

### Briggs Review

#### Subject/Issue

Ms Lynelle Briggs AO undertook a review of public sector board appointments processes. Ms Briggs' report is being considered by the Australian Government.

#### Key facts and figures

- Review commenced on 5 February 2023.
- Terms of Reference are on the APS Reform website.
- Final report is with government for consideration.
- The government has committed to publishing the review report.

#### Key points

- When the APS Reform agenda was announced in October 2022, a review of arrangements and processes for appointments to public sector boards was also announced.
- The government appointed Ms Lynelle Briggs AO to undertake the review.
- The purpose of the review was to consider and propose appropriate standards for the processes by which board members are appointed to government boards.
- The review focussed on:
  - clarifying the role of public sector boards and what skills and processes are needed
  - 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 gender, CALD, First Nations and geographic representation on public sector boards).
- Ms Briggs also considered how arrangements and processes may be used to enhance integrity and trust in the institutions of government.
- The review did not examine current or past board appointments or appointment processes related to specific individuals.

### **Why hasn't the review been published?**

- The timing of the publication of the report is a matter for government.
  - The review affects all portfolios.
  - Many boards are governed by multiple and different pieces of legislation.

### **When will it be published?**

- The final report was provided to the government in August 2023.
- The timing is a matter for government.
- The government will consider the report and all the recommendations prior to publication.

### **How much did the review cost?**

- The contract value was \$160,000 (exc. GST) or \$176,000 (incl. GST).

### **Why was the Final Report not tabled following the Order for the Production of Documents moved by Senator Pocock?**

- It is not appropriate to table the Final Report at this time, as it is under consideration by Government and subject to Cabinet confidentiality.
- This is in accordance with the Cabinet Handbook and *Odgers' Australian Senate Practice*.
- The Final Report will be released in due course, following Government consideration.

### Background

The review was conducted by Ms Lynelle Briggs AO between February and August 2023.

Ms Briggs was supported by a small secretariat in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to assist with the administration of the review. She brought extensive public sector experience in both the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions.

Ms Briggs 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 5 years. She has served on several public and private sector boards and has conducted a number of reviews for various government agencies and ministers.

### How was Ms Briggs appointed?

Ms Briggs was appointed through a limited tender process. She met the specific and unique requirements needed to lead and conduct the review. The procurement process was carried out in accordance with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules. This included an assessment against objective criteria to ensure suitability to meet the requirements of the contract.

### Supporting information

#### Questions on Notice

- PQiW379 - PQ23-000015 - Public Sector Board Appointments Final Report. House of Reps Question on 14 November 2023. Answered on 15 December 2023.
- Ref Q0067 - SQ24-000227 - Senator Hume. Review of Public Sector Board Appointments. Estimates on 24 October 2023. Answered on 13 December 2023.

#### Relevant correspondence

- Letter from Senator David Pocock (MC25-000139) on 19 August 2025 setting a motion to reject the Minister's original claim to not produce the report and ordering the report be laid on the table. Minister Gallagher responded on 25 August 2025.
- Letter from Senator David Pocock (MC25-000131) on 23 July 2025 setting a motion of the Order for Production of Documents to release the Final Report. Minister Gallagher responded on 29 July 2025.
- Letter from Senator David Pocock (MC24-000209) on 29 August 2024 seeking release of the Final Report and intention to seek an Order for Production of Documents. Minister Gallagher responded on 13 September 2024.

#### Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- FOI requests (LEX 744 & LEX1077) are registered on the [APSC Website](#) FOI Disclosure Log.

#### Recent Ministerial Comments

- Treasurer, the Hon Jim Chalmers MP responded to a [Question without Notice](#) on 25 August 2025: "We've received the Briggs report, as the honourable member rightly points out. We are working through it, in our usual considered and methodical way. We will make the report public in due course, following that careful consideration."

### Relevant Media Reporting

- [Briggs review still under lock and key despite Senate complaints](#), The Mandarin, 3 September 2025
- [Calls grow for release of secretive public service report | The Canberra Times | Canberra, ACT](#), The Canberra Times, 27 August 2025
- [Board appointments report remains a cabinet keepsake](#), The Mandarin, 7 August 2025
- [Government needs to press the APS reform accelerator](#), The Mandarin, 9 May 2025
- [Labor and merit-based appointments](#), The Saturday Paper, 31 August 2024
- [Public sector appointment report 'nowhere to be seen': Scamps](#), The Canberra Times, 26 August 2024
- [Margin Call](#), The Weekend Australian, 17 August 2024
- [Opposition goes postal on Palaszczuk job 'hypocrisy'](#), West Australian, 17 August 2024
- [Restoring Integrity to the Australian Public Service](#), Paper by Andrew Podger on APS integrity Pearls and Irritations, 5 July 2024.
- [Reform on roids? Up the dosage](#), Paddy Gourley, Canberra Times, 15 April 2024.

**Date Cleared:** 24/09/2025  
**Cleared by (SES):** Rachel Bacon  
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**Consultation:** Nil  
**PDR Number:** SB25-000117

**Diversity in the APS****Subject/Issue**

In accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999*, the APS fosters a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Australian population. This includes people of all ages, genders, cultural backgrounds, people with disability, First Nations people, LGBTIQ+ people, and people who are neurodivergent.

**Key points**

- The APS strives to set the standard as a model employer by building a workforce that leverages the rich diversity of its staff. Employees' diverse experiences, insights and backgrounds help the APS deliver better informed policy and services.

**First Nations employment**

- The SES100 is a key deliverable from the Boosting First Nations Employment Package. SES100 sought to reach 100 First Nations SES staff within the APS by 2025. This aligns with the Government's commitment to boost First Nations employment across the APS to 5% by 2030. At June 2025, APSED data confirms the APS surpassed this target with 111 First Nations staff at SES level (3.1% of all SES).
- In the completed SES100 Round 1 – and the merit list expired - 26 out of the 39 candidates rated suitable in the merit pool and have been promoted across 15 agencies.
- In November 2024, a second SES100 recruitment exercise commenced creating SES Band 1 generalist and professional streams and SES Band 2 generalist merit pools. 27 candidates at the SES Band 1, and 16 at the SES Band 2 levels, were found suitable.

**CALD employment**

- The APS has a long-term goal of achieving 24% CALD SES representation with plans to lift representation from 11% to 15% in five years. The CALD Sponsorship program is being piloted in 2025 with five agencies, with the aim to build the EL 2 to SES Band 1 leadership pipeline.
- APSC is coordinating projects to support the *APS CALD Employment Strategy*, including the development of Agency-level CALD action plans, service-wide cultural capability uplift and mentoring CALD leaders.
- The APSC is supporting foundational cultural learning through the release of *Many Cultures, One APS*. This project explores the lived experience of

CALD APS staff, and builds on MOSAIC (Multicultural Organisation – Staff Awareness, Innovation and Capability) Parts 1 and 2, which was refreshed to align with the Strategy and best practice leadership training.

### Gender equality

- APS achieved its lowest gender pay gap in December 2024 (4.4%).
- At 30 June 2025, the APS continues to achieve parity across multiple classification levels, including at the SES Band 1 and 2 levels, while 48.4% of SES Band 3 were women.
- The APSC has delivered APS-specific guidance to support agencies to prevent sexual harassment, support employees experiencing family and domestic violence, and support employees experiencing symptoms of perimenopause and menopause.

### Disability employment

- The Government has set a target of 7% employees with disability by 2025.
- At 30 June 2025, 5.8% of employees shared their disability in HR systems. In the 2025 APS Employee Census, 12.5% of respondents identified as having disability – 6.7 points higher than APSED data.
- The APSC established the Disability Royal Commission Discovery Project to support implementation of the five recommendations focused on improving attraction and retention of people with disability in the APS.
- The team has completed a 12 month investigation into setting new employment targets, establishing employment pathways and developing APS-wide workplace adjustment principles and passports. A report will be submitted to Government for further consideration.

### Neurodiversity

- In the 2025 APS Employee Census, 10.8% of respondents consider themselves to be neurodivergent. There is currently no APS target for people who consider themselves to be neurodivergent.
- The APSC is responsible for three action items under the inaugural *National Autism Strategy 2024-2031*.

### Age

- The APS has a generationally-diverse workforce, impacting all areas of the employee lifecycle and workforce planning. The greatest proportion of APS employees are aged 45 years and over (45.4% of the APS).

### Background

#### APS diversity and inclusion plan

The APSC has delivered workforce strategies to drive a diverse and inclusive APS workforce:

- Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy 2020-24
- APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020-25
- APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26
- APS Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Employment Strategy and Action Plan.

As many of these strategies draw to a close, the APSC is reviewing how we approach diversity and inclusion from a whole of system, implementation and evaluation perspective.

#### First Nations

As part of SES100, employees are provided with wrap around, end to end support, intensive leadership development program, career coaching and mentoring. SES units are also supported through the recruitment and on-boarding process.

As part of the updates made to the APS Enterprise Agreement in 2024, all Executive Level 2 (EL 2) employees are required to complete mandatory cultural competency training to foster safe and inclusive workspaces for First Nations staff. The APSC has three cultural eLearning training packages available to APS staff to support the uplift of cultural capability - the Cultural Capability Hub, NIAA's Footprints Framework, and CORE: Cultural Learning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia from AIATSIS.

#### Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

The APS CALD Strategy delivers whole of APS initiatives in support of Five Headline Actions: Whole of APS standards, Cultural understanding, Leadership and management, Recruitment and progression, and Representation.

The Statement of Leadership on Cultural Diversity – the CALD Compact – was released on 2 December 2024 to support leaders with guidance to be more CALD inclusive.

APS-wide CALD Champion Secretary Jim Betts, Chair of the SES CALD Committee, is spearheading a number of initiatives to help boost CALD SES representation in the APS.

