

THE STATE OF THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE AN ALTERNATIVE REPORT

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About this report

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Acronyms

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
APS	Australian Public Service
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
ASA	Australian Social Attitudes
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
CPD	Centre for Policy Development
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CPSU	Community and Public Sector Union
EMC	Essential Media Communications
GBE	Government Business Enterprise
ROGS	Report on Government Services
SES	Senior Executive Service

Why an alternative report on the Australian Public Service?

Public services are an integral part of our lives. From cradle to grave, Australians receive the benefit of services that are directed, managed and delivered by government employees. The most visible of these public servants are those engaged in direct or 'frontline' service delivery: the health professionals and teachers in the public health and education systems, police, armed forces and defence personnel, public transport workers and immigration and customs officers. Less visible, perhaps, are the many public servants who develop and implement the wide range of government policies and programs that address climate change and protect our environment and natural resources, manage Australia's finances, uphold human rights and enforce our laws.

The Australian Government shares responsibility for the delivery of public services with the governments of five states and two territories. To acquit its responsibilities, the Australian Government employs almost 300,000 people in its agencies and departments, statutory authorities and government business entities. Over half of these government employees are employed by the Australian Public Service (APS), making it one of our largest employers and most significant investments. By comparison, Australia's two largest retail companies, Woolworths and Coles, employ 188,000 and 100,000 people respectively. Since its inception at the time of Australia's federation, the APS has grown to constitute approximately 160,000 employees in 130 agencies. To some extent, the activities of these public servants are invisible and taken for granted. Many of us would be hard-pressed to accurately describe our many daily interactions with them. This relatively low level of visibility makes the Australian Public Service a vulnerable target for attack: taken for granted and ignored when it does its work well and criticised when it doesn't. When it is under attack, the APS has many enemies and few friends, perhaps due to its relatively low profile as the subject of public policy debates.

The APS has, however, received the close scrutiny of the Australian Government. In 2009, Kevin Rudd announced a comprehensive review of the Australian Government Administration including the APS with the stated aim of creating the world's best public service. To lead this review, Mr Rudd engaged the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Mr Terry Moran. Moran concluded the review and released 28 recommendations for APS reform in May 2010. His was the third major review of the Australian Government Administration in 35 years: arguably the most sweeping since the 1976-77 Royal Commission headed by H.C. ('Nugget') Coombs. The recommendations of the Moran Review have been endorsed by the Government and are currently being implemented by several government agencies (albeit without an implementation budget).

The public service agencies and departments of other western democracies are also receiving heightened attention. The bulk of this attention is hostile, ideologically motivated and firmly focused on reducing the size, cost and reach of public service organisations. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this movement can be seen in the United Kingdom, where Prime Minister David Cameron's election platform promised an unprecedented dismantling of the nation's public service. Cameron's 'austerity measures' and 'Big Society' vision proposed to reduce the public service budget by a massive 80 billion pounds, abolishing health authorities, freezing public service wages and inviting tenders from private and community sector organisations to deliver outsourced government services.¹ In Ireland, these changes have resulted in 3,000 public servants losing their jobs in the first 3 months of 2011, with 30,000 (10% of the service) more job losses expected over 12 months.² The British community has mobilised to oppose these changes, with almost half a million people participating in the Trades Union Congress protests on March 26th this year to express their opposition to the Prime Minister's 'small government' agenda. Alongside this political agenda, right wing think tanks³ in Britain actively vilify public servants and advocate reduced public sector budgets.

A parallel attack on public service agencies, their staffing and budgets is occurring in Canada where Treasury Board President Tony Clement recently pledged to bring the budget into balance by “not replacing the approximately 11,000 public servants who leave or retire each year.”⁴ Canada’s budget reduced funding for federal programs by \$11 billion over the next four years.⁵ In New Zealand, the National Party government plans to shut down several crown (government) entities, merge agencies and dramatically reduce public sector employment. More than 2,000 state sector jobs have been axed there since the National Party took office in 2008.⁶ Finance Minister Bill English has urged the community to “get its head” around these cuts and “stop relying” on the public service.⁷

What is the significance of these political developments in other OECD nations? Is there any reason to anticipate similar moves to diminish, discredit or dismantle public services in Australia? Are there signs of these trends?

To address these questions, the Centre for Policy Development’s Public Service research team conducted months of research to provide an overview of the APS, including an appraisal of its capability and an analysis of attitudes toward the APS agencies and services. Without detracting from the merits of the Government’s ‘State of the Service’ reports collated annually by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), CPD’s report provides an alternative perspective. Whereas the APSC’s reports are inward focused, our report is written from the ‘outsider’ perspective of a non-government think tank. We consider the social context within which the APS functions and explore debates about the role, size and function of the public service, drawing on a diverse range of sources including political and media commentary and academic literature. Our audience and purpose are distinct from those of the APSC report: we aim to communicate with a wide and general audience and provoke debate and discussion.

