| Breach found but no sanction applied: other reason | 50 |
| Investigation discontinued: employee resigned | 20 |
| Investigation discontinued: other reason | 17 |

Source: 2020 APS agency survey

Table A4.5 presents the sanctions applied to APS employees found to have breached the APS Code of Conduct during 2019–20.

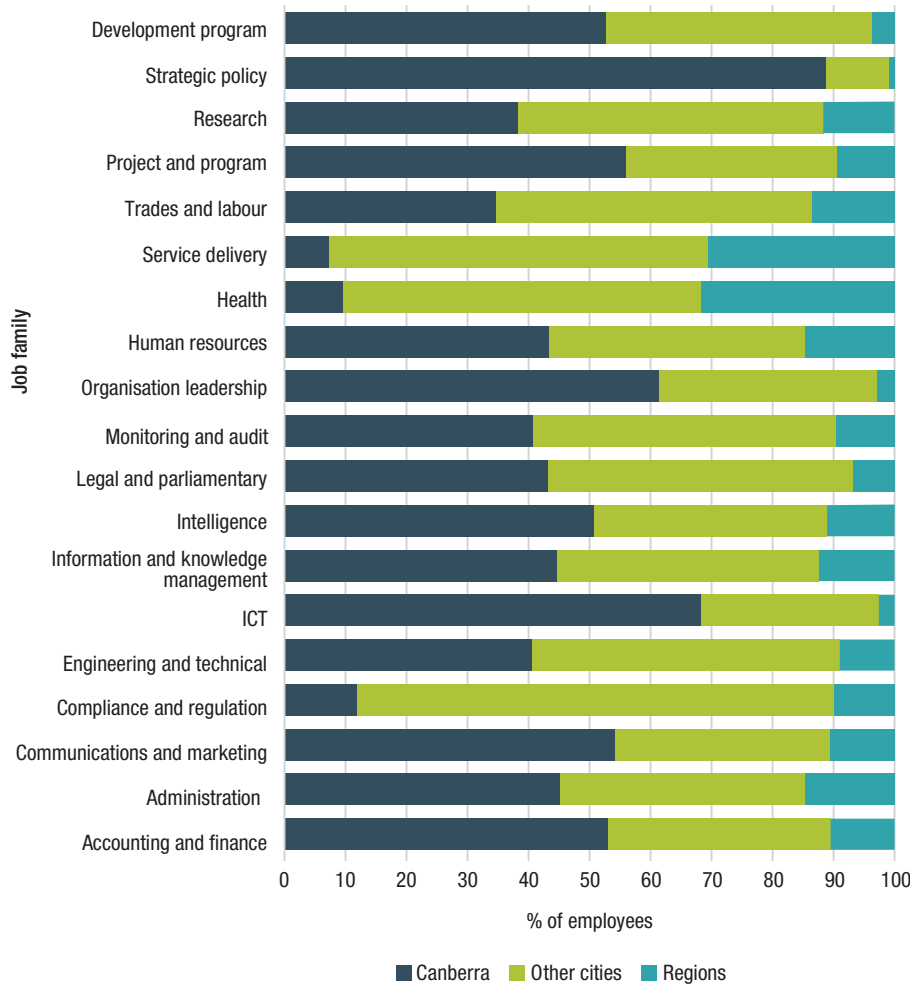
Table A4.5: Sanctions imposed for breaches of the APS Code of Conduct (2019–20)

| Sanction | Number of employees |
|--|---------------------|
| Reprimand | 259 |
| Reduction in salary | 109 |
| Deduction from salary by way of a fine | 88 |
| Termination of employment | 87 |
| Reduction in classification | 26 |
| Re-assignment of duties | 15 |

Source: 2020 APS agency survey

Location

Figure A4.6: Job families, by location (30 June 2020)



Source: APSSED

Harassment and bullying

Table A4.7 presents the number of recorded complaints of harassment and bullying made by APS employees within APS agencies during 2019–20.