#### National Anti-Racism Framework

The APSC is collaborating with the Australian Human Rights Commission on its National Anti-Racism Framework. Race Discrimination Commissioner Giri Sivaraman gave a major address in August calling on Government and other institutions to act on systemic and structural racism and to the build racial literacy, embed cultural safety and listen to the lived experiences of First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically diverse people.

#### Disability

Representation of people with disability has changed minimally since 2005, when representation was 4.0% (Source: APSED).

The APS Disability Employment Strategy is due to expire. The APSC will do an end-of-strategy evaluation on available data for delivery by May 2026.

Sponsored by the Secretaries Capability and Workforce Committee, the APSC is finalising a project aimed at improving the on-boarding experience of employees with disability.

## Neurodiversity

The APSC is delivering three actions from the inaugural *National Autism Strategy 2024-2031*, released in January 2025, for the inclusion of Autistic people: innovative hiring practices, mentoring and coaching opportunities, and supporting the Public Sector Neurodiversity Community of Practice, which is driving conversation across the APS and providing peer support, sharing resources and holding information sessions for community members.

## Age

The APS uses the Australian Bureau of Statistics definition of mature age which is 45 years and over. 45.4% of the APS workforce fits within this definition. The APSC is taking an intersectional approach to all work and is focused on creating respectful and inclusive workplaces to support all employees.

## Gender

The APS gender pay gap, whilst at its lowest, continues to be impacted by a higher proportion of women engaged in lower classifications compared to men.

In May 2025 the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) released the *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Scorecard: Key Employer Results from 2023*. The results indicate that Commonwealth public sector has a lower gender pay gap (6.4%) than the private sector (21.1%), influenced by the balance of women and men in management.

## Supporting information

### Questions on Notice

- Senate QON SQ25-000099 – Diversity and inclusion measures

### Recent Ministerial Comments

- Media release by Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, 26 August 2025 - [Workplace gender equality improving, but leadership representation and pay gaps remain](#)
- Media release by Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, 21 May 2025 – [Public Sector leading way on closing gender pay gap](#)

### Relevant Media Reporting

- [ATO pulled-up on disabled staff access to union representation](#), Julian Bajkowski, The Mandarin, 23 September 2025
- [APS reaches Indigenous executive quota](#), Dan Holmes, The Mandarin, 10 Sep 2025
- ['They don't complain': Racism in the APS 'a big problem' but is 'underreported'](#), Dana Daniel, The Canberra Times, 7 August 2025
- [The public service has a much smaller gender pay gap than the private sector. It's a big achievement](#), Leonora Risse, The Mandarin, 21 May 2025
- ['A big shift': Australia has elected its most diverse parliament. What impact will it have?](#), Krishani Dhanji, The Guardian, 16 May 2025
- [Hire higher: advocates call for increased numbers of disabled Australians in public service](#), Deborah Groarke, SBS News, 14 March 2025 (transcript of podcast)

**Date Cleared:** 25 September 2025  
**Cleared by (SES):** Ms Jo Talbot  
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**Contact Officer:** s 47F Director Inclusion Policy



# Document 2

**DIVERSITY**

**Telephone No:** s 47F  
**Consultation:** People Insights Branch  
**PDR Number:** SB25-000119



## SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – OCTOBER 2025

### First Nations employment

#### KEY MESSAGES

- The Government has committed to boost First Nations employment across the APS to 5% by 2030.
- The APS has achieved the initial target of 100 First Nations SES

#### FACTS AND FIGURES

- The SES100 was a key deliverable from the Boosting First Nations Employment Package. SES100 sought to attract new SES recruits and promotions to reach 100 First Nations SES staff within the APS by 2025. This aligns with the Government's commitment to boost First Nations employment across the APS to 5% by 2030.
- As at 30 June 2023 there were 54 First Nations SES (1.7% of all SES).
- As at 30 June 2024 there were 85 First Nations SES (2.5% of all SES).
- As at 31 December 2024 there were 100 First Nations SES (2.9% of all SES).
- As at 30 June 2025 there were 111 First Nations SES (3.1% of all SES).
- The target of increasing First Nations SES to 100 was met 6 months in advance.
- SES100 Round 1 is now complete, with the merit pool having expired on 6 May 2025. 26 out of the 39 candidates rated suitable in the merit pool have been promoted across 15 agencies.
- In November 2024, a second SES100 recruitment exercise at the SES Band 1 and Band 2 level commenced.
- 100 SES Band 1 generalist and professional streams applications were received. 70 interviews were held with a merit pool of 27 candidates being published in May 2025.
- The SES Band 1 merit pool consists of 19 generalist, 2 data, 2 finance, 2 legal, 1 Human Resources and 1 Digital, 27 candidates in total in the merit pool.
- 56 SES Band 2 generalist applications were received. 27 interviews were held with a merit pool of 16 candidates being published in May 2025.
- In December 2024 there were 193,503 employees in the APS, of which 6,643 (3.43%) identified as First Nations.
- To support the incoming First Nations SES, and build a talent pipeline at the EL2 level, two programs have been developed:



- Bulabul First Nations EL2 Talent and Development program has had 63 complete the program in 2024, and 28 have commenced in 2025.
- Yawarra First Nations SES Talent and Development program has had 14 complete the pilot in 2024, and 25 have commenced in 2025.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **How many First Nations SES are there currently?**

- As of December 2024, there are 100 First Nations SES in the APS.

### **Of the 39 candidates in the round one merit pool, how many were promoted into SES roles?**

- 26 First Nations SES were promoted from the round one merit pool. The merit pool expired in May 2025 with 13 candidates not receiving a promotion.

### **Since the round two merit pools were published, how many candidates have been promoted into SES roles?**

- As at 8 Sep 2025, 1 candidate have been promoted from the SES Band 1 merit pool, and 2 candidates have been promoted from the SES Band 2 merit pool.

### **What are you doing to retain these new SES recruits?**

- The support that will be provided to the newly onboarded SES will include:
  - External starters new to the APS will be linked with a First Nations SES buddy,
  - Development induction coaching,
  - Leadership and development program (Yawarra).

### **How was Confirmation of Heritage approached for the SES100?**

- In the SES100 context, the three tiered approach used by the Aboriginal Land Rights Act was adopted. This included:
  1. Confirmation from an incorporated Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander organisation,
  2. Letter signed by a chairperson of an incorporated organisation, and
  3. Statutory Declarations (made by a member of a First Nations Service Provider confirming that individuals meet all three criteria.

## **BACKGROUND**

The APSC has established a dedicated First Nations Unit to drive efforts to increase representation in senior leadership roles and increase cultural competency.

An EL2 First Nations Talent and Development program has been designed to build a pipeline of First Nations talent to be ready for the SES, this program is known as the Bulabul program.

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PDR: SB25-000120

Lead: Dr Steven Munns

The SES100 sought to boost the representation of First Nations people at the SES levels to 100 by June 2025. This was met in December 2024, ensuring First Nations participation in decision-making processes across the APS.

As part of SES100, the First Nations Unit provides wrap around end to end support to candidates and SES units through the recruitment and on-boarding process, intensive leadership development program, career coaching and mentoring. This intensive development program is known as the Yawarra program.

As part of the updates made to the APS Enterprise Agreement in 2024, all Executive Level 2 (EL2) staff are required to complete mandatory cultural competency training to foster safe and inclusive workspaces for First Nations staff. The APSC has three cultural eLearning training packages available to APS staff to support the uplift of cultural capability - the Cultural Capability Hub, NIAA's Footprints Framework and CORE: Cultural Learning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia from AIATSIS.

Ms Katherine Jones PSM, Secretary, Attorney-General's Department is the chair of the Indigenous Champion network.

## MEDIA

- 26/11/2024 – The Mandarin, “Indigenous public service executives hit all-time high”  
On track to reach SES100 goal by FY2025.

## CLEARANCE SUMMARY

Steven Munns Assistant Commissioner	Diversity and Inclusion	Clearance date 9/9/2025	<Mobile Phone>
s 47F	First Nations Unit	s 47F	
Finance team quality assurance	<Name>	Finance QA date <Date>	
Consultation	NIL	Is content sensitive? <sup>1</sup>	Choose answer

<sup>1</sup> This field is included to assist initial triage for use of the information after Estimates e.g. internal communication, FOI request.





## SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – OCTOBER 2025

### Gender equality

#### KEY MESSAGES

- In the APS, women have reached parity with men at every level from APS 1 to SES Band 2 (48.4% of SES Band 3 are women).
- The APS achieved its lowest gender pay gap in December 2024 (4.4%).
- 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 APS continues to maintain gender parity across multiple classification levels, including at the most senior levels. APSED data from 30 June 2025 shows that:
  - Women represent more than 50% of the workforce from APS 1 to SES Band 2.
  - Women account for 55.6% of all SES, an increase from 54.3% at June 2024.
  - More than 50% of SES Bands 1 and 2 were women
  - 48.4% of SES Band 3 were women.
  - APS achieved its lowest gender pay gap in December 2024 (4.4%), down from 4.5% the previous year.
- In May 2025, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) released the *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Scorecard: Key Employer Results from 2023*. Key findings show:
  - Commonwealth public sector employers have lower gender pay gaps than the private sector, with the balance of women and men in the workforce and at all levels of management being a key contributor.
  - The public sector had an average total remuneration gender pay gap of 6.4%, compared to the private sector's 21.1% gap.
  - 72% of Commonwealth public sector employers conducted a gender pay gap analysis and of those, 75% took action as a result of the analysis (up from 64% in 2022).
  - 93% of employers consulted with employees on workplace gender equality.
- Making progress on the gender pay gap positions the APS to attract and retain the diverse talent and representation needed to serve the Australian people.

