

Building speak up culture in the APS

The Secretaries Board Capability and Workforce Committee has endorsed [guidance to support APS employees, managers and leaders to build speak up culture](#).

Frequently asked questions

What is speak up culture?

Speak up culture in the APS is based on the definition of psychological safety: “The belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes, and the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.” (Amy Edmondson, 1999).

How is it different to psychosocial safety?

Speak up culture/psychological safety and psychosocial safety impact one another but they are separate and distinct concepts. The [ADDRESS Psychosocial Safety Hazard Suite](#) includes a short brief to help people discern the differences between psychological and psychosocial safety.

Is this just for whistle blowers and raising complaints?

No. Speak up culture is not just about reporting issues and making complaints. It’s also about sharing ideas, perspectives and learnings, and celebrating successes. Speaking up is essential for open communication, continuous learning, better decision making and team performance.

Who is the guidance for?

The guidance is designed to help all APS employees, managers and senior leaders understand the importance of speak up culture, how it contributes to a culture of integrity, and practical actions they can take to help build and sustain it. Building speak up culture in the APS is a shared responsibility but managers and leaders play a key role in setting the tone and foundations for a healthy team culture.

Is the speak up culture guidance mandatory?

No. The guidance can be applied flexibly and is intended to complement, not replace, any existing agency initiatives to build speak up culture.

Can I complete the module if my team isn't interested?

Yes. The [Introductory guidance for APS leaders and employees](#) will help you understand the importance of speak up culture, how it supports APS integrity and introduces the *4C practices*. It also includes an optional activity to help you reflect on how well you demonstrate the *4C practices* and consider what action you might take to increase your capability and confidence.

What are the 4C practices?

The *4C practices* form the foundation for speak up culture:

- Listen with compassion
- Show curiosity
- Speak with candour
- Act with courage

Each of the *4C practices* has a role to play but it’s the combination of all that helps employees feel safe to speak up.

What if I can't speak up?

Sometimes there may be barriers that impact your willingness to speak up. The [Introductory guidance for APS leaders and employees](#) includes a toolkit of available resources to help you identify common barriers to speaking up and learn how to overcome them.

What do I do if my manager says we are too busy?

Building speak up culture takes time and requires consistent, intentional effort. So it's important to choose the right time to work on it. That said, small actions can lead to meaningful and lasting change. The guidance includes suggested small steps and activities that are designed to be incorporated into daily activities. You could suggest introducing one, small change at a time and look for ways to integrate the change into existing activities, like team meetings.

How does this fit with other integrity training?

This guidance will help you understand how speak up culture supports integrity in the APS. It is designed for all APS employees, managers and senior leaders.

The APS Academy has a [range of complementary training and development](#) offerings to continue building your integrity craft.