Table A4.7: Complaints to agencies about harassment and bullying (2019–20)

| Type of harassment or bullying | Number of complaints |
|---|----------------------|
| Verbal abuse (e.g. offensive language, derogatory remarks, shouting or screaming) | 132 |
| Inappropriate and unfair application of work policies or rules (e.g. performance management, access to leave, access to learning and development) | 90 |
| Interference with work tasks (e.g. withholding needed information, undermining or sabotage) | 53 |
| Sexual harassment | 32 |
| Physical behaviour | 19 |
| Cyberbullying (e.g. harassment via IT, or the spreading of gossip/materials intended to defame/humiliate) | 19 |
| Interference with personal property or work equipment | 3 |
| Initiations or pranks | 1 |
| Other | 56 |
| Total number of complaints about bullying/harassment | 531 |

Appendix 5: Unscheduled absence

The APSC remains committed to managing workplace absence and collects data from APS agencies.

Unscheduled absence includes personal, carers and miscellaneous leave (bereavement, compassionate and emergency leave). It includes instances of these leave types with or without a supporting medical certificate, whether paid or unpaid.

The unscheduled absence rate is calculated as the average number of days per employee taken over the preceding 12 month period.

While the unscheduled absence rate has remained relatively stable over the last 5 years, this year saw the rate decrease to 11.2.

Table A5.1: Unscheduled absence (2015–16 to 2019–20)

| Year | 2015–16 | 2016–17 | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Rate (days) | 11.5 | 11.4 | 11.4 | 11.4 | 11.2 |

Table A5.2 shows unscheduled absence rates by agency size for the financial year 2019–20. The absence rate by agency size has dropped slightly from financial year 2018–19, influenced by a reduction in large agency unscheduled absence rates. This could be a reflection of the change in working conditions due to COVID-19.

Table A5.2: Unscheduled absence by agency size (2018–19 and 2019–20)

| Agency size | Unscheduled absence 2018–19 (days) | Unscheduled absence 2019–20 (days) |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Small agencies | 10.7 | 10.6 |
| Medium agencies | 11.6 | 11.6 |
| Large agencies | 12.7 | 11.9 |
| Overall APS | 11.4 | 11.2 |

Table A5.3 provides personal and miscellaneous leave use and unscheduled absence rate by agency, 2018–19 and 2019–20 (expressed as an average number of days). It should be noted, for small agencies a small number of individuals with high leave levels can influence the unscheduled absence rate substantially.

Due to Machinery of Government changes in February 2020, care should be taken when comparing affected agencies.

Table A5.3: Sick leave, carer's leave, miscellaneous leave and unscheduled absence rate by agency (2018–19 and 2019–20) (expressed as an average number of days)

| Agency name | Sick leave 2019–20 | Carer's leave 2019–20 | Miscellaneous leave 2019–20 | Total unscheduled absence rate 2019–20 | Total unscheduled absence rate 2018–19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Aboriginal Hostels Limited | 13.1 | 1.4 | 0.6 | 15.1 | 14.2 |
| Administrative Appeals Tribunal | 8.1 | 1.6 | 0.7 | 10.5 | 13.5 |
| Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission | 9.1 | 2.0 | 0.6 | 11.7 | . |
| Agriculture, Water and the Environment ^{tab} | 9.6 | 2.7 | 0.9 | 13.1 | 12.0 |
| Attorney-General's Department | 7.4 | 1.9 | 0.3 | 9.6 | 11.1 |
| Australian Building and Construction Commission | 10.6 | 1.4 | 0.3 | 12.3 | 11.1 |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | 9.0 | 2.5 | 0.5 | 12.0 | 12.0 |
| Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research | 7.2 | 3.3 | 0.1 | 10.6 | 8.1 |
| Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission | 7.7 | 1.9 | 0.1 | 9.7 | 6.8 |
| Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity | 6.3 | 2.2 | 0.5 | 9.0 | 11.2 |
| Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care | 7.6 | 1.2 | 0.6 | 9.4 | 13.8 |
| Australian Communications and Media Authority | 9.4 | 2.9 | 0.3 | 12.6 | 12.4 |
| Australian Competition Consumer Commission | 6.5 | 1.5 | 0.4 | 8.4 | 9.1 |
| Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission | 7.6 | 2.1 | 0.2 | 9.8 | 11.4 |
| Australian Digital Health Agency | 8.2 | 1.0 | 0.7 | 9.9 | 17.0 |
| Australian Electoral Commission | 11.7 | 2.3 | 0.4 | 14.4 | 10.6 |
| Australian Financial Security Authority | 8.7 | 1.8 | 0.2 | 10.8 | 12.1 |
| Australian Fisheries Management Authority | 8.4 | 3.3 | 3.5 | 15.2 | 11.6 |
| Australian Human Rights Commission | 4.7 | 2.3 | 0.3 | 7.3 | 8.0 |
| Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies | 9.0 | 2.2 | 0.6 | 11.7 | 12.3 |

