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## APS Reform Agenda

### Issue

What is the government doing to strengthen the Public Service?

### Headline Response

The Australian Public Service is implementing the Government's plan to strengthen the APS through APS Reform.

### Facts and Figures

- The Government first announced its APS Reform plan in October 2022.
  - APS Reform is based on four pillars, to create an APS that: (1) embodies integrity in everything it does; (2) puts people and business at the centre of policy and services; (3) is a model employer; and (4) has the capability to do its job well.
- On 5 December 2024, Minister Gallagher delivered the second Annual Statement on APS Reform and published the Annual Progress Report on the APS Reform website.
- 59 initiatives are collectively strengthening the APS's integrity, capability and service delivery to better serve the Australian community, with 48 initiatives (82%) complete or being delivered, and 11 initiatives (18%) progressing through design or planning.
  - The Public Service Amendment Act 2024 has locked in important changes to the Public Service Act 1999 to strengthen the core values of the APS; build APS capability and expertise; and support good governance, accountability and transparency.
  - Reform activities have strengthened integrity and built trust through the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission, updating the PGPA Fraud Rule provisions, implementing recommendations from the Integrity taskforce report (Louder than words) and strengthening protections for whistle-blowers.
  - The APS is on track to design better services aligned to the needs of people, community and business through the announcement of the Data and Digital Government Strategy, the First Nations Partnerships Playbook, the Government's response to the myGov user audit and the Charter of Partnerships and Engagement.

s 22	Cleared by: Justine Curnow
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Division: APS Reform Branch	PDR Number: QB25-000018
Date Updated: 18/07/2025 4:12:00 PM	Date Last Printed: 18/07/2025 4:12:00 PM

- Reform activities have positioned the APS as a model employer by implementing the review of the Maternity Leave Act, reporting publicly on the gender pay gap, completing APS-wide bargaining and achieving better alignment of pay and conditions, the CALD employment strategy and boosting First Nations representation at the SES level through the SES 100 program.
- Essential capability and skills across the APS are being built through the Capability Reinvestment Fund, whilst reducing the reliance on contractors and consultants through the Audit of Employment, the Strategic Commissioning Framework, and standing-up Australian Government Consulting.

### Policy Commitments

- In October 2022 the Government announced \$72.9 million in funding for the APS Reform agenda over three years including:
  - \$40.8 million over three years to deliver immediate benefits for the public sector and broader Australian public;
  - \$25 million to establish an APS Capability Reinvestment Fund, and
  - \$7.1 million reprioritised from existing resources, to establish the APS Net Zero Unit in the Department of Finance.
- In the 2023-24 Budget, funding to support APS Reform included:
  - \$8.4 million from the Contingency Reserve to build capability under the first round of the Capability Reinvestment Fund;
  - \$10.9 million to establish an in-house consulting function; and
  - \$3.4 million to boost First Nations employment in the APS.

## Background

The APS Reform agenda draws on a broad set of source material, including the 2019 Independent Review of the APS (the 'Thodey Review'); the Government's election commitments; lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic; past reform activities undertaken across the APS; elements of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap; and international experience of public sector reform, including in the UK and New Zealand.

On 1 November 2023, Minister Gallagher announced the second stage of APS Reform with 15 new initiatives in addition to the established 44 initiatives, focussed on three priority areas where there is the greatest need for ongoing reform: to bolster integrity, build an outwardly engaged APS and continue to strengthen capability.

## Recent Media Articles

**20 June 2025:** The Mandarin [Cult of the government consultant: The war is far from over](#)

**16 June 2025:** The Mandarin [Study lists ROFL lessons of robodebt](#)

**16 June 2025:** The Mandarin [Treasury leadership and APS reform under Wilkinson](#)

**13 June 2025:** The Mandarin [Kennedy and Wilkinson appointments signal public service reset. Now APS reform must catch up](#)

**12 June 2025:** The Mandarin [Public sector reform, capability must lead, not follow](#)

**22 May 2025:** The Canberra Times [Opinion | Peter Dutton misjudged APS's critical role for Australians | The Canberra Times | Canberra, ACT](#)

**12 May 2025:** The Mandarin [A second term and no more Glyn Davis. What next for the APS?](#)

**9 May 2025:** The Mandarin [Government needs to press the APS reform accelerator](#)

**9 May 2025:** The Mandarin [Toughest and trickiest public-service reforms still lie ahead](#)

**7 April 2025:** The Mandarin [Election or not, we need to stay the course with public service reinvestment](#)

**28 March 2025:** The Mandarin [Thorns among the roses: APS reforms that have not happened](#)

**14 March 2025:** The Mandarin [How capability reviews are aiding ministers and secretaries with APS future planning](#)

**10 January 2025:** The Mandarin [Albanese squibs on APS independence](#)

Public Sector Workplace Relations Arrangements

Issue

What is the Government doing to ensure there are appropriate workplace arrangements in place in the public sector?

Headline Response

The Government’s Workplace Relations Policy continues to enable Commonwealth agencies to genuinely negotiate workplace arrangements that are fair and affordable as model employers.

Facts and Figures

- The Government has delivered on its commitment to ensure the APS is a **model employer** through genuine bargaining to improve pay and working conditions that keep pace with the broader economy, are fair and affordable and provide job security.
- 103 APS agreements were approved by the Fair Work Commission and commenced by 9 May 2024. APS agreements nominally expire in February 2027.
- 48 non-APS workplace agreements have been voted on and approved by staff. A small number of non-APS agencies yet to put in place new agreements are being supported to engage in agency-level bargaining.
- Non-APS agencies have the opportunity to bargain new enterprise agreements adopting outcomes of centralised APS negotiations that meet the needs of their agency and their employees.

*If pressed on union involvement in APS workplaces*

- As a model employer, the APS supports respectful and productive relationships with employees and unions.
- APS agencies have arrangements that support the legitimate role unions and delegates play in representing employees in the workplace.

s 22	Cleared by: James O'Reilly
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Division: Workplace Relations	PDR Number: QB25-000019
Date Updated: 31/07/2025 10:35:00 AM	Date Last Printed: 31/07/2025 10:35:00 AM

## **Policy Commitments**

- As part of Labor's Plan to improve the Public Service, the Government committed to reinvigorating bargaining in the public sector through the bargaining policy. This policy has given Commonwealth employees a better opportunity to advance claims through genuine bargaining. The plan also recognised the important role that union delegates play in representing employees.

## Background

### Policy

On 28 March 2023, the *Public Sector Workplace Relations Policy 2023* was released. The Policy contains two parts, covering APS and non-APS arrangements.

APS employees received pay increases of **4 per cent** in Year 1 (March 2024), **3.8 per cent** in Year 2 (March 2025), and will receive **3.4 per cent** in Year 3. In addition, APS agreements reflect over 59 common conditions, including enhancements to flexible working arrangements and parental leave.

Under the Policy, non-APS agencies are permitted to make remuneration and conditions adjustments to ensure enterprise agreements meet the needs of the agency and employees.

Non-APS bargaining parameters were released by the APSC on 31 October 2023 outlining Government expectations on remuneration and conditions adjustments. Wage offers in the non-APS are informed by the Government's APS pay offer. Non-APS agencies may adopt APS common conditions if they meet their operational needs.

Government Business Enterprises, Public Non-financial Corporations, Public Financial Corporations, the Australian National University, the ABC and the SBS are encouraged to apply the Policy, taking into account the commercial nature of their operations.

### Senior Executive Service (SES) arrangements

The remuneration policy framework for SES officers is articulated in documents including the Policy, Executive Remuneration Management Policy and Performance Bonus Guidance. Individual SES pay arrangements are managed by Agency Heads in accordance with the guidance and expectations around fiscal discipline.

### Union engagement

As part of APS service wide bargaining, common conditions on consultation and delegates' rights were negotiated. These conditions recognise the role unions and delegates undertake in representing employees. The common conditions are complemented by circulars published by the APSC on union representation in Commonwealth agencies and consultation.

An agreed outcome of bargaining was the establishment of an APS consultative committee (ACC). The ACC meets quarterly to consider matters pertaining to the employment relationship that are of interest to the APS as a whole.

## Industrial action in the APS and non-APS

At this time no protected industrial action is being taken across Commonwealth employers.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts has held two unsuccessful enterprise agreement ballots for staff of the Indian Ocean Territories Administration. The first ballot, which closed on 6 February 2025, had a vote participation rate of 66 per cent with 54 per cent voting against the agreement. The second ballot, which closed on 23 March 2025, had a vote participation rate of 72 per cent, with 55 per cent voting against the agreement. Negotiations continue.

On 6 December 2024 employee members of the Union of Christmas Island Workers voted to take protected industrial action in the form of work stoppages and bans on call backs to undertake work.

Stoppages and bans for the Administration enterprise agreement occurred between December 2024 and March 2025. No protected industrial action has occurred since 26 March 2025.

The department is also bargaining a replacement enterprise agreement for Indian Ocean Territories Registered Nurses. To date the Registered Nurses have not sought to take protected industrial action.

## ABC bargaining

On 23 June 2025, the ABC wrote to staff advising them of the commencement of bargaining. In doing so the ABC has proposed a wage increase of 3 per cent paid from 1 October 2025 (nominal expiry of current agreement) contingent on the MEAA and CPSU committing to take no industrial action for 12 months while negotiations for a new agreement take place.

On 26 June 2025, the ABC held its first meeting with bargaining representatives. At this meeting the MEAA advised that its members did not support the proposed 3 per cent wage increase contingent on no industrial action. Negotiations continue.



**BARGAINING, PAY, CONDITIONS**

Data

**48** non-APS workplace agreements have been voted on and approved by staff, including the Australian Federal Police, Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC), the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and the agreement covering the Members of Parliament Staff (MOPS). The ASIC, CSIRO, CASA and MOPS agreements all had over 80 per cent support.

**2** non-APS agencies are currently bargaining.

**Recent Media Articles**

31 July 2025: The Canberra Times [Union calls for review of 'unacceptable' SES pay](#)

10 July 2025: Crikey [ABC staff reject pay increase that required forfeiture of strike action](#)

4 July 2025: The Australian [ALP’s power play deals unions back in](#)

23 June 2025: Capital Brief [ABC offers staff 3% pay bump if unions hold off on industrial action — Capital Brief](#)

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Division: Workplace Relations	PDR Number: QB25-000019
Date Updated: 31/07/2025 10:35:00 AM	Date Last Printed: 31/07/2025 10:35:00 AM

## Review of Public Sector Board Appointments

### Issue

What is the government doing to strengthen the integrity of public sector board appointments processes?

### Headline Response

The government undertook a review of public sector board appointments processes to consider and propose appropriate standards for the way board members are appointed to public sector boards. Ms Lynelle Briggs AO led the review. The report is with government for consideration.

### Facts and Figures

- One of the commitments under the government's APS Reform agenda was to undertake a review of arrangements and processes for appointments to public sector boards.
- On 5 February 2023, the government announced the appointment of Ms Lynelle Briggs AO, to lead the Review into Public Sector Board Appointment Processes.
- The review responds to concerns about transparency in appointment processes for public sector board appointments, and the need for standards for public sector board members.
- This review forms an important part of the government's commitment to a strong foundation of integrity right across the public service.
- As part of her review, Ms Briggs considered how arrangements and processes for the appointment of the members to public sector boards and relevant bodies may be used to enhance integrity and trust in the institutions of government.
- The review also considered and proposed standards for the processes by which board members are appointed.
- The review focussed on:
  - clarifying the role of public sector boards and how needed skills and standards are set

s 22	Cleared by: Justine Curnow
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Division: APS Reform Branch	PDR Number: QB25-000020
Date Updated: 9/07/2025 4:36:00 PM	Date Last Printed: 9/07/2025 4:36:00 PM

- options for transparent processes to identify and recruit board members
- how ministers are advised on selection of board members
- improving the diversity of board membership (including in terms of gender, CALD, First Nations and geographic representation on public sector boards).
- The review did not consider current or past appointments or appointment processes related to specific individuals.
- The Terms of Reference for the review are available on the APS Reform website at [www.apsreform.gov.au](http://www.apsreform.gov.au).
- The report will be published on the APS Reform website in due course, following careful and measured government consideration of the report recommendations.