#### APSC GENDER EQUALITY PRIORITIES

- To complement the Australian Human Rights Commission's extensive guidance and resources, the APSC has provided APS-relevant guidance, education and information



to support agencies to proactively prevent sexual harassment and related unlawful behaviours.

- The APSC has developed guidance to assist agencies in supporting employees experiencing family and domestic violence through the delivery of improved workplace arrangements, policies and practices.
- The APSC released *Circular 2025/02*, which provides guidance on 'Supporting employees experiencing symptoms of perimenopause and menopause in the workplace'.
- The APSC is continuing to develop guidance to assist agencies in supporting employees experiencing symptoms of menopause and perimenopause in the workplace.

## BACKGROUND

- Gender equality is legislated and a national priority.
- All APS agencies have a legal obligation to proactively foster respectful, safe and inclusive workplaces.
- 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.
- The PS Act also requires APS employees and agency heads to uphold the APS Values at all times, including 'The APS respects all people, including their rights and their heritage'.
- Australia's anti-discrimination laws make it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of a protected attribute 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.

## MEDIA

- 04/09/2025, [You're being listened to: Why women's health is at the centre of Labor's agenda](#), Women's Agenda. Focus on the Government delivering better outcomes for women across the different phases of their lives and expanded list of treatments for menopause added to the PBS.
- 04/09/2025, [The cost of ignoring menopause and women's health in the workplace](#), Women's Agenda. Menopause is a workplace issue.
- 15/08/2025, [Women urged to 'remain vigilant' to safeguard progress](#), The Canberra Times. A trend is emerging among young men who believe women are receiving all the opportunities in a way that is impacting male rights.



PDR: SB25-000122

Lead: Dr Steven Munns MAPS

- 14/8/2025, [Gender pay gap at record low and women's participation at record high](#), Media release from The Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for Women.
- 12/6/2025, [Australia records highest ever global ranking for gender equality](#), Media release from The Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for Women.

#### CLEARANCE SUMMARY

Steven Munns Assistant Commissioner	Diversity & Inclusion Branch	08/09/2025	s 47F
s 47F	Inclusion Policy	s 47F	
Finance team quality assurance	N/A	Finance QA date N/A	
Consultation	Workforce Metrics team (data)	Is content sensitive? <sup>1</sup>	No

<sup>1</sup> This field is included to assist initial triage for use of the information after Estimates e.g. internal communication, FOI request.





## SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – OCTOBER 2025

### Disability employment

#### KEY MESSAGES

- The Government has set a target of 7% employees with disability by 2025.
- The Government has agreed in principle to all 5 Disability Royal Commission (DRC) recommendations, supporting disability employment in the APS and public sector.

#### FACTS AND FIGURES

##### Disability

- The Government has committed to a target of 7% employees with disability by December 2025.
- At 30 June 2025, 5.8% of staff shared their disability with their agency.
  - Representation of employees with disability has changed minimally in the last 20 years. In 2005, representation was 4.0%.
  - Only 4.5% of people at the SES level identified as having disability.
- In the 2025 APS Employee Census, 12.5% of respondents identified as having disability. The discrepancy between APSED and Census is 6.7%.
- The APSC DRC Discovery Project was established in 2024 to investigate the feasibility of implementing 5 recommendations focused on improved employment of people with disability in the APS.
  - The APSC has undertaken a 12 month project of research and consultation to identify opportunities for implementing 2 of the 5 recommendations, in line with Government direction.
  - Consultation was undertaken with a cross-section of APS employees with lived experience of disability, managers, and business areas such as IT, property, and human resources.
  - The APSC is leading the consultation with States and Territories to agree common public sector workplace adjustment principles.
  - A Report to Government on the APSC's proposals for implementing the 2 recommendations is currently being drafted.

##### Neurodiversity

- There is no APS target for people who consider themselves to be neurodivergent. Neurodivergence is typically not measured by agencies.



- In the 2025 APS Employee Census, 10.8% of respondents consider themselves to be neurodivergent, 11.2% of respondents indicated 'maybe' when considering themselves to be neurodivergent, and 6.2% said they were unsure what neurodivergent means.
- The APS is accountable to delivering three actions under the inaugural National Autism Strategy 2024-2031, released by the former Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth, MP, in January 2025.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **Will the APS meet its target of 7% by December 2025?**

No, forecasting shows that the APS will not meet the target by end 2025. Substantial work is being undertaken through the APSC DRC Discovery Project to implement recommendations and improvements for people with disability. This includes the setting of targets for employees with disability in the APS, in line with recommendations 7.18 and 7.19.

### **Why isn't there a target for neurodivergence in the APS?**

All APS diversity targets are set using APSED data (sourced through Agency HR systems). Currently, the only service-wide source of data available on neurodivergence is collected through the APS Employee Census. The APS commenced data collection on neurodivergence within the Census in 2023, and since that time, sharing of neurodivergence has increased.

### **How will the success of the Disability Employment Strategy 2020-2025 be measured?**

The Disability Employment Strategy is nearing its expiration. The People Insights Branch will conduct an end-of-strategy evaluation on available data (from the 2025 Agency Survey and the 2025 APS Employee Census) for delivery by May 2026.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Disability**

The *APS Disability Employment Strategy 2020-25* aims to increase the employment of people with disability across the APS to 7% by December 2025. The Strategy supports *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*.

This year, Secretary Michael Lye (Department of Social Services), was appointed the APS Secretary-level Disability Champion. As champion, he is working to uplift the Disability Champion's Network (DCN) to become more active, influential, and engaged in supporting disability employment in the APS. The DCN has established four Tiger Teams, to progress projects on workplace adjustments, neurodiversity, disability leave, and recruitment.

The SES Disability Network has also become more active in 2025, and is currently exploring the establishment of a Cross-Agency Disability Employee Network. A number of cross-agency



networks are contributing to the broader disability landscape, including the Cross-Agency Disability Contact Officer Network and the The Cross-Agency Assistive Technology Network.

The APSC is finalising a project aimed at improving the on-boarding experience of APS employees with disability. A toolkit for employees will be released by end 2025.

### Neurodiversity

The APSC is delivering on three actions under the inaugural *National Autism Strategy 2024-2031*: innovative hiring practices, mentoring and coaching opportunities, and leveraging the Public Sector Neurodiversity Community of Practice to raise the profile of neurodivergence.

Some agencies have introduced recruitment programs to engage neurodivergent employees:

- Services Australia: Aurora Neuroinclusion Program. This program targets people with ADHD and autism.
- Defence/AFP: Dandelion Program. This program is restricted to people with autism providing meaningful employment opportunities, particularly in the IT sector.
- Home Affairs: Apollo Neurodiversity Program. This program provides career pathways for neurodivergent individuals, particularly in ICT.

### MEDIA

- 14/03/2025 - [Hire higher: advocates call for increased numbers of disabled Australians in public service](#), advocates want the government to set even more ambitious targets for employing people with disability in a bid to lift those numbers and improve peoples' lives.

### OTHER RELEVANT MATERIAL

- 14/01/2025 - [Release of the first National Autism Strategy](#), Media release from The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services

### TIMELINE

Date	Action
14 January 2025	Release of National Autism Strategy (Department of Social Services)
31 August 2024	Government response to Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Final Report
29 September 2023	Release of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Final Report
December 2020	Launch of the APS Disability Employment Strategy

### CLEARANCE SUMMARY



PDR: SB25-000123

Lead: Dr Steven Munns

Dr Steven Munns Assistant Commissioner	Diversity and Inclusion	Clearance date 9 September 2025	<Mobile Phone> s 47F
s 47F	Inclusion Policy	s 47F	
Finance team quality assurance	N/A	N/A	
Consultation	People Insights	Is content sensitive? <sup>1</sup>	No

<sup>1</sup> This field is included to assist initial triage for use of the information after Estimates e.g. internal communication, FOI request.

## Sexual Harassment in the APS

## Subject/Issue

The APSC is supporting APS agencies to strengthen their policies and processes to ensure workplaces across the APS are safe and inclusive.

## Key facts and figures

2024 survey item	Number	Comments
APS employee respondents who indicated experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace (2025 APS Employee Census)	s 45	s 45
Reported complaints of sexual harassment across APS Agencies (APS Agency Survey 2024-25)	s 45	s 45

## Key points

- The APS does **not** tolerate sexual harassment and related unlawful behaviours in our virtual and physical workplaces.
- All APS agencies have a legal obligation to proactively foster respectful, safe and inclusive workplaces.
- All APS agencies are expected to have measures in place to prevent sexual harassment and related unlawful conduct from occurring, in line with positive duty amendments to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*.
- In December 2023, the APS Commissioner wrote to all agency heads confirming his expectation that the new positive duty requirements under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)* are met by all agencies.
- On 25 June 2024, Dr Anna Cody, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, spoke to agencies and unions at the APS Consultative Committee to highlight the positive duty obligations inherent in APS workplaces and the important role of leaders in preventing sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination.
- On 24 September 2025, in her address to the National Press Club, Dr Anna Cody called for a ban on non-disclosure agreements in relation to sexual harassment, sex-based discrimination and assault at work, including in the public sector.

- APS enterprise agreements now contain a common clause on Respect at Work. This clause outlines principles for achieving Respect at Work, including that workplaces should be safe, respectful and inclusive, and 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.
- To complement the Australian Human Rights Commission's extensive guidance and resources on workplace sexual harassment and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*, the APSC is supporting APS agencies to strengthen their policies and processes. The APSC also provides APS-relevant learning products and resources to support employees embed respectful behaviours in workplaces.
- The APSC has provided the following additional supports:
  - promoted awareness via webinars, information sessions and newsletters
  - shared information via both the APSC and APS Academy websites
  - developed a model policy template and risk assessment guidance for agencies to inform their agency-specific prevention policies and initiatives
  - incorporated respectful behaviour into its SES leadership framework and in many of its learning products and resources
- In addition to obligations under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)* and existing WHS laws, 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.