| Agency name | Sick leave 2019–20 | Carer's leave 2019–20 | Miscellaneous leave 2019–20 | Total unscheduled absence rate 2019–20 | Total unscheduled absence rate 2018–19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Australian Institute of Family Studies | 9.1 | 1.5 | 0.7 | 11.3 | 11.3 |
| Australian Institute of Health and Welfare | 8.8 | 2.3 | 0.7 | 11.7 | 11.3 |
| Australian National Audit Office | 7.1 | 1.4 | 0.2 | 8.8 | 9.8 |
| Australian National Maritime Museum | 7.6 | 1.6 | 0.6 | 9.8 | 9.2 |
| Australian Office of Financial Management | 4.3 | 3.4 | 0.1 | 7.7 | 8.7 |
| Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority | 6.4 | 2.4 | 0.8 | 9.5 | 11.9 |
| Australian Public Service Commission | 10.6 | 1.9 | 0.5 | 13.0 | 10.9 |
| Australian Radiation Protection & Nuclear Safety Agency | 8.5 | 3.5 | 0.3 | 12.3 | 10.5 |
| Australian Research Council | 8.6 | 3.2 | 1.7 | 13.6 | 16.4 |
| Australian Skills Quality Authority | 9.7 | 1.5 | 0.3 | 11.5 | 10.7 |
| Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority | 6.8 | 1.4 | 0.4 | 8.6 | 6.9 |
| Australian Taxation Office | 9.3 | 2.0 | 0.3 | 11.6 | 11.9 |
| Australian Trade Commission | 6.8 | 2.0 | 0.2 | 8.9 | 10.0 |
| Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre | 6.4 | 2.2 | 0.4 | 9.0 | 8.2 |
| Australian Transport Safety Bureau | 7.1 | 1.9 | 0.2 | 9.3 | 9.8 |
| Australian War Memorial | 8.2 | 4.3 | 1.1 | 13.5 | 10.5 |
| Bureau of Meteorology | 6.4 | 2.2 | 0.2 | 8.8 | 9.9 |
| Cancer Australia* | 4.4 | 1.0 | 0.1 | 5.5 | 9.2 |
| Clean Energy Regulator | 11.8 | 2.4 | 0.8 | 15.0 | 16.8 |
| Comcare | 12.1 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 16.2 | 16.7 |
| Commonwealth Grants Commission | 10.1 | 1.9 | 0.2 | 12.2 | 7.2 |
| Commonwealth Ombudsman | 9.9 | 2.8 | 0.2 | 12.9 | 11.2 |

| Agency name | Sick leave 2019–20 | Carer's leave 2019–20 | Miscellaneous leave 2019–20 | Total unscheduled absence rate 2019–20 | Total unscheduled absence rate 2018–19 |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Defence | 10.1 | 2.0 | 0.3 | 12.4 | 13.3 |
| Defence Housing Australia | 8.9 | 2.5 | 1.3 | 12.7 | 10.7 |
| Digital Transformation Agency ^a | 7.7 | 1.8 | 0.2 | 9.7 | 10.6 |
| Director of Public Prosecutions | 6.1 | 2.1 | 0.2 | 8.4 | 5.9 |
| Education, Skills and Employment ^a | 9.8 | 2.9 | 0.4 | 13.1 | 14.1 |
| Fair Work Commission* | 6.4 | 1.5 | 0.9 | 8.8 | 9.2 |
| Federal Court Statutory Agency | 6.5 | 1.8 | 0.4 | 8.7 | 10.0 |
| Finance | 8.2 | 2.4 | 0.2 | 10.9 | 12.7 |
| Food Standards Australia New Zealand | 7.1 | 2.2 | 0.3 | 9.6 | 8.2 |
| Foreign Affairs and Trade | 7.8 | 2.4 | 0.2 | 10.4 | 10.3 |
| Future Fund Management Agency | 2.5 | 1.0 | 0.1 | 3.6 | 4.8 |
| Geoscience Australia | 7.0 | 3.7 | 0.5 | 11.2 | 10.1 |
| Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority | 11.6 | 2.8 | 1.1 | 15.5 | 15.6 |
| Health | 9.0 | 1.9 | 0.7 | 11.7 | 12.8 |
| Home Affairs | 11.4 | 3.2 | 0.3 | 14.9 | 15.7 |
| Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority | 11.0 | 3.3 | 0.0 | 14.4 | 14.9 |
| Industry, Science, Energy and Resources ^a | 7.9 | 1.5 | 0.4 | 9.8 | 11.0 |
| Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications ^a | 8.3 | 2.1 | 0.3 | 10.7 | 11.8 |
| Inspector-General of Taxation and Taxation Ombudsman | 7.0 | 1.6 | 0.1 | 8.7 | 6.2 |
| IP Australia | 8.4 | 3.0 | 0.3 | 11.7 | 12.7 |
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 7.1 | 2.5 | 0.2 | 9.8 | 12.1 |
| Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House | 9.1 | 2.6 | 0.4 | 12.1 | 12.2 |