The scope of our research was defined by geography, chronology and administrative scale. The report focuses on the Australian Public Service and to a lesser extent other elements of the Australian Government Administration. We have not examined in detail the equally large and complex public services of Australian states and territories except where this is useful to provide context or discuss issues associated with the public service agencies of both state and Commonwealth governments. Our scope is also defined chronologically. Although the report briefly describes the evolution of the APS since 1900, the focus is on the last twenty years and, in particular, the last decade.

The report considers the public sector, government administration, public service organisations, including the agencies and departments that constitute the APS, public servants and the services and other functions they deliver. As much as possible, we aim to maintain this distinction. In some instances we make inferences about one of these elements or expressions of ‘public service’ to draw conclusions about others.

The report's methodology is summarised in the following table.

Objective	Research methods and techniques
Quantify APS staffing levels and trends.	Quantitative analysis of the APSC's State of the Service reports 2000-2010.
Quantify APS funding levels and trends and situate them in an international context.	Analysis of Portfolio budgets from Agencies' annual reports. Analysis of Australia's 2011-12 budget. International context provided by reference to OECD publications.
Identify trends in the delivery of public services.	Synthesis of the annual Review of Government Service reports published by the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision and other ANAO publications.
Identify prominent political commentators on the APS and the frames invoked in their commentary.	Analysis of the Parliamentary Record (Hansard) for both the Parliament and Senate from 2006-2011. For this purpose, we relied on Open Australia which yielded 734 results for our 'public service' search (excluding references to state and territory public services). A thematic analysis identified recurrent themes, and representative quotations were selected to communicate each theme. Politicians' statements reported in the media provided additional data. The resulting data were interpreted thematically according to frequency.
Summarise community attitudes toward the APS.	Synthesis of academic literature, opinion polls and other published attitudinal research conducted in Australia between 1990-2011. International context provided through reference to the World Values Survey.
Summarise employees' attitudes toward the APS.	Analysis of employee attitudinal studies conducted by the APSC and CPSU.
Identify issues and controversies relating to the APS.	Synthesis of submissions made to the Moran Review and their summary in the review panel's reports. Analysis of media coverage in major Australian newspapers between 2006-2011 including thematic analysis of more than 500 articles accessed through Factiva. International context established through analysis of articles published in newspapers in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand.

Table 1: Research method, techniques and key data sources

This is the first in a series of reports from the Centre for Policy Development's Public Service Program. It aims to stimulate discussion about the role of the public service in Australia: discussion to guide and inform decisions about the capacity and capability of the APS and other public service agencies and organisations.

Function: What does the Australian Public Service do?

The formal role of the APS is not chiselled neatly onto a stone tablet. Interpreting the role of the service is more like navigating using the stars.⁸

Terry Moran, Secretary, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 4/5/11

The Australian Public Service (APS) is established under the Public Service Act 1999 (referred to in this report as 'the Act') which was comprehensively reviewed during the 1990s. The Act:

- » establishes an apolitical public service that is efficient and effective in serving the Government, the Parliament and the Australian public
- » provides a legal framework for the effective and fair employment, management and leadership of APS employees
- » defines the powers, functions and responsibilities of Agency Heads, the Public Service Commissioner and the Merit Protection Commissioner and
- » establishes the rights and obligations of APS employees.

Geoff Gallop, professor of public policy at the University of Sydney and former Premier of Western Australia, argues that public sector work can be categorised in terms of four core functions or 'types of work' as depicted in the figure below.

Service delivery	Law making, rule making and policy development
Tax collection and managing government finance	Monitoring and enforcing laws and regulations

Figure 1: Four dimensions of public service work^{9, 10}

These four dimensions conveniently organise a complex and diverse public sector, and serve as the framework for our brief overview of the Australian Public Service's function.

Service delivery

The Australian Government's annual 'Report on Government Services' (ROGS) provides an excellent summary of the range of public services delivered by APS agencies. In describing the government's role in delivering services, the 2011 ROGS report¹¹ identifies three categories of services:

- » services typically used by each person in the community at some stage during their life (e.g. education and training, health services, police services and emergency services)
- » social welfare (e.g. public housing and other community services) and
- » services provided to people with specific needs (e.g. aged care and disability services).

The ROGS reports describe five different arrangements through which these public services are delivered:

- » providing the services themselves (a ‘provider’ role)
- » managing and funding external providers through grants or the purchase of services (a ‘purchaser’ role)
- » subsidising users (through vouchers or cash payments) who then purchase services from external providers
- » imposing community service obligations on public and private providers and
- » reducing tax obligations in particular circumstances (‘tax expenditures’).