### Questions and Answers

#### What is the prevalence of recorded complaints of sexual harassment across agencies?

- **s 45** formal complaints of sexual harassment (Source: 2025 APS Agency Survey).
- It is unknown what has caused a trend in increased reporting, however anecdotal evidence suggests this may be due to improved attitudes and capabilities towards reporting, as well as improved workplace culture across the APS regarding responding to claims of workplace sexual harassment.

## Background

### ***Reporting of sexual harassment in the APS***

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 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 intention of this provision is to ensure greater accountability and transparency in the use of non-disclosure agreements or confidentiality provisions within the APS, and provide an advisory role for the Commissioner as a neutral party.

### ***Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-26***

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.

### ***Sex Discrimination Act***

The positive duty under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)* imposes a legal obligation on organisations, including all APS departments and agencies, to take proactive action to prevent sexual harassment and related unlawful behaviours from occurring in the workplace, or in connection to work.

This requirement is in addition to existing obligations and duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011*, and other relevant legislation including state and territory legislation.

## Supporting information

### **Questions on Notice**

- No QoN asked

### **Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests**

- No FOIs asked

### **Recent Ministerial Comments**

- [New Powers to waive social security debts for victim-survivors of coercive control](#), Media release from Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, Minister for Women, 31 August 2025.

### **Relevant Media Reporting**

- [Push to ban use of NDAs at work](#), Eleanor Campbell, The Canberra Times, 25 September 2025

# Document 6

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

**Date Cleared:** 26/09/2025  
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**Consultation:** Nil  
**PDR Number:** SB25-000125



## Size of the Service

## Subject/Issue

The Government has an ambitious agenda for Australia and an effective, efficient, and well-resourced public service is essential to successfully implement the Government's commitments to the Australian people.

## Key facts and figures

- There were 198,529 employees in the APS at 30 June 2025, an increase of 7.4% (+13,671 employees) compared to 30 June 2024.
- The rate of growth in the APS slowed to 2.6% in the 6 months ending 30 June 2025, down from 4.7% in the prior 6 months.
- There was an increase of 5,026 employees in 6 months ending 30 June 2025 compared to an increase of 8,645 employees in the 6 months ending 31 December 2024.

## Total APS headcount, Jun 2023 – June 2025 (all employees)

	Jun 2023	Dec 2023	Jun 2024	Dec 2024	Jun 2025
Number of employees	170,086	177,041	184,858	193,503	198,529
6 month change		6,955	7,817	8,645	5,026
6 month change (%)		4.1%	4.4%	4.7%	2.6%
12 month change			14,772	16,462	13,671
12 month change (%)			8.7%	9.3%	7.4%

- Ongoing employees comprise 92.9% of the APS workforce at 30 June 2025.
- The number of ongoing employees increased 8.4% over the 2024-25 financial year to 184,442, an increase of 14,308 headcount.
- The number of non-ongoing employees decreased 4.3% over the 2024-25 financial year to 14,087, a decrease of 637 headcount.
- Between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025:
  - ongoing employee engagements in the APS decreased by 4,734 to 25,917, 15.4% lower than the previous financial year.
  - ongoing employee separations from the APS increased by 92 to 11,593 from the previous financial year, 0.8% higher than the previous financial year.

- The profile of working hours of the APS remained relatively steady compared with the previous year:
  - 84.5% work full-time hours
  - 11.6% work part-time hours
  - 3.9% work casual hours.
- The proportion of the APS based in Canberra decreased to 35.4% at June 2025 (70,221 employees) from 36.9% at June 2024 (68,257 employees).
- The proportion of the APS based in capital cities other than Canberra increased to 51.3% at June 2025 (101,794 employees) from 49.9% in June 2024 (92,269 employees).
- The proportion of the APS based in regional Australia increased to 12.6% at June 2025 (24,918 employees) from 12.3% at June 2024 (22,806 employees).

### Key points

The APS workforce continues to rebuild internal capability, growing by 7.4% over the 2024-25 financial year.

## Background

The Australian Public Service Commission maintains data on staff employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*. The Commission measures the size of the APS as headcount, a point-in-time count of all APS employees. It does not collect data on average staffing level (ASL).

ASL measures the average number of employees receiving salary or wages over the financial year, with adjustments for casual and part-time employees to show the full-time equivalent.

The 2025-26 Budget Paper No. 4 provided a revised estimate of the ASL for the General Government Sector (excluding the Australian Defence Force) of 209,913 for the 2024-25 financial year.

This is not comparable to the APS headcount, both due to the different population (GGs includes non-APS entities) and the different methodology. For example, 2 x 0.5 part-time employees equate to an ASL of 1 and a headcount of 2.

The most current APS employment data available is data at 30 June 2025 and was released on 25 September 2025. The next employment data release is expected in late March 2026 and will report data at 31 December 2025.

### Headcount of APS employees by summary location at 30 June, 2024 and 2025

Location	June 2024		June 2025	
	Headcount	% of total	Headcount	% of total
ACT	68,257	36.9%	70,221	35.4%
Other capital cities	92,269	49.9%	101,794	51.3%
Regional	22,806	12.3%	24,918	12.6%
Overseas	1,526	0.8%	1,596	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>184,858</b>	100.0%	<b>198,529</b>	100.0%

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## APS NUMBERS

Headcount of APS employees by location including State/territory, capital cities, regional areas and overseas at 30 June, 2024 and 2025

Location	June 2024		June 2025	
	Headcount	% of total	Headcount	% of total
<b>ACT</b>	68,257	36.9%	70,221	35.4%
<b>VIC</b>	31,922	17.3%	35,679	18.0%
Melbourne	27,025	14.6%	30,165	15.2%
Regional VIC	4,897	2.6%	5,514	2.8%
<b>NSW</b>	30,644	16.6%	33,646	16.9%
Sydney	21,586	11.7%	23,822	12.0%
Regional NSW	9,058	4.9%	9,824	4.9%
<b>QLD</b>	24,136	13.1%	26,448	13.3%
Brisbane	17,736	9.6%	19,461	9.8%
Regional QLD	6,400	3.5%	6,987	3.5%
<b>SA</b>	12,858	7.0%	14,111	7.1%
Adelaide	12,456	6.7%	13,648	6.9%
Regional SA	402	0.2%	463	0.2%
<b>WA</b>	8,951	4.8%	9,839	5.0%
Perth	8,228	4.5%	9,125	4.6%
Regional WA	723	0.4%	714	0.4%
<b>TAS</b>	4,424	2.4%	4,734	2.4%
Hobart	3,789	2.0%	4,041	2.0%
Regional TAS	635	0.3%	693	0.3%
<b>NT</b>	2,140	1.2%	2,255	1.1%
Darwin	1,449	0.8%	1,532	0.8%
Regional NT	691	0.4%	723	0.4%
<b>Overseas</b>	1,526	0.8%	1,596	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>184,858</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>198,529</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## Supporting information

### Questions on Notice

- QON 0057 (SQ25-000003): Question from Senator Hume asking how many APS public servants are frontline versus back office. The APS Employment Database (APSED) records the number of ongoing and non-ongoing staff employed under the Public Service Act 1999. There is no specific identifier of 'frontline' employees in APSED. APSED records the job family of employees' roles using the APS Job Family Framework for most employees. There are 18 job families in the APS Job Family Framework. Within the job families, there may be a mix of 'frontline' and 'back office' employees.

### Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- FOI request (LEX1383) - Copy of the APS Commissioner Gordon de Brouwer's Senate Estimates issues briefs prepared for the agency's appearance before the FPA committee for the hearings on February 25 2025. Response submitted on 28 April 2025.

### Recent Ministerial Comments

- [Labour delivering faster support for Australian families](#), Media Release from Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, 4 September 2025 cited in media detailed below A media release from Government Services Minister Katy Gallagher says there will be more progress on complex claims as staff are upskilled. "We promised the Australian people that our investments in the frontline would lead to better services, and that is exactly what we are delivering," she said. "Faster payments mean more money into families' pockets sooner, and less time waiting for cash that Australians are rightly entitled to. "We'll continue working to strengthen frontline services and provide Australians with the services they expect and deserve."
- [Albanese Government continues improvements across social security and Medicare claim times](#), Media Release from Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher, 13 June 2025 "These new figures show that our government's approach to rebuilding the APS and properly staffing our frontline agencies is shifting the dial in the right direction. "Effective and efficient government services aren't just nice to have, they're fundamental to the role of government and how it supports everyday Australians. "I am determined to use this new term to continue delivering improvements in government services and deliver better outcomes for all Australians."
- Minister Gallagher (cited in The Canberra Times article of 13 January 2025 detailed below) responded to Opposition Leader Dutton's proposed plan to cut 36,000 public servant jobs. Minister Gallagher stated that rather than cutting public service jobs, the Government should invest in a strong APS to help deliver needed services to Australians.

### Relevant Media Reporting

- [Services Australia claims-processing improvement slows](#), Dan Holmes, The Mandarin, 5 September 2025. This article reports Services Australia's improvements to claims processing have slowed for the time since the welfare agency "turned the corner" last year. Subsequent to the claims backlog peaking at 1.35 million in June 2023, the welfare agency has made significant progress on most claim types. CEO David Hazlehurst has largely credited the injection of staff that Services Australia

received over the last term of Albanese's first government. Minister Gallagher is quoted from a media release as saying "We'll continue working to strengthen frontline services and provide Australians with the services they expect and deserve."