### **Policy Commitments**

- N/A

## Background

In October 2022, the government agreed to undertake a review of arrangements and processes for appointments to public sector boards under pillar one of the APS Reform Agenda – an APS that embodies integrity in everything it does. The review was conducted by Ms Lynelle Briggs AO between February and August 2023.

Ms Briggs brought extensive public sector experience in both the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions. She was the CEO of Medicare Australia, overseeing the significant service reform merging Medicare, Centrelink and the Child Support Agency, and was the Australian Public Service Commissioner for five years. She has served on several public and private sector boards and has conducted a number of reviews for various government agencies and ministers.

Ms Briggs was appointed based on advice from the APS Reform Office.

## Recent Media Articles

**9 May 2025:** *The Mandarin*, [Government needs to press the APS reform accelerator](#)

**31 August 2024:** *The Saturday Paper*, [Labor and merit-based appointments](#)

**26 August 2024:** *The Canberra Times*, [Public sector appointment report ‘nowhere to be seen’: Scams](#)

**17 August 2024:** *The Weekend Australian*, [Margin Call](#)

**17 August 2024:** *The West Australian*, [Opposition goes postal on Palaszczuk job ‘hypocrisy’](#)

**5 July 2024:** *Pearls and Irritations*, [Restoring Integrity to the Australian Public Service](#)  
- Paper by Andrew Podger on APS integrity, notes report from Briggs Review was still not available at the time of publication of the article.

**15 April 2024:** *The Canberra Times*, [Reform on roids? Up the dosage](#)

Culturally and linguistically diverse representation in the APS

Issue

Why is the Government using valuable staffing resources on initiatives to boost culturally and linguistically diverse staff in the APS, which does little to improve the daily lives of most Australians?

Headline Response

The Government is committed and legally obliged to foster an APS workforce that reflects the diversity of the Australian population. The APS sets the standard as a model employer by creating workplaces that are inclusive and respectful, and building a workforce that leverages the skills, insights and experience of all staff for the benefit of all Australians.

Facts and Figures

- Released on 30 April 2024, the APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Employment Strategy and Action Plan (the Strategy) to raise CALD senior leadership in the APS, promote cultural safety and implement inclusive recruitment practices.
- The Strategy sets an eventual target of 24% CALD representation in the APS Senior Executive Service (SES), bringing it into line with representation in the Australian population. This equates to a 1% improvement in CALD SES representation each year.
- To achieve the benchmark of 24% there are three interim benchmarks over the six year term of the Strategy: 13% in year 2, 15% in year 4 and 17% in year 6, with a clear ongoing trajectory towards 24%.
- The APSC has been working with lead APS agencies to develop action plans to improve multicultural awareness, cultural safety and recruitment processes.
- The APSC is leading the development of a number of whole of government initiatives that address the headline actions that underpin the strategic reforms:
  - The Statement of Leadership to Support Cultural Diversity – the CALD Compact, which articulates legislative obligations and leadership imperatives to create an inclusive workforce.

s 22	Cleared by: Steve Munns
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Division: Workplace Reform & Diversity	PDR Number: QB25-000021
Date Updated: 17/07/2025 1:38:00 PM	Date Last Printed: 17/07/2025 1:38:00 PM

- Guidance on the correct application of the merit principle which underpins the creation of a creating a level playing field where promotions based on skills, experience, performance, and qualifications.
- a Sponsorship model for CALD executive leaders, and
- Innovative and inclusive recruitment practices.
- In accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999*, the APS is required to foster a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Australian population.
- Reflecting the diversity of the community enables the APS to deliver higher quality policy and services, providing benefits to all Australians through:
  - a more productive APS
  - enriched APS policy making and service delivery
  - strengthened capability by understanding the lived experience.

## **Policy Commitments**

- Development and implementation of the APS CALD Employment Strategy – within existing resources.
- APS Capability Reinvestment Fund: Round 1 – 2023/4. MOSAIC, a digital learning package in two parts designed to build cultural capability and awareness. Part 1 is designed for all APS staff and Part 2 is aimed at senior leaders and managers.
- APS Capability Reinvestment Fund: Round 2 – 2024/5. CALD Storytelling project captures the lived experience of APS CALD staff to support development of cultural awareness and literacy in the APS workforce. The project offers the prospect of longer term iterative change based on self-reflection and continued learning.

## Background

The Strategy after the APS Commissioner flagged it was a priority for the Government in February 2023 Senate Estimates hearings.

The Strategy found that CALD representation SES level drops away sharply at 11% compared with 25% in the broader population. CALD representation generally mirrors the diversity of the Australian population at the APS level.

The Strategy was informed by employment data, and evidence based on the lived experiences of CALD APS employees. The public consultation process resulted in 185 submissions from individuals and organisations across government, private and non-government sectors.

Diversity and Inclusion policy was raised as an issue ahead of the May 2025 Federal Election campaign when the Federal Opposition questioned the value of Diversity and Inclusion roles within the APS, as part of a broader plan to reduce the public sector workforce.

*Table 1. Comparison of APS CALD employee representation to the Australian population*

	APSED December 2023 First language of employee was not exclusively English <sup>1</sup>	ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021 Language spoken at home was other than English for all employed persons in Australia aged 15-64 years old
SES equivalent	11%	15%
Non-SES equivalent	25%	24%
Total	25%	24%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021 and APS Employment Database December 2023.

## Recent Media Articles

11 June 2025: The Canberra Times [The key to ending racism? It's right here in these PM's speeches](#)

15 June 2025: The Canberra Times [A groundbreaking appointment, but this evolution has not been natural](#)

16 May 2025: Guardian [‘A big shift’: Australia has elected its most diverse parliament. What impact will it have?](#)

31 Jan 2025: SMH ‘Straight from the Trump playbook’: Dutton flags cultural diversity jobs are in the firing line

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<sup>1</sup> The variable *first language of employee was not exclusively English* is not the same as the variable *language spoken at home* and has a different source, hence the proportions are slightly different between what was in the public consultation paper and what is in Table 1.

## Contractors, Consultants and APS Employment Figures

### Issue

What is the Government doing to reduce APS reliance on contractors and consultants for core work?

### Headline Response

The Strategic Commissioning Framework requires core public service work to be done by APS employees, not outsourced. Agencies are using it to bring core work back in-house over time.

### Facts and Figures

- 104 APS agencies reported under the framework in 2024.
- \$527 million is the combined total target reduction in outsourcing of core work for APS agencies in the 2024-25 financial year.
- As part of the Government's commitment to reducing reliance on contractors and consultants, agencies are applying the Strategic Commissioning Framework to rebalance their workforce while delivering on their priorities.
- Agency heads must bring core work in-house over time, in line with Government intent. The framework lists core functions, which must not be outsourced, such as drafting cabinet submission recommendations, drafting regulations, leading policy development, or occupying a role on an agency's executive. It also requires agency heads to identify additional agency-specific core work that will be brought in house over time.
- APS agencies set targets to bring core work in-house in 2024-25 and are working to achieve them. The APSC published its overview of agency core work and targets on 4 November 2024, in a public update on the APSC website.
  - APS-wide, agency targets for 2024-25 total around **\$527 million**.
- Agency targets were reported to the APSC in July and August 2024. Targets vary depending on how much core work an agency outsources and its priorities.
- APS agencies will report progress against targets and set new targets as part of the framework's reporting process. This will open early August and close mid-September.

s 22	Cleared by: Ashley Sedgwick
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Division: Workforce Strategies	PDR Number: QB25-000022
Date Updated: 030/07/2025 11:01:00 AM	Date Last Printed: 30/07/2025 11:01:00 AM



- We are not removing access to all contractors and consultants, rather rebalancing the workforce and ensuring the APS has the capability to deliver its core work.

### *If asked about 2025 reporting*

- In 2025, APS agencies will again report to the APSC on implementation of the Strategic Commissioning Framework.
- Reporting opens early August and will close mid-September. APS agencies must report on:
  - progress against 2024-25 targets
  - new procurement for core work (2024-25), not covered by the limited circumstances
  - core work for 2025-26
  - targets for 2025-26 to reduce expenditure on outsourcing core work
  - actions taken to embed the framework and strengthen capability.

### *If pressed on agency targets/reporting*

- Questions about individual agency reporting are best directed to the appropriate agency.

### *If pressed on whether the \$527 million is a saving*

- APS-wide, targets for 2024-25 total more than \$527 million.
- This figure is not a saving, as agencies will have related employee costs as core work is brought in-house. This is the expected reduction in supplier expenditure as agencies bring work in-house in 2024-25.

### *If pressed about corporate plan reporting*

- All relevant agencies reported to the APSC as required.
- Most agencies also reported on the framework in their corporate plans.
- For some agencies 2024-25 targets were settled after their corporate plan content was finalised. This meant some corporate plans were published without information about the core work and targets or with limited details.

### *If pressed on repercussions for agencies who don't follow the framework*

- Accountability and transparency are the first line of defence. Agencies publish targets in corporate plans and will report progress in annual reports.

## **Policy Commitments**

Nil.

## Background

### Strategic Commissioning Framework

On 24 October 2023, the Strategic Commissioning Framework was released. It applies to more than 100 agencies that employ staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Implementation begins in 2024-25, with agencies required to set targets to bring core work back in-house. Targets for 2024-25 were reported to the APSC in July and August 2024, and appear in agency corporate plans. On 4 November 2024, the APSC issued a public update on APS implementation including a list of each agency's 2024-25 target.

### APS employment figures

The size of the APS workforce (by headcount, not ASL) is 193,503 employees as at 31 December 2024. This is published on the APSC website through the APS Employment database. Headcount is distinct from ASL estimates, which are collected by the Department of Finance and published in 2025-26 Budget Paper No. 4 (BP4) Part 2: Staffing of Agencies.

The Government has removed the ASL cap. APS agencies are still required to limit their departmental spending to their allocated budget. ASL data published in the 2025-26 Budget Paper No. 4 (BP4) Part 2: Staffing of Agencies shows that the estimated ASL figure for 2025-26 is 213,349 (See Finance QB25-000015).

Although the Government has removed the ASL cap, APS agencies are still required to limit their departmental spending to their allocated budget and additional ASL can only be agreed by ERC or the Prime Minister. The ASL estimate for 2025-26 is 213,349 (See Finance QB25-000076).

### Australian Government Consulting

Australian Government Consulting (AGC) within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is a dedicated management consultancy run by the APS for the APS. AGC supports departments to deliver on priorities quickly, partnering in ways that build APS capability and result in solutions that are better value than the private sector. AGC's services specialise in policy reform, strategy and organisational performance.

### Parliamentary Inquiries

In November 2021, the Senate's Finance and Public Administration References Committee conducted an inquiry into the capability and performance of the Australian Public Service. The inquiry found that there had been a shift from APS staff to labour hire, and that this shift had resulted in lower APS capability, wasted public funds and weakened service delivery to the public. The inquiry made 36

recommendations to address these issues, first of which was to abolish the ASL cap. The inquiry also recommended that service-wide expenditure on external labour hire be centrally collected and published.