These five arrangements involve the public, private and community sectors in varying ways and to varying extents. They also involve public servants employed by the Australian Government and those employed by the state and territory governments. Although the states provide most services, many of them are funded to some extent by the Australian Government.

Although service delivery is arguably the most visible and highly valued dimension of public service, there are considerable pressures toward privatising and outsourcing this work to the private and community sectors. While these trends have not been nearly as dramatic here as is proposed in the UK, not for profit organisations in Australia already deliver a wide range of services worth more than \$26 Billion annually. As the former head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet Peter Shergold has noted, community sector groups provide services “from employment provision to disability support, from family relationship counselling to aged care, from emergency services to health care.”¹²

Public servants whose day-to-day work is primarily service delivery are often described as ‘frontline’. On one hand, this is a positive depiction. Certainly, ‘frontline’ public servants are the last to be targeted by politicians seeking budget cuts.¹³ At the same time, the allusion also conjures up images of soldiers and other defence force personnel engaged in direct combat and, by implication, denotes their low rank and suggests that they are somehow expendable.

Tax collection and managing government finance

Agencies fulfilling this function include the Australian Tax Office, the Department of Treasury and the Department of Finance and Deregulation.

As the interface between citizens and government finance, the ATO collects 92% of the Australian Government’s revenue of \$350 billion from 10 million personal taxpayers, 3 million businesses and non-profit organisations, and regulates 240,000 self managed super funds, receiving a million written enquiries and 6.5 million variations each year.¹⁴ Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd extolled the efficiency of the ATO. In just 12 weeks in 2010, the ATO processed stimulus payments to more than 8.4 million Australians. Mr Rudd extended his praise to the Departments of Treasury and Finance whose advice was “vital in developing the Stimulus plan that helped Australia to avoid recession and keep hundreds of thousands of Australians in work.”¹⁵

The Commissioner of Taxation reports on the ATO’s efficiency in collecting taxation by measuring the cost per tax dollar collected. In 2010, the ATO was spending \$1 for every \$100 dollars collected.¹⁶ This is about average for OECD countries.¹⁷

Monitoring and enforcing laws and regulations

As with service delivery, the APS shares responsibility with state government agencies for law enforcement and regulation. The 2010 ROGS report describes in some detail the role of government administrators in “creating a legal framework that determines the rules for ownership of property and the operation of markets (for example, enforcing property rights and competition policy, checking abuses of power and upholding the rule of law) - a framework that encompasses the work of the courts, police and corrective services agencies in maintaining law and order.”

Law making, rule making and policy development

This fourth dimension of public service is where public servants and elected representatives connect most closely. Britain’s Westminster System of parliamentary democracy, on which the Australian Government is based, maintains a separation between the public service and the elected government. The Australian Public Service Act 1999 upholds this tradition by legislating that the APS is to be “responsive to the Government in providing frank, honest, comprehensive, accurate and timely advice and in implementing the Government’s policies and programs.”¹⁸

This separation of functions and powers is not always clear. Kathy MacDermott¹⁹ observes that the trend toward locating policy advisers in Ministers’ offices has presented real challenges to their capacity for ‘frank and fearless’ advice. This trend is nowhere more evident than in the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet where the number of staff, including advisers, has grown to 680 public servants who “have a hand in almost every area of government.”²⁰ MacDermott also notes the tension between ‘responsiveness’ and complicity. The inclusion of this word when the Public Service Act was reviewed in 1999 was highly controversial.

In recent years, during critical moments of public policy development and implementation such as the Tampa and ‘children overboard’ refugee crises, public servants have been seen as politically compromised and far from independent. In another public policy crisis, Treasury official Godwin Grech made the headlines for his spectacular failure to separate his personal and professional life while steering the Government’s response to the ‘Ozcar’ motor dealing finance fiasco.²¹ Commenting on these challenges, Terry Moran has observed that, “there is considerable uncertainty around the proper role of the Public Service, about where the boundaries lie... At times we public servants become collateral damage in the battle of politics.”²²

Historically, the APS had a near monopoly on policy advice.²³ More recently, consultants have been engaged extensively to provide high-level advice to the Prime Minister and other Ministers. Having regularly criticised the Howard Government for its expensive reliance on consultant advisers, the Rudd government spent almost \$800 million on 6,534 consultancy contracts during its first 18 months.²⁴



*There is a case for us to be more selective in calling upon the assistance of external consultants. I am reminded of the question: what is the difference between a consultant and a shopping trolley? First, you can fit a bit less food and drink in a shopping trolley. And second a shopping trolley has a mind of its own. Outsourcing the frontal lobe work brings with it tremendous risks. There is a danger that you simply get the opinions you pay for.*²⁵

Senator Kim Carr, Minister for Industry, Innovation, Science and Research, 7/2/11

Form and funding: APS capability

From a strategic perspective, the APS represents a capability for government. In business terms, this could be expressed as our value proposition. The APS, you could say, maintains a set of capabilities, and the organisational means to deploy those capabilities, to achieve positive effects for Australian society on behalf of the Government. In this sense, the Government's overriding interest in the APS is going to be whether or not it can deliver a capability or a suite of capabilities that government values highly.