- [Research shows real price of political pitch to slash public service](#), Melissa Coade, The Mandarin, 28 February 2025. The article reports content of a briefing paper released by The Australia Institute titled 'Restoring public sector capability through investment in public service employees' that found cutting the APS increases inefficiencies, costs taxpayers more, and reduces accessibility to essential services. The article reports the paper highlighted that most of the new APS jobs created by Labor since 2022 were not based in Canberra but other centres around Australia and that the size of the APS is at a historical low of 0.68% of the population compared to 0.75% nearly 20 years ago.
- [Gallagher lays into 'lazy conservative' APS job cuts pitched by Coalition](#), Brittney Levinson, The Canberra Times, 13 January 2025. The article details Minister Gallagher's response to Opposition Leader Dutton's proposed plan to cut 36,000 public servant jobs. Minister Gallagher calls the plan lazy and recommends instead investing in a strong public service, to better deliver services to the Australian public.

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<b>Consultation:</b>	Nil
<b>PDR Number:</b>	SB25-000128

**APS Remuneration Data Release 2024****Subject/Issue**

The APS Remuneration data release 2024 provides an annual snapshot of remuneration paid to APS employees as at 31 December 2024.

**Key facts and figures**

- **Headline remuneration movements:**
  - Median Base Salary movement for all APS employees was 3.8%.
  - Median Base Salary increased by 3.8% for non-SES and 7.4% for SES.
  - Median Total Reward increased by 4% for non-SES and 5.8% for SES.
- **Gender pay gap:**
  - Declined from 4.5% in 2023 to 4.4% in 2024, compared to a national gender pay gap of 11.5%.
- **Individual flexibility arrangements:**
  - 2.2% of employees (4048) had an individual flexibility arrangement in 2024, down from 2.9% (4795) in 2023.
- **Performance bonuses:**
  - 0.3% of employees (612) received a performance bonus in 2024, down from 0.5% (826) in 2023.
  - The median performance bonus was \$800, down from \$1000 in 2023.

**Key Points**

- **Non-SES remuneration movements** are affected by a number of factors such as general wage increases, salary progression through pay scales, engagements, promotions, separations and transfers between agencies.
- Consistent with the outcomes of service wide bargaining, APS agencies paid a 4% wage increase to employees from 14 March 2024.
- As a first step in reducing pay fragmentation across the APS, 35 agencies implemented new service wide minimum salary ranges which saw lower paid employees receiving additional wage increases ranging from 0.1% to 11.2% on the commencement of their agreements.
- Counterbalancing these increases, investment in APS capability increased new engagements commencing at or near the bottom of salary scales,

placing downward pressure on non-SES median base salary growth in 2024. The non-SES headcount increased by 15% since 2023.

- **SES remuneration** was influenced by a combination of factors which resulted in the 7.4% SES weighted median Base Salary increase.
- There was a continuing trend of repackaging motor vehicle related allowances into SES Base Salaries, leading to larger base salary increases for around 13% of SES employees with no or marginal impact on their Total Remuneration.
- A substantial proportion of SES employees also received two wage adjustments in 2024, related to an increase deferred from 2023 during non-SES enterprise bargaining and a scheduled pay increase in 2024.
- The **APS gender pay gap** continues to be driven primarily by the different representation of males and females across classifications.
- A higher proportion of women recruited to junior classifications during 2024 likely contributed to the slower reduction of the gender pay gap.
- The WGEA Commonwealth gender pay gap figure is different to the APS figure due to key differences in agencies captured, the timing of data collection and the remuneration components included in calculations.
- 83% of employees covered by **individual flexibility arrangements** were at EL1 or EL2 level.
- The distribution of individual flexibility arrangements between genders was 50.81% women and 49.18% men, however proportionally, slightly more men had individual flexibility arrangements than women (2.8% and 1.9% respectively).
- Agency heads are responsible for ensuring individual flexibility arrangements are consistent with Government policy.
- Agencies are expected to limit **performance bonuses** to roles that involve demonstrable at-risk performance outcomes. The APSC has expectations and guidance on agency use of performance bonuses on their website.
- The decrease is due to a reduction in SES recipients, fewer performance bonus provisions in enterprise agreements, and one agency now reporting none (having reported bonuses previously).



## Background

### APS Remuneration Data Release

The APS Remuneration data release provides an annual snapshot of remuneration paid to APS employees as at 31 December each year. The 2024 release captures data for 182,185 employees as at 31 December 2024. This includes 178,785 non-SES and 3,400 SES employees.

### Median base salary vs general wage increases

Median base salary movements are not the same as general wage increases. Median base salary movements are impacted by general wage increases; performance based progression (for example, pay point increments); movement, promotions and separations; and changes in the distribution of the workforce in different classifications, job families and agencies.

## Supporting information

### Questions on Notice

- No QoNs asked

### Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- No FOIs asked

### Recent Ministerial Comments

- Nil

### Relevant Media Reporting

- [Pay bonuses are disappearing from government agencies, but there are a few key outliers](#), Miriam Webber, The Canberra Times, 11 August 2025
- [ASU slams doubling of SES pay growth](#), Julian Bajkowski, The Mandarin, 11 August 2025
- [New pay data reveals APS' winners and losers](#), Miriam Webber, The Canberra Times, 8 August 2025
- [Soaring SES pay rises leave regular APS employees in their dust](#), Chris Johnson, Region, 8 August 2025
- [SES salaries soar 7.4% in just one year: APSC](#), Julian Bajkowski, The Mandarin, 8 August 2025
- [Growing gap 'unacceptable': Union calls for review of SES pay](#), Miriam Webber, The Canberra Times, 31 July 2025

**Date Cleared:** 8 September 2025  
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**Consultation:** Nil  
**DR Number:** SB25-000130

## SES Numbers

## Subject/Issue

The SES cohort policy maintains reasonable constraint on SES numbers while ensuring APS agencies have the capability they need to deliver.

## Key facts and figures

- SES numbers are reported publicly via the APS Employment Database.
  - The most recent reporting date was 30 June 2025.
- The database shows 3,581 SES employees in June 2025. This is:
  - up 85 since December 2024 (previous reporting period)
  - up 551 since the SES cohort policy was introduced in July 2022.
- SES continue to make up less than 2 per cent of all APS employees, which has remained consistent since December 2021.

	Total SES employees	Total APS employees	% of employees who are SES
APSED Dec 2023	3,317	177,041	1.9%
APSED June 2024	3,426	184,858	1.9%
APSED Dec 2024	3,496	193,503	1.8%
APSED June 2025	3,581	198,529	1.8%

*APS Employment Database, all employees (base classification; ongoing and non-ongoing)*

- As at 30 June 2025, the SES breakdown per level, is:

Classification	Dec 2024	June 2025
SES 1	2,602	2675
SES 2	731	745
SES 3	163	161
TOTAL	3,496	3,581

### Key points

- The SES cohort policy is maintaining reasonable constraint on SES numbers.
- There have been no Ministerial approvals for SES positions since September 2024.
- Additional positions were approved via decisions of Government.

### *Current Policy*

- On 28 October 2024 the SES cohort policy was updated and published on the Australian Public Service Commission website.
- There is a clear expectation of agencies to continue to exercise restraint in the size of SES cohorts.
- The policy provides that the default approach to resourcing new SES positions is through reprioritisation of existing resources within agencies.
- The changes to the policy primarily relate to how and when an agency can request an increase to its approved SES cohort.
- An agency can request an increase through three mechanisms:
  1. Transfer SES positions within the same Portfolio
  2. Decision by Government via New Policy Proposal or Cabinet Submission
  3. Approval by the Minister for the Public Service.
- To request approval of an increase to SES cohort by the Minister for the Public Service, an agency must be operating within its current approved SES cohort size, have existing ASL and funding, and demonstrate that particular exceptional circumstances exist.
- An agency may request a formal exemption from the APS Commissioner that would permit a request being made to the Minister for the Public Service where an agency is not eligible to make a request and there are extraordinary circumstances.
- Any requests for new positions are considered on their merits.

## Background

The SES cohort policy replaced the SES Cap in July 2022. The revised process is intended to maintain restraint without the need for a hard cap on SES numbers.

APS agencies are approved to operate with a certain number of SES. If they need additional SES positions, the agency requires approval from the Government and must demonstrate how the position will support the Government's priorities.

The key difference is agencies no longer need to seek government approval twice for the same SES position. They can seek approval either through a decision of Government or through a request to the Minister for the Public Service where eligible under the policy.

On 1 October 2023, the Minister approved a change to the SES cohort policy to assess the appropriateness of all SES spans of supervision within the agency when a ministerial request is made. This came into effect on 23 October 2023 when updated Optimal Management Structures guidance was released.

On 28 October 2024, the APSC published an updated SES cohort policy, consistent with expectations that agencies demonstrate discipline in managing SES levels, primarily through agency and portfolio reprioritisation.

Agencies are required to report to the Australian Public Service Commission on their SES cohort twice a year. This data is not published. The numbers provided through this reporting process are broadly consistent with those reported publicly through the APS Employment Database. However, they will never be identical because APS Employment Database counts *people*, while the SES cohort counts *positions*.

## Supporting information

### Questions on Notice

- QoN #F032. Approving ASL. Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, Department of Finance, 30 May 2024. Tabling date of response – 25 July 2024

### Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- Nil

### Recent Ministerial Comments

- Nil

### Relevant Media Reporting

[Top-heavy bureaucracy needs efficiency, not cuts](#)

Jack Quail, *The Australian*, 25 March 2025

[Amongst the Canberra bashing, there may be opportunities for sensible APS efficiency savings](#)

Andrew Podger, *The Mandarin*, 11 February 2025

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Consultation:	Nil
PDR Number:	SB25-000131



## SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES – OCTOBER 2025

### First Nations initiatives

#### KEY MESSAGES

- Priority Reforms under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap are embedded in the APS Reform agenda.
- There are four current APS Reform initiatives supporting First Nations staff and communities.
- This helps elevate, align and drive a collective approach to systems change across the APS.
- To reinforce the Government's commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, a First Nations Systems Lead has been appointed to provide dedicated leadership and to drive change across the APS through the Collaboration Circle and actions to support working in genuine partnership with First Nations people.