### Savings from External Labour and Non-Wage Expenses

Reductions in supplier expenditure on core work achieved through the Strategic Commissioning Framework are separate from the Government's savings measures to reduce spending on external labour and non-wage expenses (\$5.3 billion from 2022-23 to 2028-29), and the Government's election commitment to save an additional \$6.4 billion (over the next four years from 2025-26).

### Audits of Employment

Although both are integral to the Government's commitment to APS reform, the data collection as part of the Strategic Commissioning Framework is separate from the Government's Audits of Employment, led by the Department of Finance. The Audit of Employment aims to provide an estimate of the use of external labour across the APS.

The 2023-24 Audit of Employment is currently being finalised. The 2021-22 Audit of Employment covered 112 entities across the APS who employ staff under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Entities' reported data showed the use of an external labour workforce (contractors, consultants, labour hire and outsourced service providers) of 53,900 staff (on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis) at a cost of \$20.8 billion in 2021-22.

### **Recent Media Articles**

- (30 July 2025) The Canberra Times [Defence boosts internal team amid \\$8m consultancy spend | The Canberra Times | Canberra, ACT](#)
- (29 July 2025) Australian Financial Review [Australian Government Consulting: chief consultant Andrew Nipe says in-house public sector team is as good or better than private sector](#)
- (27 July 2025) The Sydney Morning Herald [Labor vowed to crack down on consultants, but spending is going up](#)
- (20 June 2025) The Mandarin [Cult of the government consultant: The war is far from over](#)
- (22 April 2025) The Canberra Times [ACT businesses cut back as government contracts decline](#)
- (8 May 2025) The Canberra Times [Labor to tighten belts on consultants and labour hire in new term](#)
- (25 March 2025) The Guardian [Labor defies criticism to add 3,400 public service roles](#)

- (11 February 2025) The Canberra Times [Warning over the result of APS job cuts](#)
- (11 February 2025) The Mercury [Politicians spin numbers as public service jobs debate fuels misleading claims and financial contradictions](#)
- (10 February 2025) The Mandarin [Gallagher rules out more APS growth](#)
- (29 January 2025) The Mandarin [Ministers want a more strategic approach to commissioning. How can government agencies make that happen?](#)

## Digital Capability and Capacity in the Australian Public Service

### Issue

What is the Government doing to address digital capability and capacity in the Australian Public Service (APS)?

### Headline

The Government is taking steps to ensure the APS has world class data, digital and cyber capabilities to deliver outstanding outcomes for all Australians.

### Facts and Figures

- A skilled and confident public service workforce is critical to Australia's future and the Government is taking action through the APS Data Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan, including accelerating the work of the APS Digital and Data Professions.
- Skills needs are shifting due to rapid technology advancements such as artificial intelligence and innovation causing disruption and reshaping the workforce and increasing demand for workers with high levels of digital and data literacy – this is true for the Australian Public Service.
- The APS Data Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025-30 was launched in March 2025. The five-year plan provides a coordinated approach to building a capable, sustainable, and future ready data, digital and cyber skilled workforce, and aligns with the bold vision to deliver simple, secure and connected public services as set in the Data and Digital Government Strategy.
- The plan outlines four key action areas and over 20 initiatives across three horizons spanning five years to help agencies in their workforce planning and development efforts.
- The plan was built with extensive consultation across the APS, in particular those with specific whole of APS workforce responsibilities under the Data and Digital Government Strategy. There were also consultations with industry and external experts.
- Agencies continue to report difficulties in attracting experienced and mid-level digital employees citing low labour market supply, broader competition and affordability as key factors inhibiting their success. The Workforce Plan looks to address these challenges in a co-ordinated and strategic way across the APS.

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Division: APS Academy and Capability	PDR Number: QB25-000023
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### *APS Digital Profession and Career Pathfinder*

- Through the APS Digital Profession, the APS is investing in foundational capability uplift, including digital literacy and AI-focused training, communities of practice, events and career pathways to digital skills across the APS. The APS Professions member's community platform has 15,970 Digital Professions members and continues to grow. The Digital Profession also provides programs to help women to develop into digital leadership roles.
- APS Career Pathfinder, a flagship product created by the Digital Profession for the APS helps people explore career options across the APS and links people to the learning required to develop digital skills.

### *APS Academy Campuses*

- The APS Academy Campuses allow students and graduates to undertake data and digital traineeships, cadetships and graduate placements with the APS, without leaving their communities.
- In 2023, the APSC opened two campuses. One in Newcastle, at the University of Newcastle, and one in Townsville, at James Cook University. The Government renewed support for the program in the 2025 Federal Budget.
- As of July 2025, 12 APS agencies are supporting current data and digital entry level participants at the Campuses.
- Including the participants from APS Academy Campuses, there are a total of 234 participants in the data and digital cadets, traineeships and graduate streams.

### *Cyber Security*

- Under Horizon 1 of the 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy, the APS continued to work with the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) Foundation to better reflect the cyber security skills needed for our current and future workforce.
- The APS has expanded APS Career Pathfinder to include cyber security roles and develop visible cyber security career pathways in the APS.

### *Artificial Intelligence (AI)*

- The APS continues to partner with industry and academia to provide specialist development opportunities and support the responsible adoption of AI technologies in line with the Policy for responsible use of AI in government.

## **Policy Commitments**

In 2023, the Australian Government launched the Data and Digital Government Strategy and the 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy, setting a vision for delivering simple, secure and connected public services, for all people and business, and be a world leader in cyber security.

As an outcome of the Jobs and Skills Summit 2022, the Government committed to improving access to jobs and training pathways, including digital traineeships in the APS with a focus on opportunities for women, First Nations peoples, older Australians, and veterans and their partners.

In 2022, the Government announced data and digital training and entry-level employment opportunities outside of Canberra, as part of the APS Academy Campuses program.

In March 2025, the APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan was released, providing a 5 year plan for a coordinated approach to attract, develop and retain people with skills in these critical areas.

## Background

Australian employment growth for digital workers is projected to increase up to 13.9% by 2030 (JSA 2024) and is estimated to need 1.2 million tech jobs by 2030 to keep pace with rapid transformation (Tech Council of Australia). In addition to the digital skills shortage, the APS ICT workforce does not reflect the broader population, with substantial under-representation of women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The APS is on an ambitious digital transformation journey and the Government is working closely with the APS to support implementation of policy initiatives. The APS Data Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025-30 is a key to driving this ambitious digital transformation journey forward. Overall, the Government is committed to meeting the needs of the Australian community and looking to the future, the next step in digital transformation.

### *APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025-30*

The APS Data Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025-30 was launched in March 2025. The five-year plan made up of 26 initiatives spanning over three horizons provides a coordinated approach to building a capable, sustainable, and future ready data, digital and cyber skilled workforce, and aligns with the bold vision to deliver simple, secure and connected public services as set in the Data and Digital Government Strategy.

The plan outlines the following four key action areas that will support agencies to:

1. Attract, recruit and retain a data, digital, and cyber workforce
2. Uplift technical capabilities
3. Grow and deploy a specialist cohort
4. Enhance capability planning maturity.

Horizon 1 is currently underway with the implementation of 12 foundational initiatives that set the strong groundwork for sustainable success of the plan.

Aligned to the four key action areas, the initiatives in horizon 1 aim to enhance the APS employee value proposition to attract digital and cyber talent and expand associated career pathway and employment platforms to help agencies identify and manage a future data, digital and cyber workforce.

Horizon 1 initiatives are geared to uplift technical capabilities of Senior Executive Service (SES) and Executive Level 2 (EL2) (middle manager) through programs such as EL2 and SES data capability uplift, SES accountabilities for data, and Senior Responsible Officer digital governance programs.



Through initiatives such as the production of digital workforce data insights report, the harmonisation of workforce data and development of specialist deployment framework, horizon 1 lays strong foundation to grow and deploy a specialist cohort and to enhance digital and cyber workforce capability planning maturity in the APS.

Agencies including the Australian Public Service Commission along with the Digital Transformation Agency, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Department of Finance, Services Australia and the National Disability Insurance Agency are jointly leading horizon 1 initiatives that will deliver whole of APS outcomes.

### **Recent Media Articles**

Nil.

## Flexible Work across the APS

### Issue

What is the Government doing to ensure flexible work and working from home is operating effectively and productively across the public service?

### Headline Response

The Government has commissioned a report on the operation of flexible working arrangements in the APS with a focus on working from home. The APSC collects data on flexible work through the annual APS Census and Agency Survey, and has recently sought information directly from agencies to inform the commissioned report.

### Facts and Figures

- Flexible working arrangements including working from home, part-time work, flexible rostering and location strengthen the APS's ability to deliver strong outcomes, improves its workforce's resilience, helps employees balance their work and personal priorities and helps position the APS as an employer of choice.
- A key outcome of APS service-wide bargaining was a common clause on flexible working arrangements, including working from home.
- The common clause is incorporated into all 103 APS enterprise agreements and reflects the Government's commitment to the APS as a model employer, while ensuring agencies can continue to meet their operational requirements.
- To ensure that APS flexible working arrangements continue to support efficient and effective workplaces, the APS Commissioner is preparing a report on the operation of flexible working arrangements in the public service.

### If asked, what is the APSC reviewing and when will a report be delivered?

- The Government has asked the APS Commissioner to prepare a report covering the operation of flexible working arrangements in the APS.
- Now that the common flexible working conditions have been in place for over 12 months, it is appropriate to make sure arrangements continue to support modern productive workplaces.

s 22	Cleared by: James O'Reilly
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Date Updated: 31/07/2025 9:09:00 AM	Date Last Printed: 31/07/2025 9:09:00 AM

- The APSC has engaged with agencies to collect robust data and information on how flexible working arrangements support them to deliver effective services to the Government, the Parliament and the Australian community. This information will inform the final report. There is no firm deadline on the delivery of the report at this time.

**If asked, what other support have agencies received on implementing flexible working arrangements?**

- The APSC has provided implementation guidance to agencies on the common clause for flexible working arrangements.
- The APSC is expanding training of managers and senior managers to ensure that agency, team and individual needs are properly integrated in flexible work arrangements.
- The APSC's APS Location Framework supports agencies to make more informed and deliberate choices about their workforce locations, and use flexible work as an enabler to secure the skills they need.

**If asked, what is the impact of flexible working arrangements on the productivity of the APS?**

- Productivity for the APS means delivering on the objectives of Government and providing effective services to the Government, the Parliament, and the Australian community.
- Flexible working arrangements are an effective method of boosting productivity when they meet the needs of the individual, their team and the agency.
- The 2025 Australian HR Institute Survey found that more than four in ten employers (45 per cent) believed that work from home or hybrid work has had a positive effect on productivity levels at their organisation compared with only 11 per cent who think it has had a negative effect.
- The Productivity Commission's 2025 research paper on productivity before and after COVID-19 found most studies find that hybrid work is either neutral or positive for labour productivity. The Productivity Commission did not find any evidence that the trend towards hybrid working in Australia during COVID-19 contributed to the productivity loss phase of the productivity bubble that occurred in Australia around the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Flexible working arrangements increase employee job satisfaction and engagement, and play a crucial role in attracting and retaining high performing employees. High engagement directly relates to productivity and effectiveness (World Bank Group, 2019).

- Employee engagement in the APS remains high. Research from the 2024 Employee Census shows that where an employee works (office, home or a hybrid arrangement) has minimal impact on their engagement levels.
- The Secretary of the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's recent comments around potential long term impacts of working from home arrangements on productivity and work/office balance are important considerations. Like all employers, APS agencies will need to monitor and adapt to new ways of working as information becomes available.