| Agency name | Sick leave 2019–20 | Carer's leave 2019–20 | Miscellaneous leave 2019–20 | Total unscheduled absence rate 2019–20 | Total unscheduled absence rate 2018–19 |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| National Archives of Australia | 11.5 | 2.3 | 0.3 | 14.2 | 15.7 |
| National Blood Authority | 8.0 | 1.6 | 0.3 | 9.9 | 9.3 |
| National Capital Authority | 5.9 | 2.2 | 0.6 | 8.7 | 11.6 |
| National Disability Insurance Agency | 10.4 | 1.9 | 0.7 | 13.1 | 13.3 |
| National Film and Sound Archive | 9.7 | 3.0 | 1.1 | 13.7 | 15.2 |
| National Health and Medical Research Council | 8.8 | 2.8 | 0.2 | 11.7 | 11.1 |
| National Health Funding Body | 7.1 | 1.7 | 0.1 | 8.9 | 9.8 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 11.6 | 2.8 | 0.5 | 14.9 | . |
| National Library of Australia | 11.6 | 3.1 | 0.6 | 15.3 | 14.2 |
| National Museum of Australia | 10.1 | 2.6 | 0.4 | 13.2 | 13.6 |
| National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority | 6.8 | 1.2 | 0.4 | 8.4 | 9.7 |
| National Portrait Gallery | 7.0 | 2.6 | 0.8 | 10.3 | 11.7 |
| NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission | 8.9 | 1.7 | 0.3 | 11.0 | . |
| Office of National Intelligence | 5.5 | 4.1 | 2.0 | 11.6 | 6.9 |
| Office of Parliamentary Counsel | 5.7 | 1.2 | 0.5 | 7.4 | 13.1 |
| Office of the Australian Information Commissioner | 7.3 | 1.9 | 0.3 | 9.4 | 12.0 |
| Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman | 8.9 | 2.2 | 0.4 | 11.4 | 13.0 |
| Organ and Tissue Authority | 8.7 | 1.3 | 0.5 | 10.5 | 9.3 |
| Prime Minister and Cabinet | 8.2 | 1.6 | 0.4 | 10.1 | 13.4 |
| Productivity Commission | 6.7 | 1.2 | 0.3 | 8.2 | 10.3 |
| Royal Australian Mint | 11.8 | 4.0 | 1.1 | 17.0 | 14.5 |
| Safe Work Australia | 10.2 | 2.1 | 0.5 | 12.8 | 12.3 |

| Agency name | Sick leave 2019–20 | Carer's leave 2019–20 | Miscellaneous leave 2019–20 | Total unscheduled absence rate 2019–20 | Total unscheduled absence rate 2018–19 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Services Australia | 13.6 | 2.5 | 0.6 | 16.7 | 16.4 |
| Social Services | 10.5 | 2.3 | 0.4 | 13.2 | 13.6 |
| Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency | 7.3 | 1.2 | 0.3 | 8.7 | 6.1 |
| Torres Strait Regional Authority | 7.9 | 1.9 | 1.5 | 11.4 | 9.9 |
| Treasury | 7.3 | 1.8 | 0.3 | 9.4 | 9.7 |
| Veterans' Affairs | 11.0 | 2.2 | 0.4 | 13.7 | 15.5 |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency | 9.6 | 1.5 | 0.7 | 11.7 | 10.0 |

* Agency provided headcount (not full-time equivalent) data.

^a Agency was involved in a Machinery of Government during 2018–19 and data is not comparable to other years.

^b Agency was involved in a Machinery of Government change. As such, five months of data has been annualised to make it comparable to other agencies.