#### FACTS AND FIGURES

- In the 2023-24 Budget, the APSC received \$3.4 million over two years (\$1.6 million in 2023-24 and \$1.8 million in 2024-25) to support the Boosting First Nations Employment initiative, aimed at increasing First Nations employment in the APS to 5 per cent by 2030.
- In the 2022-23 Budget, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet received \$1.26 million to support the development of the Closing the Gap Monitoring & Accountability initiative, intended to drive and measure cultural, systemic and structural transformation across the Australian Public Service.
  - No funding was provided in 2023-24.
  - *Questions on the status of this initiative should be directed to NIAA, who are now leading this work.*
- Four initiatives under APS Reform are identified as directly progressing Closing the Gap Priority Reform 1 (formal partnerships and shared decision-making) and Priority Reform 3 (transforming government).
- Additionally, three projects have been funded through the APS Capability Reinvestment Fund to support First Nations capability building.
  - The two Round 1 Projects are:
    - Cultural competency in the application of the Commonwealth Grant Rules and Procedures, and
    - First Nations: Technology Design Program.



- The one Round 2 Project is:
  - Uplifting APS Capability to work effectively with First Nations data and evidence.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **What APS Reform initiatives are supporting First Nations people and communities?**

- Under APS Reform, there are four current initiatives supporting First Nations staff and communities:
  - **Actions to support genuine partnerships with First Nations people**
    - This initiative focuses on identifying non-legislative barriers to working in partnership and shared decision making with First Nations people and progress practical actions to address non-legislative barriers.
  - **National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reform One**
    - *Questions on the status of this initiative should be directed to NIAA*
  - **APS First Nations cultural capability and boosting First Nations employment**
    - This initiative supports the government's commitment to increasing First Nations employment in the Australia Public Service to 5% by 2030.
  - **Monitoring & accountability to embed Closing the Gap Priority Reform 3**
    - *Questions on the status of this initiative should be directed to NIAA, who are now leading this work.*
- In 2024, the Chief Operating Officer Committee piloted a Collaboration Circle where Senior Executive public servants engage with First Nations public servants in a structured, collaborative way to review current First Nations initiatives across the APS.
  - The Collaboration Circle develops recommendations to the COO Committee, who can commit to actions that can take agreed recommendations forward.
  - From 2025, the Collaboration Circle is a sub-committee of the COO Committee.
  - The Collaboration Circle has provided recommendations to the COO Committee on improving current effort towards Cultural Awareness Training initiatives and First Nations retention initiatives.

### **How does APS Reform relate to the Closing the Gap Agenda?**

- Reform initiatives under Outcome 4 (the APS has effective relationships and partnerships with First Nations peoples) and Outcome 7 (the APS sets the standard

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for First Nations employment and cultural competency) directly progress Closing the Gap Priority Reform 1 (formal partnerships and shared decision-making) and Priority Reform 3 (transforming government).

## **What is the role of the First Nations Systems lead?**

- The First Nations Systems Lead provides systems-level leadership on partnership and cultural capability, as well as focusing on employment and retention of First Nations staff.

## **Who is the First Nations Systems Lead?**

- Sam Jeffries commenced in the role on 27 November 2023 for 12 months. This trial has been extended to December 2025.
- Mr Jeffries is a Moorawoori / Wiradjuri man from New South Wales with more than four decades of experience working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. He has held positions at the local, regional and national level both in the community sector and government.

## **What is the 'Legislative Amendments to the Public Service Act' initiative, identified in the 2023 Closing the Gap Implementation Plan?**

- Under the APS Reform agenda, this initiative is called 'actions to support Genuine Partnerships with First Nations peoples'.
- The Genuine Partnerships initiative will support the Government's commitment to Closing the Gap by identifying the systems changes required to transform government organisations (Priority Reform 3) that will enable formal partnerships and shared decision making (Priority Reform 1).
- In first quarter of 2024, Mr Jeffries led external engagements to define the role of government as a partner, and to identify non-legislative barriers to working in genuine partnerships with First Nations people. This work has two main components:
  - **First Nations Partnership Playbook** – released in June 2025, to equip public servants with practical guidance on building and strengthening genuine partnerships with First Nations peoples and communities.
  - **Partnership Action Plan** – this plan will address non-legislative, system wide barriers and enablers to working in partnership with First Nations people, many of which have been identified during consultations for the Partnership Playbook. This is due for release by December 2025.

## **What external consultancy contracts have been entered into?**

- The APSC procured the services of First Nations Development Services to provide expertise and advice in connection with the development of the First Nations Playbook and action plan. First Nations Development Services is a wholly owned Indigenous business.



- The contract was executed on 11 June 2024 and ended on 27 December 2024. The contract value was \$33,000 (inclusive of GST).

## Is cultural competency training mandatory in APS?

- As part of the updates made to the APS Enterprise Agreement in 2024, all Executive Level Two (EL2) staff are required to complete mandatory cultural competency training to foster safe and inclusive workspaces for First Nations staff.
- The APS Commission has three cultural eLearning training packages available to APS staff to support the uplift of cultural capability and cultural safety. This includes:
  - the Cultural Capability Hub,
  - NIAA's Footprints Framework, and
  - CORE: Cultural Learning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia (CORE) from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

## What is the SES100 and Boosting First Nations Employment initiative?

- The **SES100** is a key deliverable from the **Boosting First Nations Employment Package**. SES100 sought to attract new Senior Executive Service (SES) recruits and promotions to reach 100 First Nations SES staff within the APS by 2025. This aligns with the Government's commitment to boost **First Nations employment across the APS to 5% by 2030**.
  - As of 30 June 2025, there were 111 First Nations SES employees (3.1% of all SES employees).
  - SES100 Round 1 is now complete, with the merit pool having expired on 6 May 2025. 26 out of the 39 candidates rated suitable in the merit pool have been promoted across 15 agencies.
  - SES100 Round 2 launched in November 2024, with 27 candidates suitable at the SESB1, and 16 suitable at the SESB2.

The SES100 is a joint project with the National Indigenous Australians Agency and the Australian Public Service Commission.

The initiative received the prestigious **Kerry Kennedy Award** at the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) ACT 2024 *Spirit of the Service Awards* in October 2024 for achieving excellence by thinking outside of the box and collaborating

For further information on Bulabul (EL2 leadership program) and Yawarra (SES leadership program) please see First Nations Employment Brief – SB25-0001208





PDR: SB25-000133

Lead: Leah Baas-Becking

### **CLEARANCE SUMMARY**

Justine Curnow Assistant Commissioner	Transformation and Strategy	Clearance date 10/09/2025	s 47F
s 47F	Partnerships and Engagement, Transformation and Strategy	s 47F	
Finance team quality assurance	N/A	N/A	
Consultation	First Nations Unit	Is content sensitive? <sup>1</sup>	No

<sup>1</sup> This field is included to assist initial triage for use of the information after Estimates e.g. internal communication, FOI request.

**Building the digital capability of the APS****Subject/Issue**

The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) and the Digital Profession are working to ensure the APS has the digital and AI workforce capabilities needed to deliver safe, secure and trusted public services for the Australian community.

**Key facts and figures**

- A wide range of capability-building initiatives have been implemented across the APS to address economy-wide digital workforce challenges.
- Initiatives span the breadth of the employee lifecycle and include:
  - APS Digital Profession (established 30 April 2020)
  - Members' Community Platform
  - APS Career Pathfinder
  - Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) whole of country licence
  - APS Academy Campuses
  - Digital Entry Level Pathways
  - APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025-30
  - Supporting the uplift of AI capability across the APS

**Key points***APS Digital Profession*

- The Digital Profession was established in response to a recommendation from the Independent Review of the Australian Public Service (2019).
- Under the guidance of the Head of APS Digital Profession (Mr Chris Fechner, CEO Digital Transformation Agency) and in collaboration with the Digital Transformation Agency, the Australian Public Service Commission provides the administration support for the Digital Profession.
  - The Digital Profession builds the digital capability of the APS through activities focussed on four pillars: attraction, development, retention, and deployment of digital capability across the APS.

- With the emergence of AI and other significant shifts in the digital landscape, the Digital Profession is finalising its future roadmap aimed at further building of the APS digital workforce capability over the next 2-3 years. This work will also support the initiatives identified in the APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025-30, released in March 2025.
- The continual growth in public sector employees joining the Digital Profession is testament to its value in connecting our digital workforce and building the capability we need to deliver simple, secure and connected government services.

Member numbers	June 2023	June 2024	June 2025	Avg Year on Year % Growth
Digital Profession Members	9,065	12,588	15,970	~ 30%

#### *Members' Community Platform*

- The Digital Profession established the Members' Community Platform as an online hub for Profession members. It provides members with a platform to network, collaborate and develop capability in a peer learning environment, helping to break down silos across the public sector.
- The Platform currently hosts ~22,000 members of the digital, data and evaluation professions, and is being scaled to include all APS Professions. This will further enhance cross-profession collaboration to support better delivery of government services.
- The most active community on the Platform is the AI and machine learning community, where people are discussing and sharing information on the adoption and safe use of AI.