**If asked, what data does the APSC currently collect regarding flexible work and working from home?**

- The APSC collects data on flexible working arrangements through the annual APS Employee Census. In 2024:
  - **76 per cent** of respondents accessed some form of flexible work. This is broadly similar to **74 per cent** in 2023.
  - **83 per cent** of respondents were confident that if they requested a flexible work arrangement, the request would be given reasonable consideration. This is higher than **79 per cent** in 2023.
- In 2024, APS Employee Census respondents were also asked about the frequency of working away from the office/from home:
  - **39 per cent** did not work away from the office/from home
  - **47 per cent** did so some of the time as a regular arrangement
  - **9 per cent** did so only on an irregular basis
  - **6 per cent** did so all of the time, and was proportionally more commonly accessed by employees with an ongoing disability and those aged 65 years and older.
- *According to 2024 APS Agency Survey data, the proportion of APS employees working from home is relatively consistent across the work week.*

Day	Proportion of employees who had an agreement to work from home each day
Monday	26%
Tuesday	21%
Wednesday	22%
Thursday	26%
Friday	29%
Saturday	2%
Sunday	2%

*2024 APS Agency Survey. Data covers 60% of the APS workforce*

- A majority of APS Employee Census respondents (**61 per cent**) who accessed some form of flexible working arrangement had caring responsibilities, an ongoing disability, or were older than 55. These categories of employees would be eligible to make a request for flexible working arrangements under the *Fair Work Act 2009* in many instances.

**If asked, how are working from home arrangements operating outside the APS?**

- Working from home arrangements are now a common feature across the economy – in both the public and private sectors.
- On 9 December 2024, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released figures showing a minor reduction in levels of employees working from home.
- These figures also show that working from home had been increasing steadily before the COVID-19 pandemic. It jumped by around eight percentage points between August 2019 and August 2021, from around 32 to 40 per cent.
- The data from the reference period of August 2024 shows that 36 per cent of Australians now work from home regularly. While this was down from around 40 per cent in 2021, it was still four percentage points above the pre-pandemic level.
- Working from home continues to be more common in some occupations. Close to two-thirds (60 per cent) of managers and professionals were working from home in August 2024, compared with around one in five (21 per cent) across other occupations.

*If asked, is the government wasting money on empty office space due to increased flexible working arrangements?*

- The Department of Finance regularly collects data to assist agencies to identify and progressively implement better property management practices, and to inform whole-of-government leasing and property policy decisions. This includes publishing the Australian Government Office Occupancy Report, which provides insights into office tenancies of non-corporate Commonwealth entities as at 30 June each year.
- The most recent report indicates that the average cost per worker has decreased by \$759, from \$9,459 for 2021-22 to \$8,700 in 2022-23. The total property operating cost has also decreased by 18 per cent in the same period.
- This data shows that agencies have reduced the number of empty desks in offices through hybrid working arrangements and desk-sharing.

**Policy Commitments**

- N/A

## **Background**

### **APS service-wide bargaining**

The common condition on flexible working arrangements provides that an agency head must genuinely try to reach an agreement with the employee about making changes to their working arrangements, but they can refuse a request on reasonable business grounds. The common clause also states that agencies cannot impose caps on time spent working from home or remotely.

### **National Employment Standards**

A number of changes to the flexible work provisions in the National Employment Standards came into effect on 6 June 2023. The common condition adopts and builds on these amendments, which apply to the majority of Australian workplaces.

The changes include broadening who has a right to request flexible working arrangements, introducing steps to be taken in relation to requests for flexible working arrangements and allowing the Fair Work Commission to deal with disputes on requests for flexible working arrangements.

### **US administration changes**

On 20 January 2025, the White House issued a presidential decree that all departments and agencies should as soon as practicable, take all steps to terminate remote work arrangements and require employees to return to work in-person. Agency heads may make exemptions deemed necessary.

### **NSW Premier's Department circular on flexible working arrangements**

On 5 August 2024 the NSW Premier's Department released the C2024-03 NSW Government Sector workplace presence Circular. The Circular outlines that employees are expected to work primarily at their approved workplaces in NSW. The Circular confirms that remote work opportunities exist but are not guaranteed or unlimited and should be managed based on departmental needs. This Circular emphasises that Government Sector employees contribute to public institutions through their presence at work, fostering a sense of belonging and effective service delivery. It notes that agencies should ensure that workspaces are used efficiently and that remote work arrangements are formally approved and reviewed regularly.

### **Recent Media Articles**

(31 July 2025): The Canberra Times – [Hume weighs in after work-from-home comments](#)

(30 July 2025): Australian Financial Review – [Calls to rethink public service WFH falls on deaf ears in Canberra](#)

(30 July 2025): Australian Financial Review – [Health chief's 'worry' over WFH](#)

(19 June 2025): PSNews - [Private sector clerks pushing for WFH rights just like the APS has | PS News](#)

(29 May 2025): The Guardian - [Working from home not to blame for dip in productivity, Australian report says | Australian economy | The Guardian](#)

(24 March): The Daily Telegraph - ['A big believer': Minns backs WFH crackdown | Daily Telegraph](#)

## Gender in the APS

### Issue

What is the approach to gender in the Australian Public Service (APS), and can you explain how the Government justifies a continued focus on gender targets and gender pay gap initiatives in the APS?

### Headline Response

The APS is committed to progressing gender equality. Gender equality is essential to building a workforce that can deliver better informed policy and services by leveraging a rich diversity of employee backgrounds, insights and experiences. This is achieved through the setting of gender targets and initiatives to address the gender pay gap, in line with current legislation and national priorities.

### Facts and Figures

- The *Public Service Act 1999* (PS Act) sets out Employment Principles that require APS employees and agency heads to foster a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Australian population that we serve.
- The PS Act also requires APS employees and agency heads to uphold the APS Values at all times, including 'Respectful: The APS respects all people, including their rights and their heritage'.
- Australia's anti-discrimination laws also make it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of a protected attributes including sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Actions to progress gender equality in the APS are consistent with national efforts to progress gender equality, including work performed by the Office for Women, Australian Human Rights Commission, and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. It is also in line with international direction provided by the World Health Organisation and United Nations.
- The APS is addressing acknowledged community challenges including a focus on ending gender-based harassment and violence and improving outcomes for women experiencing perimenopause and menopause. Both of these are impacted by gender inequality.

s 22	Cleared by: Steven Munns
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Division: Workplace Reform & Diversity	PDR Number: QB25-000025
Date Updated: 11/07/2025 1:56:00 PM	Date Last Printed: 11/07/2025 1:56:00 PM



*If asked about gender targets or quotas, or the gender pay gap, in light of recent commentary on gender in Australian politics and within Australian political parties.*

- The APS is committed to achieving gender parity at all levels, as reflected in the *APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026 (the Strategy)*. As a mechanism for achieving parity, the APS has set gender representation targets as part of earlier iterations of the Strategy. There are no gender representation targets set as part of the current strategy.
- In accordance with the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, APS agencies with 100 or more employees must lodge an annual Gender Equality Report which includes gender pay gap analysis; and agencies with 500 or more employees, are now also required to meet or demonstrate improvement on three selected gender equality targets.
- The APSC is reviewing the requirements for reporting on the gender equality targets, particularly from the perspective of APS enterprise bargaining. The APSC will provide agencies with further guidance on this in time.
- The APS remains committed to closing the gender pay gap. This is in line with national priorities to progress economic equality and security, articulated in *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*.
- The APS recognises that making progress on the gender pay gap positions us to attract and retain the diverse talent and representation the APS needs to serve the Australian people, now and in the future. Reflecting the community in this way enables the APS to deliver better informed policy and services.
- In December 2023, the APS achieved its lowest recorded gender pay gap of 4.5%, based on annualised base salaries. This figure is less than half the national gender pay gap as at January 2025 of 11.9%.
- Women have reached parity with men at every level from APS 1 to SES Band 2. At SES Band 3, women represent 49.1%.
- The distribution of women across classification levels significantly influences the APS gender pay gap. A higher concentration of women in lower classifications (APS3-5) contributes to the overall gap, despite near pay parity within individual classification levels.
- There has been a continued increase in representation of women at higher classifications (EL1 and above) since 2018, along with a slight decrease in women at lower classifications.
- These trends underscore the importance of ongoing efforts to promote gender balance across all classification levels to further reduce the gender pay gap in the APS.

## **Background**

### **Approach to workplace equality**

Approaches to workplace equality ensure everyone has an opportunity to make the most of their experiences, careers and talent. Equality in the workplace is about recognising differences and providing tools and support so everyone has an opportunity to succeed. It is not about undermining or discriminating against any cohort or individual.

Research finds gender equality and other inclusion efforts benefit everyone. Multiple Senate Inquiries, Royal Commissions and other reviews demonstrate that barriers to progressing diversity and inclusion remain a concern for many in the APS and wider Australian community.

The APS is committed to progressing initiatives that support inclusion and gender equality.

### **APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26**

The *APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026* (the Strategy) sets the vision and actions for achieving gender equality in the APS. The Interim Evaluation (2024) of the Strategy found that the APS continues to be a leader in gender outcomes.

Employment data demonstrates the APS has continued to achieve, and in most cases exceeded, parity with men at every level from APS 1 to SES Band 2 and is close to achieving parity at the SES Band 3 level. In December 2023, the APS achieved its lowest-ever gender pay gap of 4.5%.

Positive change is being achieved through increased leadership action, improved capability and awareness, greater flexibility and/or leave provisions, and improved culture and transparency.

### **Australian Government approach to classifying sex and gender**

The Australian Government approach to gender equality is supported by a suite of Australian government legislation and direction, including:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012
- The ABS [Standard for Sex, Gender Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables 2020](#) (The ABS Standards), and
- The Attorney Generals [Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender 2013](#) (The Guidelines).

Specifically, the preferred Australian Government approach to collect and use gender information is referenced in the *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender* 2013 (the Guidelines). All APS agencies are expected to align to this approach.

The Guidelines state that individuals may identify as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth, or may not exclusively identify as male or female, and that this should be reflected in records held by the Australian Government.

Where sex and/or gender information is collected and recorded in a personal record, individuals should be given the option to select M (male), F (female) or X (Intermediate/Intersex/Unspecified).

This approach aligns with best practice approaches on an international scale, including approaches undertaken by the World Health Organisation and United Nations.

### **Recent Media Articles**

2 July 2025: The Guardian - '[Liberal figures push for expiry dates on gender quotas in bid to win party support](#)'.

27 June 2025: ABC News – '[Angus Taylor against Liberal quotas for women](#)'.

5 June 2025: ABC News – '[Liberal Party leaders hit back at Alan Stockdale's comments on assertive women](#)'.

## Gifts and Benefits and the Advice to Agency Heads

### Issue

Is the Government going to ban public servants from accepting gifts and benefits, including airline lounge memberships and upgrades?

### Headline Response

Public servants are held to high standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability in relation to gifts and benefits - including those offered by airlines and other suppliers of goods and services to government - and must comply with current declaration and reporting requirements.