Abbreviations

| Term | Description |
|---------------|--|
| AAOs | Administrative Arrangement Orders |
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| ACMA | Australian Communications and Media Authority |
| ACT | Australian Capital Territory |
| ADF | Australian Defence Force |
| AHRI | Australian Human Resources Institute |
| ANAO | Australian National Audit Office |
| APS | Australian Public Service |
| APSC | Australian Public Service Commission |
| APSED | Australian Public Service Employment Database |
| ATO | Australian Taxation Office |
| BOM | Bureau of Meteorology |
| CALD | Culturally and Linguistically Diverse |
| COO | Chief Operating Officer |
| COO Committee | Chief Operating Officers' Committee |
| COVID | Coronavirus disease |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus disease |
| DAWE | Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment |
| DESE | Department of Education, Skills and Employment |
| DFAT | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| DPS | Department of Parliamentary Services |
| DTA | Digital Transformation Agency |
| EL | Executive Level |
| GDP | Gross domestic product |
| GLAM | Galleries, libraries, archives and museums |
| HR | Human Resources |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| IT | Information Technology |

| Term | Description |
|---------|--|
| LGBTIQ+ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Questioning/Queer + |
| MBS | Medical Benefits Schedule |
| NBRA | National Bushfire Recovery Agency |
| NCM | National Coordination Mechanism |
| NESB | Non-English Speaking Background |
| NSW | New South Wales |
| NT | Northern Territory |
| NZ | New Zealand |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development |
| PDMS | Parliamentary Document Management System |
| PM&C | Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet |
| QLD | Queensland |
| SA | South Australia |
| SES | Senior Executive Service |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics |
| TAS | Tasmania |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| U.S. | United States |
| WA | Western Australia |
| VIC | Victoria |

Glossary

| Term | Description |
|---------------------|--|
| APS agency | An APS agency operates under the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> (Cth). This includes departments, statutory agencies and executive agencies. APS agencies are a subset of Commonwealth agencies. A list of APS agencies is available on the APSC website: www.apsc.gov.au/aps-agency-listing-agencies-covered-public-service-act-1999 |
| APS employee | An APS employee is an employee engaged under the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> (Cth). |
| Base classification | Another term for substantive classification, which is the classification level an APS employee has been engaged at, or were last promoted to. |
| Commonwealth agency | An agency under the Commonwealth of Australia, including those not covered under the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> (Cth). |
| Engagement | An engagement refers to the engagement or re-engagement of employees under Section 22 of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> (Cth). Employees of agencies moving into coverage of the Act are counted as engagements. Engagement can be employment as an ongoing APS employee; for a specified term or for the duration of a specified task; or for duties that are irregular or intermittent. |
| Job family/ies | The APS Job Family Model groups functionally similar positions that have related skills, tasks and knowledge requirements. The model does not reflect work level classification. |
| Non-ongoing | Non-ongoing employment is a generic term which refers to the engagement of APS employees for either a specified term or for the duration of a specified task or for duties that are irregular or intermittent as mentioned in sections 22(2)(b) and (c) of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> (Cth). |
| Ongoing | Ongoing employment refers to the employment of an APS employee as an ongoing employee as mentioned in Section 22(2) (a) of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> (Cth). |
| Paid classification | The actual classification that an employee is currently working in. It includes employees on temporary assignment to a higher or lower classification. |
| Planned leave | Planned leave includes annual leave and long service leave. |
| Promotion | A promotion is when an existing APS employee moves to a higher classification level. For example, an APS 6 employee is successful in gaining a promotion to an EL 1 classification. |
| Unplanned leave | Includes the following leave types: sick, community service, compassionate, Defence Reservist, leave without pay, miscellaneous, parental, and workers compensation. |
| Unscheduled absence | Includes the following leave types: personal, carers and miscellaneous leave (bereavement, compassionate and emergency leave). |
| Separation | A separation occurs when an employee ceases to be employed under the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> (Cth). It does not refer to employees moving from one APS agency to another. Separations include retirement, resignations, and terminations of employment for grounds stated at section 29 in the Act. |
| Stewardship | Stewardship in the public sector context refers to the effective planning, management and protection of resources; as well as to the role of building a culture of innovation and integrity in policy advice. Under section 57 of the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i> (Cth), as part of their roles, Secretaries are expected to provide stewardship to their departments. |

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