#### *Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA)/APS Career Pathfinder*

- The Government has purchased a whole-of-country licence for SFIA (the Skills Framework for the Information Age). This ensures all Australians including governments, businesses and academia have access to a consistent framework for how we describe digital skills across the Australian economy.
- The APS is using SFIA to map digital skill requirements for the APS workforce.
- The APS Career Pathfinder tool was developed by the Digital Profession and helps people explore tailored career pathways, identify skill gaps and

access development opportunities to bridge those gaps and build their digital capability.

- Pathfinder is available publicly and is being enhanced to include AI supported navigation to help people understand the skills they have and the skills they need for digital roles in the APS.
- Several agencies in federal and state governments are adopting their own partition of Pathfinder to better support the management of their digital workforce, ensuring they can attract, develop and retain the skills they need now and for the future.

## *APS Academy Campuses*

- APS Academy Campuses are a government driven pilot policy program (the program) to develop a data and digital talent pipeline in regional areas (\$18.6 million over 3 years from 2022-23).
- The program was extended till December 2026 in the Budget 2025-2026 (\$3.4 million over two years from 2025–26).
- There are two APS Academy Campuses located in Townsville and Newcastle. As at 30 June 2025 there are 32 data and digital entry level participants across 12 participating agencies.

Participant numbers	Data Cadet	Digital cadet
Townsville campus (10)	6	4
Newcastle campus (22)	14	8

Note: the number of campus participants fluctuates annually as participants graduate from the program.

## *Digital Supported Pathways Programs*

- As of 30 June 2025, 30 participating agencies have the following number of entry-level program participants:

Programs:	Data Cadets	Digital Cadets	Digital Graduates	Digital Trainees	Total
APS Academy Campuses:	20	12	n/a	n/a	32
Non Campus	37	57	57	30	149
<b>Total:</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>213</b>

- The APSC is working to increase agency participation to meet government's commitments, and support agency efforts to reduce reliance on contractors and consultants over time.

- Participants are located across 6 states and territories:

Participant Locations	NSW	ACT	QLD	SA	VIC	TAS	WA	NT	Total
APS Academy Campuses:	22	n/a	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	32
Non Campus	15	107	16	10	32	0	1	0	181
<b>Total:</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>213</b>

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

- APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025-30 (Workforce Plan) was established to support the delivery of the Data and Digital Government Strategy and the 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy.
- The Workforce Plan was released on the 7 March 2025 and includes 26 workforce initiatives spanning three time horizons (2025-2030) and four action areas:
  - Attract, recruit and retain a data, digital and cyber workforce.
  - Uplift technical capabilities
  - Grow and deploy a specialist cohort
  - Enhance capability planning maturity
- The Workforce Plan contributes to priority four of the APS Reform agenda (an APS that has the capability to do its job well), and builds on the foundational work of the APS Workforce Strategy 2025.
- Implementation of initiatives under Horizon 1 of the Plan is well under way.

## Background

According to Tech Council of Australia, Australia is estimated to need 1.2 million tech jobs by 2030 to keep pace with rapid transformation. In addition to the digital skills shortage, there is a substantial under-representation of people from diversity groups in digital and ICT roles in the APS including women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Government is working closely with the APSC and the Department of Finance to gain a deeper understanding of the skill shortages APS agencies are experiencing.

### *APS Professions*

The 2019 Independent review of the Australian Public Service recommended the establishment of APS Professional Streams to develop and deliver targeted capability-building initiatives in areas with critical capability gaps, including digital.

As of September 2024, the APS has established six APS Professions to focus efforts on building specialist capability in critical areas. The Professions include HR, data, digital, evaluation, procurement and contract management, and complex project management.

These Professions are collectively building the public sector workforce we need to deliver world leading government services in the current digitally enabled and data driven environment.

### *APS Digital Workforce Insights report*

The first APS Digital Workforce Insights report is a Horizon 1 initiative of the plan and was released in September 2025. It predicts a significant gap in digital talent across the next five years.

The APS Digital Workforce Insights Report predicts a potential gap in the APS digital workforce of 8,190 between now and 2030. This is of concern given industry bodies are predicting a significant shortfall in digital talent nationwide for that period.

The report highlights five priority areas for consideration to fill that gap:

- Reconsider education pathways and reduce reliance on universities.
- Build reskilling opportunities at scale.
- Consider a location strategy for Digital and ICT
- Revisit career pathways for digital and ICT workforce including the conversion from entry to middle management and the strategic management of those retiring to ensure continued knowledge.
- Articulate critical digital roles to ensure they are being prioritised for development in house wherever possible.

## *Australian Government Digital Traineeship Program*

From October 2022, the APSC co-designed the Australian Government Digital Traineeship Program (AGDTP) to complement existing digital entry pathway programs (the Digital Graduate Program, Digital Cadetship Program). The AGDTP was designed in consultation with agencies in direct response to the Agency Survey results and aims to address the digital capability gap and the anticipated agency digital capability needs identified over the next 5 years.

The program was designed to be flexible in order to meet emerging and changing capability needs across the APS, with a focus on regional and metro areas around Australia. Supporting tailored credentialed and micro-credentialed based on agency need and candidate experience.

Applications are open to candidates from all experience levels who are seeking to enter the APS. In particular, the program aims to attract First Nations peoples; women re-entering the workforce or seeking a career change; people 45 years and older; and Australian Defence Force personnel transitioning into civilian roles and their partners.

## *Data and Digital Government Strategy 2030*

On 15 December 2023, the Australian Government released the Data and Digital Government Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy sets out the Australian Government's 2030 vision: To deliver simple, secure and connected public services for all people and business through world class data and digital capabilities.

## *2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy*

On 22 November 2023, the Australian Government released the 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy. The Strategy is the roadmap that will help realise the Australian Government's vision of becoming a world leader in cyber security by 2030.

Through the Strategy, we seek to improve our cyber security, manage cyber risks and better support citizens and Australian businesses to manage the cyber environment around them. We will do this with six cyber shields.

## **Supporting information**

### **Questions on Notice**

- No QoNs asked.

### **Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests**

- FOI request LEX937. Digital Traineeship: relevant information regarding assessment of a candidate application, including agencies that have initiated contact regarding that application. Response provided on 10 May 2024.
- FOI request LEX1077. Briefing pack prepared for the APS Commission for 2024-25 Budget Estimates hearings. Response provided on 30 September 2024.

## Recent Ministerial Comments

- APS ready to bring down barriers in Digital Workforce participation | Finance Minister

## Relevant Media Reporting

- Nil

**Date Cleared:** 14/09/2025  
**Cleared by (SES):** Subho Banerjee  
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**Group/Branch:** Professions and Pathways Group  
**Contact Officer:** s 47F  
**Telephone No:** s 47F  
**Consultation:** Digital Transformation Agency  
**PDR Number:** SB25-000136



#### APS Staff Resourcing

##### Subject/Issue

The Government has invested in the APS so it can better deliver for Australians. Increased resourcing has improved service delivery and built capability to meet the growing and more complex needs of Australians.

##### Key facts and figures

- The APS exists to serve the Government, Parliament and Australian people.
- The APS is critical national infrastructure and enables Australia's democratic system of government.
- A strong public service is essential to the health, wealth and livelihood of Australians at every stage of life.

##### APS Headcount & Job Type as at 30 June 2025

- APS headcount is a point in time snapshot of the number of ongoing and non-ongoing employees in the APS, employed under the Public Service Act.
- There are 198,529 APS staff across Australia
  - Up 2.6% from December 2024, up 7.4% since June 2024.
- APS headcount has increased by 13,671 staff since June 2024, and by 28,443 since June 2023.
- In terms of APS job families, there was an increase of:
  - 2,137 in the Service Delivery roles.
  - 2,376 in Portfolio, Program and Project roles.
  - 1,874 in Administration roles.
- More staff are supporting national priorities like services, defence and health. From 30 June 2024 to 30 June 2025, there was an increase of :
  - 1,651 staff in Services Australia
  - 213 staff in DVA
  - 2,756 staff in NDIA
  - 305 staff in Dept of Health
  - 749 staff in Home Affairs
  - 763 staff in Defence
- At 30 June 2025, there were 42,520 staff in roles in the service delivery job family, representing 24.4% of all staff.

### Contractor and labour hire

- Converting contractors and labour hire into permanent roles has rebalanced the workforce.
- Between 30 June 2024 and 30 June 2025, there was a:
  - 8.4% increase in permanent (ongoing) employees, compared to 12.6% increase between June 2023 and June 2024.
  - 4.3% decrease in non-ongoing employees, compared to 22.5% reduction between June 2023 and June 2024.

### APS staff in locations around Australia

- APS staff are in 586 locations around Australia, including in regions.
  - 64.6% of staff are located in states other than the ACT.
  - The proportion of APS staff in the ACT has further reduced to 35.4% (36.9% in 2024, 38.1% in 2023 and to 38.3% in 2022).
  - 24,918 staff (12.6%) of staff work in regional areas (up from 12.3% in 2024).
  - 1,079 SES are outside Canberra representing 30.1% of all SES, which is an increase of 77 from June 2024.

### Employee engagement 2025

- APS employee engagement is at its highest ever level.
  - 91% of staff are 'happy to go the extra mile at work when required'.
  - 93% understand how their role contributes to achieving outcomes for the Australian public.
- APS staff are increasingly satisfied with monetary and non-monetary employment conditions
  - 66% of staff feel fairly remunerated for the work they do in - a slight increase on 63% in 2024.
  - 85% are satisfied with non-monetary employment conditions (82% in 2024). This is the highest level ever recorded for the APS overall.