### Facts and Figures

- The Australian Public Service Commission provides guidance to APS agency heads on their obligations to publicly disclose all gifts or benefits accepted and valued at over \$AUD100.00 (excluding GST).
- The management of gifts and benefits declarations by APS employees is a matter for individual agencies however, the APSC's guidance states that there is a strong expectation that Agency Heads will also publish gifts and benefits received by all staff in their agency, including senior executives, exceeding the \$100 threshold.
- This guidance was updated in October 2023 to require Agency Heads to report invitation-only airline lounge memberships on an annual basis.
- To facilitate transparency, the Commission publishes links to each Agency Head's gifts and benefits registers on its website.
- The guidance is underpinned by the ethical and legal obligations that apply to Agency Heads and APS employees under the *Public Service Act 1999*, and accountable authorities and other public officials under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.
- The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit has recently recommended the Department of Finance and the Digital Transformation Agency take action to understand the extent to which inappropriate cultivation of

§ 22	Cleared by: Paula Stratton
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Division: Integrity, Performance and Employment Policy	PDR Number: QB25-000026
Date Updated: 9/07/2025 12:45:00 PM	Date Last Printed:

Commonwealth officials may be occurring by major ICT vendors through the offering of gifts and benefits.

- The JCPAA also recommended the Australian National Audit Office consider future audits of potential gifts and hospitality issues in the public sector to identify practices of concern.
- In support of the JCPAA's observations, the APSC is updating its guidance to agencies on Gifts and Benefits with a view to issuing a revised product later in 2025.
- This review is being conducted in partnership with a Department of Education-led sub-group of the Chief Operating Officers' Committee, and in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, including relevant policy agencies such as Finance and the Digital Transformation Agency, integrity agencies including the Australian National Audit Office and the National Anti-Corruption Commission, and a sample of APS agencies subject to the revised guidance.
- APS Agency Heads should continue to comply with the APSC's current guidance, and APS employees should comply with relevant agency policies, which are based on this guidance.

### **Policy Commitments**

- N/A

## Background

### JCPAA report – NDIA and Services Australia

On 26 June 2024, the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit tabled the final report of its inquiry into procurement at Services Australia and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) finding key aspects fell short of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and ethical requirements.

In particular the report indicated evidence of clear breaches of NDIA's internal policies by its officials, in relation to the acceptance and failure to declare gifts, benefits and hospitality from IT contractor Salesforce over a 5 year period, before and after the award of a customer relationship platform contract to Salesforce which was ultimately varied to a total value of \$135 million.

The relevant agencies have agreed to the report recommendations and in their responses indicated follow-up actions planned or underway, including referrals to law enforcement including the National Anti-Corruption Commission; the APSC review of its gifts and benefits guidance, and a piloted approach by Finance and DTA to uplift ethical engagement with ICT suppliers in the context of procurement activities.

### Airline lounge memberships

A book by former *Australian Financial Review* journalist, Joe Aston, published on 28 October 2024, asserts that senior public servants may be improperly influenced by offers of exclusive airline lounge memberships by Qantas, and that acceptance of such memberships should be banned.

A Canberra Times article published on 21 May 2025 reports that the Department of Finance is examining the issue of airline status credits accrual, as part of an overhaul of the government's agreements with major airlines. The article identifies that Qantas is overwhelmingly used for government travel and suggests that issues such as status credits, lounge access and Airline lounge memberships may be a factor.

### ANAO Insights Lesson—Gifts, benefits and hospitality

On 29 October 2024, the Australian National Audit Office published an Audit Lesson Insights report on gifts, benefits and hospitality across the Commonwealth public sector. The report refers to the Commission's guidance, including Guidance for Agency Heads—Gift and Benefits, and the APS Values and Code of Conduct in Practice guidance. The Commission provided feedback to the ANAO on the draft report on 14 October 2024.

The ANAO examined the websites of 115 Australian Government entities as at September 2024 and found that 94 per cent of Agency Heads had published a register of gifts and benefits they had accepted.

### APSC Guidance

The Australian Public Service Commission's guidance for Agency Heads on gifts and benefits seeks to ensure that Agency Heads meet public expectations of integrity, accountability, independence, transparency and professionalism in relation to gifts and benefits; and that there is consistency in Agency Heads' management of gifts and benefits across the Commonwealth.

The *Guidance for Agency Heads—Gifts and Benefits* has been in place in its current form since 1 December 2021. It was updated on 20 October 2023 to require Agency Heads to annually report invitation-only airline lounge memberships including those that are invitation-only, on their public-facing register of gifts and benefits.

The guidance sets out factors that Agency Heads, and by extension APS employees, should have regard to in considering whether it is appropriate to accept a gift or benefit. This expressly includes free or discounted hospitality such as invitation-only airline lounge memberships.

The Commission's broader guidance for all APS employees is that they should avoid accepting any gift or benefit in connection with their employment if it creates a real or apparent conflict of interest. Under the APS Code of Conduct, APS employees are required to take reasonable steps to avoid any conflict of interest, real or apparent, in connection with their employment, and disclose details of any material personal interest.

In this context, the appropriate course of action will depend on the role and responsibilities of the employee and the risk that the offer of a gift or benefit in any circumstance could influence, or reasonably be perceived to influence, their decisions or actions.

### **Recent Media Articles**

**21 May 2025:** The Canberra Times-

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8971238/public-servants-airline-status-credits-included-in-major-review/>

This article discusses how status credits will be reviewed by the end of 2025.

**9 January 2025:** The Canberra Times -

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8861615/finance-proposes-change-to-gifts-disclosure-after-salesforce-saga/>

This article reports the follow-up actions indicated in the relevant agency responses to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit inquiry report.

**7 November 2024:** The Daily Telegraph -

<https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/business/complimentary-lounge-access-and-increased-baggage-allowance-part-of-highly-desirable-status-credits-for-public-servant-flights/news-story/b0671f2f9b2f9e99598669bcf11e2669>

This article directly correlates Qantas airline's offerings in contrast to competitors, including the accrual of status credit points, international lounges, and increased baggage allowance, as advantages resulting in a 77% share of federal government travel business.

**27 June 2024:** The Mandarin - <https://www.themandarin.com.au/249358-ndia-plagued-by-procurement-deficiencies-gifts-and-benefits-scandal/>

**27 June 2024:** ABC News - <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-06-27/committee-ndia-salesforce-probe-push-for-gift-inquiry/104019572>

These articles both relate to the report of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit's inquiry into ICT procurement in the National Disability Insurance Agency.



## ANAO audit of APSC's administration of its integrity functions

### Issue

What did the ANAO find in its audit of the APSC's administration of its integrity functions, and how is the Commission responding?

### Headline Response

The ANAO made four recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the Commission's administration of its statutory integrity functions. The Commission agreed with all four recommendations and has taken further action on steps commenced prior to the audit to strengthen the APS employment and integrity framework.

The *Strengthening Integrity in the APS* strategy, published in June 2025, outlines the Commission's approach, as framework owners, to administering the employment and integrity framework under the *Public Service Act 1999*. The strategy has been informed by recommendations from the ANAO audit.

### Facts and Figures

- The Commission welcomes the ANAO's report on the administration of integrity functions under the *Public Service Act 1999*.
- The Commission agreed with the recommendations and identified opportunities for improvement.
- Prior to receiving the audit, the Commission had progressed work to strengthen its strategy and evaluation approach, in order to better demonstrate how it discharges its integrity related functions under the *Public Service Act*.
- The *Strengthening Integrity in the APS* strategy outlines how the Commission undertakes its function to uphold high standards of integrity and conduct in the APS, working collaboratively with agencies, in accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999*.
- The strategy was published in June 2025. Work has now commenced on the implementation of the strategy, supported by an action plan.

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Date Updated: 17/07/2025 1:51:00 PM	Date Last Printed:

- Effective delivery of the strategy is intended to achieve:
  - greater assurance that APS Agency Heads and employees are aware of their obligations under the Public Service Act, understand how to act, and know where to go for information and support
  - increased awareness and understanding of workforce and integrity risks across the APS, to prevent and mitigate integrity issues before they arise, and
  - greater assurance of high standards of accountability, effectiveness and performance in agencies with regards to employment and integrity.
- This program of work will acquit Recommendations 1, 2 and 4 of the ANAO's recommendations, as well as Recommendation 6 of the JCPAA Report 502 (The never-ending quest for the golden thread) and Recommendations 12 and 15 of the Louder than Words report.

#### Key other integrity work still underway

- The Commission is partnering with the Attorney-General's Department to develop an enduring strategy for strengthening integrity across the Commonwealth Public Sector. The *Commonwealth Integrity Strategy 2025-30* will outline the collective commitment and priorities to uplift the integrity system, building on past lessons and reforms to embed activities across the public sector, identify mechanisms to strengthen cooperation and indicate opportunities to harness existing whole-of-system information to support the responsible and ethical delivery of services and programs for Australians.
- System wide initiatives outlined in the *APSC's Integrity Roadmap* which was launched in May 2024. This roadmap is a framework for the Commission to deliver the integrity initiatives arising from recommendations from the *Louder than Words: As APS Integrity Action Plan*, Government response to the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme and the integrity package in Stages 1 and 2 of public sector reform.

#### **Policy Commitments**

- The Government is continuing to implement an agenda of ambitious and enduring public sector reform including to ensure that the APS embodies integrity in everything it does.
- Fifty-nine initiatives have been announced as part of the APS Reform Agenda.

- Enshrining Stewardship as a new APS Value was one of the earliest of these initiatives

## **Background**

### *Strengthening Integrity in the APS strategy*

The Strategy draws together the functions of the APSC and its policy work, and articulates how they are underpinned by the integrity and employment framework.

Under the strategy, the Commission's functions will be strengthened through the pursuit of four objectives. These objectives are:

- pro-actively using data to develop insights to monitor and evaluate the extent to which agencies incorporate and uphold the APS Values and Employment Principles
- developing promotional activities that support building awareness and understanding of the APS Values, APS Employment Principles and Code of Conduct to drive ethical behaviour
- making it easier to find guidance, advice and resources to build capability and support people to take action and make decisions that are consistent with the framework, and
- increasing the capability of agencies to deliver on workforce management with particular effort on uplifting investigative and recruitment skills as two important fundamentals of integrity.

There are three focus areas for the delivery of the strategy; monitoring and evaluation, assurance, and capability and promotion.

### *ANAO Audit*

During 2023, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) conducted an audit of the Commission's administration of statutory functions relating to upholding high standards of integrity and ethical conduct in the APS. The period under review was July 2022 – December 2023.

The audit found that the Commission was partly effective in its administration of statutory functions for the audit review period.

The Auditor-General made four recommendations primarily relating to the need for a comprehensive strategy, evaluation plan for activities undertaken as part of the strategy (including our statutory functions) and improved record keeping.

All four recommendations were agreed to by the Commissioner, noting that work had already commenced to address these matters following the agency's Capability Review in mid-2023. This was acknowledged in the report.

### *APSC integrity initiatives*

The recommendations align with the Commission's ongoing program of work to promote and uphold high standards of integrity through a broad range of programs, services and functions.

### *APS Reform*

In the last term of Government, a number of first stage APS Reform initiatives were delivered via the *Public Service Amendment Act 2024*. These initiatives were designed to strengthen integrity, build the capability and expertise of the APS, and support good governance, accountability and transparency.

As part of the second stage of APS Reform, a range of initiatives to further bolster integrity of the APS will be pursued.

## **Recent Media Articles**

**8 July 2025:** [APSC releases integrity strategy - Government News](#)

**3 July 2025:** [Public Service Commission getting hands-on in a bid to improve integrity across agencies](#) – This Region Media article reports on the features and objectives of the strategy, as well as how the APSC will engage with APS Agencies.

**1 July 2025:** [Four objectives powering APSC integrity mission](#) - This Mandarin article reports on the release of the Strategy.

## Agency Investigations - APSC inquiries

### Issue

How is the Government managing allegations of misconduct and poor workplace culture in the Australian Public Service, including misconduct by agency heads?

### Headline Response

The Government is committed to fostering an APS that embodies integrity in everything it does, and takes seriously allegations of misconduct by agency heads, senior executive service employees and APS employees. The APS Commissioner is currently undertaking a number of inquiries into individuals alleged to have breached the APS Code of Conduct. It is not appropriate to provide further commentary on individuals or ongoing inquiries.