## ASL in the public sector

Table 1: Public sector workforce data sets

Public sector workforce data sets	For 2021-22	For 2023-2024	For 2024-2025	For 2025-2026
ASL estimates	<b>173,938</b> (2022 PEFO baseline)	<b>197,108</b> (2023-24 Budget ASL Collection)	<b>209,913<sup>1</sup></b> (2024-25 Budget ASL Collection)	<b>213,349<sup>2</sup></b> (from 2025-26 Budget ASL Collection)
APS Headcount	<b>159,179</b> (as at June 2022)	<b>184,858</b> (as at June 2024)	<b>198,529</b> (as at June 2024)	
ABS employment estimates	<b>339,300</b> (as at June 2022)	<b>365,400</b> (as at June 2024)	Not available yet – comes out 6/11/2025	

Table 2: ASL compared to total population and total labour force

Measure	2006-07	2013-14	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Source
Total population	20,827,622	23,475,686	27,196,812	27,594,464	28,086,207	2006-07, 2013-14, 2023-24: <a href="#">ABS 3101.0, Table 4, Estimated Resident Population, Persons, Australia</a> , June quarter.  2024-25 and 2025-26: <a href="#">ABS Population Projections, Australia, Table 1</a> , high series projection, consistent with the data used in the State of the Service reports.
Total labour force	10,895,304	12,275,037	14,948,755	15,293,364	-	<a href="#">ABS Labour Force, Australia July 2025, Table 1, Labour force total persons, original series</a> . As at June 2007, June 2014, June 2024, and June 2025.
ASL revised estimates	167,596	177,258	197,108	209,193	213,349	From <a href="#">Budget 2025-26, BP 4, Table 2.3</a>
ASL as a percentage of population	0.80%	0.76%	0.72%	0.76%	0.76%	-
ASL as a percentage of labour force	1.54%	1.44%	1.32%	1.37%	-	-

<sup>1</sup> [Budget Paper No. 4](#)<sup>2</sup> [Budget Paper No. 4](#)

**Supporting information****Questions on Notice**

- No QoNs asked.

**Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests**

- No FOIs asked.

**Recent Ministerial Comments**

- [Building Australia's future by working together: Speech to the AI Group | Ministers' media centre](#) 25 August 2025
- [Speech to the Chief Audit Executive Breakfast Forum | Ministers' media centre](#) 31 July 2025
- [State of the Service Roadshow 2025 | Ministers' media centre](#) 17 March 2025

**Relevant Media Reporting**

- [Further public service reform hangs on ministerial resolve](#), Andrew Podger, The Mandarin, 4 September 2025
- [Cult of the government consultant: The war is far from over](#), Verona Burgess, The Mandarin, 10 June 2025
- [Study lists ROFL lessons of robodebt](#), Julian Bajkowski, The Mandarin, 16 June 2025
- [Treasury leadership and APS reform under Wilkinson](#), Bernard Keane, The Mandarin, 16 June 2025
- [Kennedy and Wilkinson appointments signal public service reset. Now APS reform must catch up](#), Andrew Podger, The Mandarin, 13 June 2025
- [Public sector reform, capability must lead, not follow](#), Caron Beaton-Wells, The Mandarin, 12 June 2025
- [Opinion | Peter Dutton misjudged APS's critical role for Australians | The Canberra Times | Canberra, ACT](#), Melissa Donnelly, The Canberra Times, 22 May 2025
- [A second term and no more Glyn Davis. What next for the APS?](#), Melissa Coade, The Mandarin, 12 May 2025
- [Government needs to press the APS reform accelerator](#), Andrew Podger, The Mandarin, 9 May 2025
- [Toughest and trickiest public-service reforms still lie ahead](#), Verona Burgess, The Mandarin, 9 May 2025
- [Election or not, we need to stay the course with public service reinvestment](#), Caron Beaton-Wells, 7 April 2025
- [Thorns among the roses: APS reforms that have not happened](#), Verona Burgess, The Mandarin, 28 March 2025
- [How capability reviews are aiding ministers and secretaries with APS future planning](#), Melissa Coade, The Mandarin, 14 March 2025

**Date Cleared:** 26/03/2025  
**Cleared by (SES):** Dr Rachel Bacon, Deputy Commissioner  
**Telephone No:** s 47F  
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**Contact Officer:** s 47F  
**Telephone No:** s 47F  
**Consultation:** Department of Finance  
**PDR Number:** SB25-000139

### Secretaries Rates of Pay

#### Subject/Issue

Why are departmental secretaries so highly paid?

#### Key facts and figures

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

#### Key points

- 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.

## 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, and 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 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 Health, Disability and Ageing Home Affairs Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication, Sports and the Arts	3	1	\$983,910
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Education Employment and Workplace Relations Finance	3	2	\$932,120
Attorney-General's Industry, Science and Resources Social Services	4	1	\$880,340
Veteran's Affairs	4	2	\$828,550

### Remuneration Tribunal Amendment (There for Public Service, Not Profit) Bill 2025

On 24 July 2025, the Senate referred the above Bill to the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 28 November 2025.

The Bill would amend the *Remuneration Tribunal Act 1973* to set a statutory limit on remuneration of \$430,000 for Secretaries and other public offices. Any variation from that limit for a given year would require Ministerial approval.

### 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. For the above reasons, the Tribunal awarded increases in remuneration ranging from 25% to 45% depending on the particular Secretary office through a series of staged increases between 2012 and early 2014.

### Vice-Chancellor remuneration

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.

### 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*.

## Supporting information

### Questions on Notice

- No QoNs asked.

### Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- No FOIs asked.

### Recent Ministerial Comments

- Nil.

### Relevant Media Reporting

- [Remuneration Tribunal converts to doctrine of restraint](#), Julian Bajkowski, The Mandarin, 1 October 2025
- [Lambie resurrects APS secretaries' salary probe](#), Julian Bajkowski, The Mandarin, 31 July 2025
- [The APS' march towards \\$1 million salaries](#), Miriam Webber, The Canberra Times, 18 July 2025
- [Uni bosses buckle over V-C pay advice](#), Natash Bitá, The Australian, 15 July 2025
- [PM's \\$16m team: it's time to earn it](#), Geoff Chambers, The Australian, 2 July 2025
- [Senior APS pay is a mess, and latest increase is simply beyond explanation](#), Paddy Gourley, The Canberra Times, 16 June 2025
- [Pay rise puts secretary in public service \\$1m club](#), Miriam Webber, The Canberra Times, 11 June 2025

#### Date Cleared:

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#### Consultation:

Nil

#### PDR Number:

SB25-000145

## Recent Secretary Appointments

### Subject/Issue

Recent Secretary appointments and the Government's commitment to merit-based appointments for Secretaries.

### Key facts and figures

- Secretary appointments are governed under section 58 of the *Public Service Act 1999*:
  - Secretaries are appointed by the Governor-General on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.
  - Before making a recommendation, the Prime Minister must have received a report from the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
  - The report must be prepared after consultation with the Agency Minister and the APS Commissioner.
  - The APS Commissioner provides the equivalent report for the appointment of a new Secretary of PM&C.
- Four Secretaries have been appointed in 2025:

Department	Individual	Date	Details
PM&C	Dr Steven Kennedy	16 June 25	Moved to new portfolio
Treasury	Ms Jenny Wilkinson	16 June 25	Moved to new portfolio
DCCEEW	Mr Mike Kaiser	14 July 25	Competitive process
Finance	Mr Matt Yannopoulos	29 Sept. 25	Competitive process

### Key points

- Secretary appointments are a matter for the Prime Minister.
- Seven competitive processes have been run since 2023. These are the first competitive selection processes run for Secretary roles.
- Other than the movement of Secretaries across portfolios, competitive selection processes have informed all Secretary appointments in 2025.
- The APS Commissioner chaired the DCCEEW selection panel and was a member of the Finance selection panel chaired by the Secretary of PM&C.

**Supporting information****Questions on Notice**

- No QoNs asked.

**Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests**

- APSC FOI request #LEX1564. Question Time Briefs provided to Minister Gallagher between 23 and 31 July 2025. Partial release of documents occurred on 1 October 2025
- APSC FOI request #LEX1535. Documents related to the selection process and appointment of Mr Mike Kaiser as Secretary of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. Partial release of documents occurred on 22 September 2025.

**Recent Ministerial Comments**

- Nil.

**Relevant Media Reporting**

- [Qld's former top public servant Mike Kaiser given \\$397k golden handshake by Premier](#) Taylah Fellows, The Courier Mail, 1 October 2025.
- [A technologist in charge of Finance... What could possibly go right?](#), Julian Bajkowski, The Mandarin, 10 September 2025.
- [New Finance Secretary revealed](#), Miriam Webber, The Canberra Times, 8 September 2025.
- [Further public service reform hangs on ministerial resolve](#), Andrew Podger, The Mandarin, 4 September 2025.
- [Calls for ANU and top public servant to reveal any links](#), Steve Evans, The Canberra Times, 29 August 2025.
- [James Paterson criticises vacancy in critical Finance role](#), Miriam Webber, The Canberra Times, 27 August 2025.
- [How the Coalition can outflank Labor on the public service. If it's interested](#), Bernard Keane, The Mandarin, 11 August 2025.
- [Kaiser appointment shows all that is wrong with APS process](#), Verona Burgess, The Canberra Times, 18 July 2025.
- [Queensland Labor secretary to lead Climate change dept](#), Miriam Webber, The Canberra Times, 10 July 2025.
- [Anthony Albanese's handing of plum federal job to ex-Labor MP challenges public service independence](#), Matt Hampson, Sky News, 9 July 2025.
- ['Smells of jobs for mates': Labor's Mike Kaiser gets top climate change gig](#), Sarah Elks and Jack Quail, The Australian, 8 July 2025.
- [Miles' top public servant handed plum job by Albo](#), Hayden Johnson, The Courier Mail, 8 July 2025.
- [Queensland's former top public servant lands plush gig](#), Cameron Atfield, The Age, 8 July 2025

**Date Cleared:** 1/10/2025  
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