### Facts and Figures

- It is a matter of public record that the Australian Public Service Commission is undertaking inquiries into alleged breaches of the APS Code of Conduct by individuals in accordance with the Commissioner's powers under the *Public Service Act 1999*.
- These inquiries reflect the expectation of the Australian people, the Government and the APS that public servants adhere to the highest professional standards and their obligations in the Public Service Act.
- It is critical – to both good decision-making and the public's continued confidence in the integrity of the APS – that Code inquiries are conducted fairly and according to proper process, including the provision of natural justice.
- It is not appropriate to provide commentary on individual inquiries, including details of specific allegations, lines of inquiry, projected timeframes, or likely outcomes.
- Such commentary may disclose sensitive personal information, prejudice those processes or jeopardise outcomes, inadvertently undermine the effectiveness of future Code inquiries, or potentially affect inquiries conducted by other integrity agencies.

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## Policy Commitments

- We are building trust in the APS through integrity measures including the National Anti-Corruption Commission, updating the PGPA Fraud Rule provisions and strengthening protections for whistle-blowers.
- ‘Stewardship’ has been enshrined as an APS Value following the passage of the Public Service Amendment Act 2024.
- The second stage of APS Reform includes a range of initiatives to further bolster the integrity of the APS. This builds on the first stage of Reform and focusses on initiatives that will strengthen appointments and performance of senior APS executives, strengthen the powers of the APS Commissioner, extend the APS values to other government entities, and further build pro-integrity culture and capability.
- *Public Service Amendment (Measures No. 2) Act 2024*, enacted on 26 August 2024, clarifies the APS Commissioner’s power to inquire into, and make determinations about, alleged breaches of the APS Code of Conduct by current and former Agency Heads. The amendments directly address a recommendation of the Royal Commission that former Agency Heads should be held to account for conduct they engaged in while they were an Agency Head (recommendation 23.7).

## Background

### Robodebt

- See **QB25-000030 – Robodebt**

### NACC Operation Kingscliff

- The National Anti-Corruption Commission released its Investigation Report on 'Operation Kingscliff, An investigation into a senior public official's role in the recruitment of a close relative to a position in the Department of Home Affairs' on 30 June 2025.
- The NACC undertook an investigation into allegations that an SES staff member in the Department of Home Affairs improperly used her position to influence the recruitment of her sister's fiancé into a position in that Department, improperly assisted her sister in another recruitment process, and failed to declare their family relationship.
- The NACC made misconduct findings and recommendations to the Department of Home Affairs to strengthen the integrity of future recruitment processes.
- Section 15(2) of the Public Service Regulations provides an APS employee can be terminated when a NACC Investigation Report recommends termination of the employment of the APS employee.
  - The NACC Report indicates the person is no longer an APS employee but had she remained in APS employment a recommendation under section 15(2) would have been made.
- It is open to APS agencies to continue or commence Code processes to investigate the conduct of former APS employees, when the conduct occurred while the person was an APS employee.

## Recent Media Articles

**5 July 2025** – Saturday Paper – [‘NDIA chief intervened to throw advocate off scheme’](#)

**4 July 2025** – Canberra Times – [‘Australia's corruption challenge: A call for transparency’](#)

**30 June 2025** – Guardian – [‘Senior home affairs official abused public office to get her future brother-in-law a job, NACC finds’](#)

**27 November 2024** – Canberra Times – [‘More than 550 APS breaches revealed in State of the Service Report’](#)

**12 August 2024** – Canberra Times – [‘Who would want to be a Secretary?’: APS bosses pushed back on payout changes](#)



## Recordkeeping obligations of public servants

### Issue

What is the Australian Public Service doing to ensure adequate recordkeeping of key actions and decisions?

### Headline Response

APS employees must make and keep records that provide an accurate account of key actions, decisions and outcomes relating to their agency's business activities, and in doing so should follow Commonwealth information management legislation and agency-specific policies, including record creation, retention and disposal procedures.

### Facts and Figures

- The creation and retention of records by public servants, documenting the key actions, decision and outcomes of APS agency business activities are a matter for agencies to manage, in accordance with their obligations under Commonwealth information management legislation, and any agency specific policies and procedures.
- The National Archives of Australia has published detailed information about Commonwealth information management obligations, including in 2024:
  - guidance on managing information with integrity, which draws the connection between meeting legislative recordkeeping obligations and the APS Values; and
  - key practical actions for APS employees and managers to take in ensuring integrity in information management.
- This guidance was developed in consultation with the Australian Public Service Commission in response to recommendations in the Robodebt Royal Commission Report and *Louder than Words: An APS Integrity Action Plan*.
- In addition, the new APS Value of Stewardship requires all APS employees and Agency Heads to:
  - Ensure complete, accurate, and appropriately accessible recordkeeping of key actions and decisions.

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- The new Value is enforceable through the APS Code of Conduct following commencement of the *Public Service Amendment Act 2024* on 11 December 2024.
- Guidance on how APS employees can effectively demonstrate recordkeeping requirements, as described under the Stewardship Value, was published on the Australian Public Service Commission website on 28 October 2024.
- The recordkeeping obligations of the Stewardship Value supplement and reinforce long-standing statutory requirements for recording and retention of Commonwealth information.
- On 27 February 2025 the Australian Information Commissioner issued a report to the Attorney-General about Australian Government agency practices and policies with respect to their use of messaging applications.
- The report underscores the need for agencies to strengthen their policies and governance frameworks around messaging applications and associated recordkeeping, Freedom of Information, and privacy obligations.
- Work is underway at the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner and the National Archives of Australia to support agencies' understanding of how Commonwealth information management obligations apply to records generated through encrypted messaging applications, such as Signal and WhatsApp.
- Agency Heads and employees of the Parliamentary departments are subject to an equivalent Code of Conduct under the *Parliamentary Service Act 1999* and are subject to Commonwealth information management legislation in the same way as APS employees.

## **Policy Commitments**

- The Government is continuing to implement an agenda of ambitious and enduring public sector reform including to ensure that the APS embodies integrity in everything it does.
- Fifty-nine initiatives have been announced as part of the APS Reform Agenda.
- Enshrining Stewardship as a new APS Value was one of the earliest of these initiatives.

## Background

### Australian National Audit Office briefing

On 20 June 2025 the Australian National Audit Office published an Audits Lessons insights briefing on Records Management: [Records Management | Australian National Audit Office \(ANAO\)](#), which noted:

*In the past five years, the majority of ANAO performance audit reports, including all 45 performance audit reports presented for tabling in the Parliament in 2023–24, included findings on deficiencies in records management.*

The briefing sets out a suite of actions that agencies can take to improve records management practices.

### Encrypted messaging applications

In late 2024, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner surveyed 22 Commonwealth agencies, including the Commission, to understand the prevalence and use of messaging applications such as Signal, WhatsApp, and Telegram.

In its ensuing report, *Messaging apps: a report on Australian Government agency practices and policies*, the OAIC identified a need for agencies to strengthen their policies and governance frameworks around messaging applications and their recordkeeping, FOI, and privacy obligations.

To assist agencies in this regard, the OAIC and the National Archives of Australia are developing guidance for agencies on the regulation of messaging apps and the associated recordkeeping requirements.

In the interim, the Commission and other agencies are taking a proactive approach to addressing the matters raised by the OAIC, in order to help ensure compliance, enhance security, uphold transparency in government communications and records, and reduce exposure to information security and recordkeeping risks.

### Services Australia matter

A Freedom of Information release by Services Australia to a journalist at The Canberra Times in September 2024 indicated an apparently limited number of documents related to the transfer of the former Deputy Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, Ms Catherine Saunders, to Services Australia

following decision-making to manage a declared conflict of interest management by the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, Mr Rob Stefanic.

Adverse commentary was made about the lack of records regarding this transfer process by Senator Barbara Pocock.

### **Recent Media Articles**

Two recent articles have noted deficiencies in recordkeeping identified in ANAO audits:

**18 June 2025** – The Canberra Times –

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8994253/departments-vows-changes-to-oversight-of-136b-child-care-scheme/>

**21 May 2025** – The Canberra Times –

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8971793/audit-office-finds-defence-failing-local-industry-content-mandate/>

The following articles relate to the use of messaging apps in the public service:

**19 May 2025** – The Mandarin –

<https://www.themandarin.com.au/292307-can-messaging-apps-be-undermining-open-and-accountable-government/>

**27 March 2025** – The Guardian –

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/mar/27/donald-trump-us-signal-journalist-leak-australia-government-security>

**20 March 2025** – The Mandarin –

<https://www.themandarin.com.au/289056-oaic-puts-agencies-on-notice-for-messaging-app-use/>

**19 March 2025** – The Canberra Times –

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8918557/opinion-use-of-signal-whatsapp-in-aps-work-needs-attention/>

The following article relates to the Services Australia matter outlined in the Background (above):

**9 September 2024** – The Canberra Times –

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8752554/dps-deputy-secretary-transfer-sparks-transparency-concerns/?cs=14329>

## Robodebt

### Issue

What is the Government doing to respond to the recommendations in the Robodebt Royal Commission's Report?

### Headline Response

The Government has agreed, or agreed in principle, to all 56 of the Royal Commission's recommendations as part of its ongoing work to restore faith, integrity and trust in government.

### Facts and Figures

- The Robodebt Scheme was a failure of government that caused damage to people and their families.
- The Royal Commission's findings following its inquiry into the Robodebt Scheme were serious and significant, and the Robodebt experience offers important lessons for all public servants and Government agencies.
- The Government's response to the Royal Commission's recommendations is in line with its commitment to put people back at the centre of the work of government and invest in better services for the Australian community.
- The Government continues to implement reforms to strengthen the Australian Public Service and bolster the powers of oversight agencies to ensure a failure like the Robodebt Scheme can never happen again.
- The Royal Commission's report also made various findings about the conduct, roles and responsibilities of individual public servants involved in the Robodebt Scheme.
- The APSC separately oversaw an independent process to determine if public servants with adverse findings have breached the APS Code of Conduct. This process was established under the APS Commissioner's powers in the *Public Service Act 1999*. It was designed to be fair, independent, and consistent. The Centralised Code of Conduct Inquiry Taskforce Report was published on 13 September 2024.

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*If pressed about inquiry details*

- Of the 16 referrals to the Centralised Code of Conduct Inquiry Taskforce:
  - 2 former Secretaries of the Department of Human Services breached the Code of Conduct on 25 occasions
  - 10 current and former public servants breached the Code on 72 occasions
  - 4 individuals were found not to be in breach or their actions did not meet the necessary threshold at certain stages of the process.
  - Sanctions were recommended for each current public servant, including reprimands, fines and demotions.
- The former public servants and former Secretaries that were found to have breached the Code of Conduct are required to declare that breach if they seek re-employment in the public service (including as a contractor or consultant) over the next 5 years.

*If questioned about the NACC*

- Mr Geoffrey Nettle AC KC was appointed to independently reconsider the NACC's decision relating to referrals made to the NACC by the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme.
- On 18 February 2025, the NACC announced Mr Nettle's decision to investigate the referrals to determine if any of the 6 referred persons engaged in corrupt conduct. It's not appropriate to speculate on the likely outcomes of this investigation, or any associated matters.

**Policy Commitments**Response to Robodebt

- The Government's response to the Robodebt Royal Commission includes:
  - \$22.1 million in new and additional funding over four years from 2023-24, and \$4.8 million each year ongoing, to support implementation of the Commissioner's recommendations
  - funding for the Commonwealth Ombudsman to boost its oversight of government agencies, and new funding to reinstate the Administrative Review Council to support better decision-making across government
  - funding for Attorney General's Department's Office of Legal Services Coordination and Office of Constitutional Law to improve how legal risk is

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identified and how legal advice is provided to Cabinet, and new funding to develop a legal framework to support automated decision making in appropriate circumstances and in a manner that is consistent with the principles recommended by the Royal Commission.

- This follows the announcement of an additional \$228 million in funding for Services Australia in 2023-24 to improve frontline service delivery and \$1 billion in additional funding for Services Australia since October 2022.

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## Background

The Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme (Royal Commission) held nine weeks of hearings over four blocks between October 2022 and March 2023 and heard from over 100 witnesses. Public hearings concluded on 10 March 2023. Final submissions, including from the Commonwealth, were required by 6 April 2023.

The Royal Commission submitted its report to Government on 7 July 2023.

The Attorney-General's Department led the Commonwealth's engagement with the Royal Commission.

The APSC is partnering with key agencies in the APS to deliver on 5 of the 56 recommendations, regarding customer experience, agency oversight, integrity training, agency head accountability, and recordkeeping.

### *Centralised Code of Conduct Inquiry*

Mr Stephen Sedgwick AO was appointed as an independent reviewer to make inquiries into possible breaches of the APS Code of Conduct by current and former APS employees. Ms Penny Shakespeare was appointed as a supplementary reviewer to make inquiries into the conduct of former Agency Heads.

Between July 2023 and September 2024, Independent Reviewers, supported by the Centralised Code of Conduct Inquiry Taskforce, examined the actions and decisions of a small number of senior public servants in relation to the Robodebt scheme.

In addition to the details the Inquiry outcomes, the number and range of breaches upheld and sanctions imposed, the Final Report highlights learnings, insights and observations about individual behaviours, responsibilities and processes and suggests areas for future consideration of management and integrity of the APS.

## Recent Media Articles

There has been extensive media reporting on the Robodebt Royal Commission, from its commencement in August 2022, during the hearings from October 2022 to April 2023 to the release of the Report and the establishment of the Centralised Code of Conduct Inquiry Mechanism on 7 July 2023, and subsequently with the referrals to the NACC. Some recent reporting includes:

**5 July 2025** – Mandarin – [‘Gallagher seizes control of Services Australia, Centrelink in massive welfare shake-up’](#)

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This article reports that on 26 June 2025, the Administrative Arrangement Orders were amended, and responsibility for the delivery of services and payments relating to social security, health and other government services and whole-of-government service delivery policy from the Social Services portfolio to the Finance portfolio.

**16 June 2025** – Crikey – ['Concerning': Lessons from robodebt scandal found lacking across defence, home affairs'](#)

This article discusses an academic study titled *Robodebt and the limits of learning: exploring meaning-making after a crisis*, which concluded that three departments did not communicate with their staff about the learnings of Robodebt: Defence; Home Affairs; and Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts.

## Secretaries rates of pay

### Issue

Why are departmental secretaries so highly paid?

### Headline Response

Remuneration for Departmental Secretaries is determined by the independent Remuneration Tribunal.

### Facts and Figures

- The Remuneration Tribunal determines the classification structure for Departmental Secretary remuneration and places Secretary offices at levels within that structure. The Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet then allocates secretaries to pay points within the classification structure.
- Departmental Secretaries have significant leadership roles in government and the public sector generally. Their responsibilities encompass the most complex strategic, policy, administration and service delivery areas of the Australian Government's activities, both domestic and international.
- No other public service offices have the continuing, direct and intense exposure to the processes of government and the associated proximity to Ministers and their offices that Departmental Secretaries do.

### Policy Commitments

- N/A

s 22	Cleared by: Matthew Bowd
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Date Updated: 017/07/2025 8:41:00 AM	Date Last Printed: 17/07/2025 8:41:00 AM

## Background

### Determination of remuneration

- The Remuneration Tribunal determines the Departmental Secretary classification structure and the total remuneration for each level and pay point in the classification structure.
- Within that structure, the Tribunal determines:
  - the classification level to which each office of Departmental Secretary is assigned
  - the total remuneration for the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and Secretary of the Department of the Treasury.
- The Secretary of PM&C, in consultation with the President of the Tribunal and the Australian Public Service Commissioner, assigns all other Secretaries to a specific pay point within the classification level assigned to the office by the Tribunal.
- Recent media reporting has raised the matter of the Tribunal's role with respect to Vice-Chancellor remuneration, including reports that the University Chancellors Council has proposed that the Tribunal advise universities on pay rates for Vice-Chancellors. Subsection 5(2) of the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973* provides that the Tribunal has an advisory function with respect to executive education offices of the Australian National University and the University of Canberra. Beyond this, the Tribunal currently has no other role with respect to Vice-Chancellor remuneration.

### Recent changes to remuneration

- On 11 June 2025 the Tribunal completed its annual remuneration review and decided to increase remuneration by 2.4% for public offices in its jurisdiction, including Departmental Secretaries. This increase took effect from 1 July 2025.
- Also with effect from 1 July 2025, the Tribunal reduced the classification of the offices of the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department and the Secretary of the Department of Social Services (from remuneration Level 3 to remuneration Level 4). The reclassification reflected changes to the Administrative Arrangements Orders on 13 May 2025.
- The current classification structure for Departmental Secretaries and total remuneration for each office are:

Department	Level	Pay point	Total remuneration
Prime Minister and Cabinet	1	-	\$1,035,690
Treasury	2	-	\$1,009,790
Defence Foreign Affairs and Trade Home Affairs Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts	3	1	\$983,910
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Education Employment and Workplace Relations Finance Health, Disability and Ageing	3	2	\$932,120
Attorney-General's Industry, Science and Resources Social Services	4	1	\$880,340
Veteran's Affairs	4	2	\$828,550

#### History of remuneration

- In August 2011 responsibility for determining the terms and conditions, and the classification structure for Secretaries was given to the Tribunal through the passage of the *Remuneration and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2011*. Previously, the *Public Service Act 1999* provided for the remuneration and other conditions of appointment of a Secretary to be determined by the Prime Minister. For each determination, the Prime Minister was required to seek the advice of the Tribunal and take that advice into account. Transferring responsibility for Secretaries remuneration to the Tribunal was aimed at enhancing independence and transparency.
- As part of its advisory role, the Tribunal reported in 2005 that Secretaries continued to receive remuneration below that of comparable roles in the private sector, further aggravated by appointments to the position having an indicative tenure in the range of three to five years. The Tribunal relayed its views to the Prime Minister at the time, who acknowledged and accepted the Tribunal's view that increases in Secretaries' remuneration had not kept pace

with the increases awarded to SES employees and had fallen significantly behind comparable positions in the private sector.

- Between 1999 and 2010, the most significant change to Secretaries remuneration came about following the Tribunal's 2008 recommendation to incorporate performance pay for Secretaries into their fixed remuneration. This led to a market adjustment of remuneration plus an additional 14 per cent. Other than this increase, the primary adjustments to Secretaries' pay over the period were market adjustments that did not reflect the growth in scale of the Departments and portfolio agencies under the stewardship of Secretaries.
- In 2010, the Tribunal commenced a review of the Office of Secretary and noted that no other public sector offices have the continuing, direct and intense exposure to the processes of Government and the associated proximity to Ministers and their offices. The review found that flexibility was a distinguishing feature for Secretaries, noting that Governments can create and dissolve departments speedily. The review highlighted that the responsibility of any one Secretary can be changed rapidly and dramatically, through variation of the Administrative Arrangements Order. The Tribunal believed these features, including the termination (i.e. tenure) arrangements applicable to Secretaries distinguished the office of Secretary from every other federal public sector role and warranted a 14% increase in remuneration with effect from the Tribunal's first determination for Secretaries that was made in March 2012.

#### Comparative remuneration

- The following table presents comparative remuneration for Secretaries (green), high level offices within the Tribunal's determinative jurisdiction (blue) and universities.

Group	Office	TR / Notional TR	Date of effect
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Monash University	\$1,565,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Melbourne University	\$1,447,500	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – University of New South Wales	\$1,322,500	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – QUT, USA	\$1,235,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Sydney University	\$1,177,500	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – UQ	\$1,162,500	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Tasmania University	\$1,115,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – ANU	\$1,100,000*	2024
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – WSU	\$1,065,000	2023

UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Macquarie University	\$1,055,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Adelaide University	\$1,052,500	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Deakin University	\$1,050,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Wollongong, Swinburne, ACU	\$1,045,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Curtin University	\$1,035,000	2023
Secretary	Level 1, Prime Minister and Cabinet	\$1,035,690	01/07/2025
Secretary	Level 2 (Treasury)	\$1,009,790	01/07/2025
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – RMIT	\$1,005,000	2023
FTO	Chair APRA	\$1,004,300	01/07/2025
Secretary	Level 3, pay point 1, also Chief of the Defence Force****	\$983,910	01/07/2025
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Newcastle University	\$975,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Griffith University	\$974,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – La Trobe University	\$965,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Edith Cowan University	\$955,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Sunshine Coast University	\$945,000	2023
Secretary	Level 3, pay point 2, also Public Service Commissioner***	\$932,120	01/07/2025
SSO	Commissioner of Taxation	\$928,980	01/07/2025
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – UTS	\$905,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor - UWA	\$904,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Federation University	\$895,000	2023
Secretary	Level 4, pay point 1	\$880,340	01/07/2025
FTO	Solicitor-General – also Chair ASIC, ACCC	\$878,760	01/07/2025
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Murdoch University	\$865,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – University of Canberra	\$860,000**	2025
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – JCU, SCU	\$847,500	2023
SSO****	Auditor-General, Australian Statistician	\$847,410	01/07/2025
FTO	CEO, Services Australia	\$847,410	01/07/2025
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Victoria University	\$845,000	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – CSU	\$837,500	2023
Secretary	Level 4, pay point 2	\$828,550	01/07/2025
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – CQU	\$817,500	2023
FTO	Australian Federal Police Commissioner, DG ONI	\$816,000	01/07/2025
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – USQ	\$697,500	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – Charles Darwin University	\$652,500	2023
UNI	Vice-Chancellor – UNE	\$575,000	2023

Source for most Vice-Chancellor remuneration - <https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/the-high-pay-for-vice-chancellors-does-not-deliver-better-outcomes-for-students/> (data from chart at beginning of article)

\* Source for ANU Vice-Chancellor remuneration – AFR article 15 December 2024 quotes ‘\$1.1m’ salary.

\*\* Source for University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor remuneration – The Australian article 28 January 2025 quotes an ‘\$860,000 a year job’

\*\*\* FTO – Full-time public office with a determination issued under the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973*.

\*\*\*\* SSO – Specified Statutory Office with a determination issued under the under the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973*.

## Recent Media Articles

15 July 2025: *The Australian*, [Uni bosses buckle over V-C pay advice](#)

2 July 2025: *The Australian*, [PM’s \\$16m team: it’s time to earn it](#)

16 June 2025: *The Canberra Times*, [Senior APS pay is a mess, and latest increase is simply beyond explanation](#)

11 June 2025: *The Canberra Times*, [Pay rise puts secretary in public service \\$1m club](#)

## Sexual Harassment in the APS

### Issue

What is the APS doing to address sexual harassment in its workplaces?

### Headline Response

The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) is supporting APS agencies to strengthen their policies and processes, and providing learning products and resources to support employees embed respectful behaviours in workplaces.

### Facts and Figures

- The APS does not tolerate sexual harassment and related unlawful behaviours in our virtual and physical workplaces.
- All APS agencies are expected to have measures in place to prevent sexual harassment and related unlawful conduct from occurring, in line with amendments to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*.
- The APSC has incorporated respectful behaviour into its SES leadership framework and in many of its learning products and resources. In particular, a dedicated Integrity module includes content related to respectful behaviour in the workplace - this is mandatory for all new APS employees.
- The APSC continues to promote awareness and share best practice via its website, and has a model policy template and risk assessment guidance for agencies to inform their prevention policies and initiatives.
- The APSC's website, training content and policy documentation will be updated to reflect updates in the area of sexual harassment, including the recent release of the Australian Human Rights Commission's 'Speaking from Experience' report.
  - The new report reveals the systemic barriers faced by people who experience workplace sexual harassment and calls for stronger measures to combat sexual harassment. The report marks the delivery of the final recommendation of the Respect@Work report, released in March 2020.

s 22	Cleared by: Dr Steve Munns
s 22	s 22
Division: Workplace Reform and Diversity	PDR Number: QB25-000032
Date Updated: 9/07/2025 2:29:00 PM	Date Last Printed: 9/07/2025 2:29:00 PM



- Since the positive duty obligation became enforceable, reports of sexual harassment received by the Australian Human Rights Commission from APS agencies, are below:

Total number of reports:	5
Number of agencies affected:	4
Number of enquiries resolved:	4

- The Australian Human Rights Commission has no formal inquiries underway into any of these entities:
  - One entity voluntarily provided information upon request
  - A different entity has voluntarily provided information upon request and is currently being monitored.

*If asked for further details on reports of sexual harassment made to the Australian Human Rights Commission*

- The Australian Human Rights Commission is responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with the positive duty in the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) (Sex Discrimination Act).
- Questions or inquiries into positive duty reports in the APS should be directed to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

## **Policy Commitments**

- N/A

## Background

APS employees and agencies have a shared obligation to create respectful, safe workplaces and call out negative behaviour and every day sexism in the workplace.

APS enterprise agreements now contain a common Respect@Work clause. This clause outlines that respect at work principles include safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces that are free from physical and psychological harm, harassment, discrimination and bullying. This clause instructs agencies to consult with employees to develop guidelines and policies that, as far as possible, prevent sexual harassment and sex discrimination from occurring.

The *APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26* includes the following key actions for agencies:

- Agencies strengthen approaches to preventing and responding to sexual harassment
- Leaders reinforce respectful standards of behaviour
- Agencies must understand what drives their gender pay gap and gender imbalances across all levels.

APS agencies must report all sexual harassment complaints (de-identified) and high level outcomes to the APS Commission through the annual APS Agency Survey.

High level annual data is published in the APS Employee Census results and the State of the Service Report. This is de-identified data only and does not report on specific agencies.

The APS Commissioner's Directions include a provision requiring agencies to consult with the Commissioner before disputes relating to sexual harassment are settled using agreements that include non-disclosure or confidentiality terms.

The *Public Service Act 1999* places an obligation on all APS agencies and employees to foster safe and respectful workplaces. Sexual harassment is inconsistent with obligations to promote and uphold the APS Values, Employment Principles, and Code of Conduct.

## Recent Media Articles

25 June 2025: The Australian – [Australian Human Rights Commission calls for end to NDAs in workplace sexual harassment cases](#)

25 June 2025: The Canberra Times – [Penalties proposed for employers who ignore harassment](#)

Recent Secretary Appointments

Issue

s 47C [Redacted]

Headline Response

Mr Kaiser was appointed consistent with the requirements of the *Public Service Act 1999* following a competitive selection process chaired by the Australian Public Service Commissioner.

Facts and Figures

- Secretaries are appointed by the Governor-General on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.
  - Before making a recommending to the Governor General, the Prime Minister must have received a report about the appointment from the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C).
- The Prime Minister’s recommendation that Mr Kaiser be appointed Secretary of DCCEEW was consistent with section 58 of the *Public Service Act 1999*.
- Mr Kaiser’s appointment was informed by advice from the Secretary of PM&C in consultation with the APS Commissioner.
  - Mr Kaiser was identified through a competitive selection process chaired by the APS Commissioner. The process also included consultation with the portfolio ministers and the usual due diligence you would expect for a senior appointment.

s 47C [Redacted]

- Mr Kaiser’s appointment was supported by a report from the Secretary of PM&C after consulting with portfolio ministers and the Commissioner, and informed by a competitive selection process chaired by the Commissioner.
- Other than the movement of secretaries across portfolios, competitive selection processes have been used for all but one secretary appointment since 2023.
- A competitive selection process was also used for the appointment of the APS Commissioner.

Contact: Kate Boxsell	Cleared by: Rachel Bacon
s 22 [Redacted]	s 22 [Redacted]
Division: Leadership & Talent Development	PDR Number: QB25-000034
Date Updated: 18/07/2025 3:22:00 PM	Date Last Printed: 18/07/2025 3:22:00 PM

s 47C

- Appointments are a matter for the Governor-General acting on advice from the Prime Minister.
- I will be consulted on a proposed appointment as required under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

s 47C

- The Government has made a series of reforms to support Secretaries and senior public servants to deliver with integrity:
  - Overseen multiple competitive processes for Secretary-level positions.
  - Strengthened Secretary and SES performance frameworks to ensure a focus on behaviours as well as delivery.
  - Amended the *Public Service Act 1999* to provide the Commissioner the power to inquire into and determine a former Agency Head has breached the Code of Conduct.

### Policy Commitments

2023 Annual Statement on APS Reform committed to introduce merit-based appointments processes for Secretary roles as part of the second tranche of APS Reform.

## Background

On Tuesday, 8 July 2025, the Prime Minister announced that he intended to recommend to the Governor-General the appointment of Mr Kaiser as Secretary of DCCEEW, commencing 14 July 2025.

The announcement gained media attention due to Mr Kaiser's service as a Labor Member of the Legislative Assembly in Queensland and his time as Chief of Staff to Labor Premiers the Hon. Morris Iemma and the Hon. Anna Bligh AC.

The Prime Minister's recommendation was informed by a report on the vacancy by the Secretary of PM&C, Dr Steven Kennedy PSM. The report was informed by a competitive selection process chaired by the Commissioner. **s 47E(c), s 47E(d)**

During the Government's first term, seven competitive selection processes were undertaken for Secretary-level positions:

Publicly advertised competitive selection process:

- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry: September 2023
- Department of Social Services: November 2024

**s 47E(c), s 47E(d)**

## Recent Media Articles

18 July 2025: **The Mandarin** article [Kaiser appointment shows all that is wrong with APS process](#) reports on Mr Kaiser's appointment and suggests that it raises issues with the broader appointment process for Secretaries, particularly transparency.

10 July 2025: **The Canberra Times** article [Queensland Labor secretary to lead Climate change dept](#) reports on the appointment and Mr Kaiser's termination following the new government in QLD in 2024. It reports on Mr Kaiser's stint in the QLD Legislative Assembly in 2000 and subsequent resignation.

9 July 2025: **Sky News** article [Anthony Albanese's handing of plum federal job to ex-Labor MP challenges public service independence](#) quotes Dan Tehan stating the public service must be independent and be seen to be independent.

9 July 2025: **The Australian** article [PM Hands \\$930k job to Labor veteran](#) mentions the review into public service appointments initiated by Minister Gallagher in 2023 and claims the appointment of Mike Kaiser looks like political favouritism ("jobs for mates") raising concern about impartiality in Secretary appointments.

8 July 2025: **The Courier Mail** article [Miles's top public servant handed plum job by Albo](#) reports Mike Kaiser as a controversial figure after his appointment was terminated by the QLD LNP government.

8 July 2025: **The Age** article [Queensland's former top public servant lands plush gig](#) reports on the recommendation of the PM on the appointment of Mike Kaiser. It reported Mr Kaiser's previous appointment as QLD Department of Premier and Cabinet as a political appointment.

8 July 2025: **Capital Brief** first reported [Mike Kaiser appointed as climate change secretary](#) and reported Mr Kaiser's previous roles as a Chief of Staff to Labor Premier of NSW and later Labor Premier of QLD.

### Delivery of APS Academy SES leadership programs outside of Canberra

#### Issue

Why does the APS Academy spend money on residential retreats for SES leadership programs?

#### Headline Response

The APS Academy delivers leadership programs which lift capability for senior APS leaders, to support the government in delivering better outcomes for Australians.

#### Facts and Figures

- The APS Academy delivers a range of SES programs to deepen leadership and management capability, and support productive workplace cultures and APS wide stewardship.
- These programs have built the APS's capability to support the government of the day since they were introduced in 2010 in response to the Ahead of the Game Review.
- The importance of investing in current and future APS leaders was reinforced in the Thodey Review, 2019 and is considered critical to effective and ethical leadership in the APS.
- Current APS leadership offerings include SES Band 1, Band 2 and Band 3 programs. They involve a mix of on-line, in-person and work-place learning and also include group-based learning in a residential setting. This blended approach is consistent with high quality private and public sector leadership programs.
- Locations for the residential components are selected taking into account the increasingly dispersed national footprint of the APS and with consideration of accessibility and travel related costs.
- All venues are selected following the Commonwealth Procurement Rules. Value for money is the key criterion.

<b>s 22</b>	<b>Cleared by:</b> Kate Boxsell
<b>s 22</b>	<b>s 22</b>
<b>Division:</b> Leadership and Talent Development	<b>PDR Number:</b> QB25-000033
<b>Date Updated:</b> 11/07/2025 11:25:00 AM	<b>Date Last Printed:</b> 11/07/2025 11:25:00 AM

*If pressed for further detail on residential programs*

- Between July 2024 and June 2025, the APS Academy delivered 10 residential programs.
- Most of the 10 deliveries were held in Sydney and Regional Victoria. The following locations have been used:
  - 1 in Geelong, VIC
  - 1 in Melbourne, VIC
  - 2 in Shepparton, VIC
  - 3 in Sydney, NSW
  - 1 in Kiama, NSW
  - 2 in Bowral, NSW
- The total cost of accommodation and catering for the 10 programs is **s 47G**
- The average cost per participant per day is **s 47G**

*If pressed about the upcoming SES Stewardship Program in Bowral*

- The Senior Executive Stewardship Program for Band 3s and Agency Heads is held every 12 to 18 months and includes a 5 day immersive residential.
- Peppers Craigieburn was selected for the residential scheduled for September 2025. The Commonwealth Procurement Rules were followed.
- The venue contract is for \$19,370. The contract includes venue hire and a standard catering package with morning and afternoon tea, lunch, and dinner. No alcohol is provided.
- A total of 26 senior leaders including APS participants and practitioners and facilitators are expected.

### **Policy Commitments**

- Nil



### Background

The delivery of SES leadership programs is aligned with APS Reform agenda, Priority Reform 4: An APS that has the capability to its job well.

### Recent Media Articles

7 July 2025: The Canberra Times, An APS retreat to the country on page 2. Article referred to spending of more than \$19,000 on a senior leadership retreat. Please see attachment below.

#### **An APS retreat to the country**

Whoever said the public service retreat was dead? The **Australian Public Service Commission** will host 26 people in Bowral later this year, at the quaint Peppers Craigieburn Resort.

The commission has forked out more than \$19,000 to secure the venue, catering and set-up for the five-day conference, which will serve as the event of the season for the APS Academy's Senior Executive Stewardship Program.

Though worth noting that accommodation is not included in the sum, and will be contracted separately.

Of the 26 attendees, 22 will be Senior Executive Service members who are participating in the program.

On the menu: morning and afternoon tea, lunch and dinner. Expect coffee and tea, but no alcohol.