Stephen Sedgewick, Australian Public Service Commissioner, 2010

APS Commissioner Stephen Sedgewick refers to the APS as the Australian Government's *capability* to achieve positive effects for society. This capability can be measured, in part, by analysing the staffing levels in APS agencies and their budgets.

The Australian Government Administration employs approximately 300,000 people, representing 1.5% of the Australian workforce.²⁶ Of this number, roughly 160,000 are employed in the agencies of the Australian Public Service (APS) under the Public Service Act 1999. They include the employees of Commonwealth government departments, the federal court system and some government agencies. The precise number of APS agencies is reported variously as between 120 and 140. Appendix A provides the Australian Public Service Commission's 2010 listing of agencies. This number fluctuates when agencies merge or split, when public service functions expand or are outsourced, and in response to the inevitable changes of agencies' names and functions following a change of government. These trends are examined in detail elsewhere in this report.

20 departments	+	65 statutory agencies whose staff are employed under the Public Service Act 1999	+	15 statutory agencies with dual staffing powers	+	6 executive agencies	+	18 bodies with employees under the PS Act which operate with some degree of autonomy	=	124
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Figure 2: Australian Public Service agencies ²⁷

Another 130,000-140,000 employees of the Australian Government Administration are located in organisations other than APS agencies. Approximately 80,000 people "work in a wide range of organisations that have either a commercial focus, require a governing board or have specific or special functions."²⁸ Several of these organisations are Government Business Enterprises (GBEs) established to operate commercially (listed in Appendix B). The largest of these GBEs, Australia Post and Medibank Private, account for 34,000 and 4,000 employees respectively.²⁹ Government agencies and departments pursue non-financial objectives and have no need to satisfy a set of shareholders with a return on investment through higher share prices or dividends. Like agencies and departments, GBEs serve public policy objectives but they also tend to serve financial objectives. A further 53,700 Australian Government employees are employed by the defence forces.³⁰

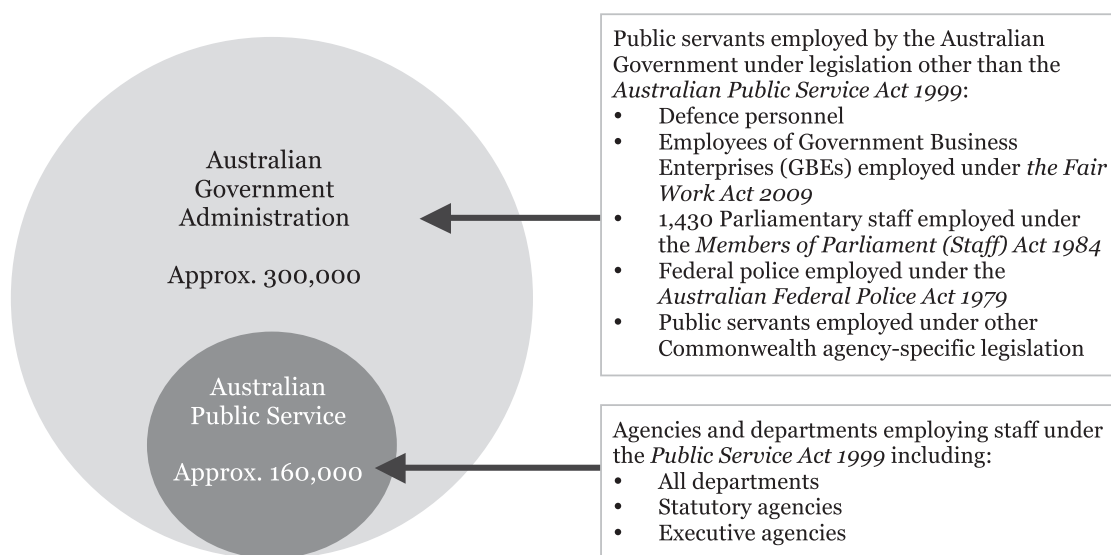


Figure 3: Australian Government Administration and the APS ^{31, 32, 33, 34}

Staffing levels are one important indicator of the APS' capacity. In addition, capability is determined by available funding. Government Administration, including the APS, constitutes a significant proportion of each year's budget. The 2010-11 budget illustrated in Figure 4 (below) shows the allocation of \$354.6 billion (AUD) according to portfolios.

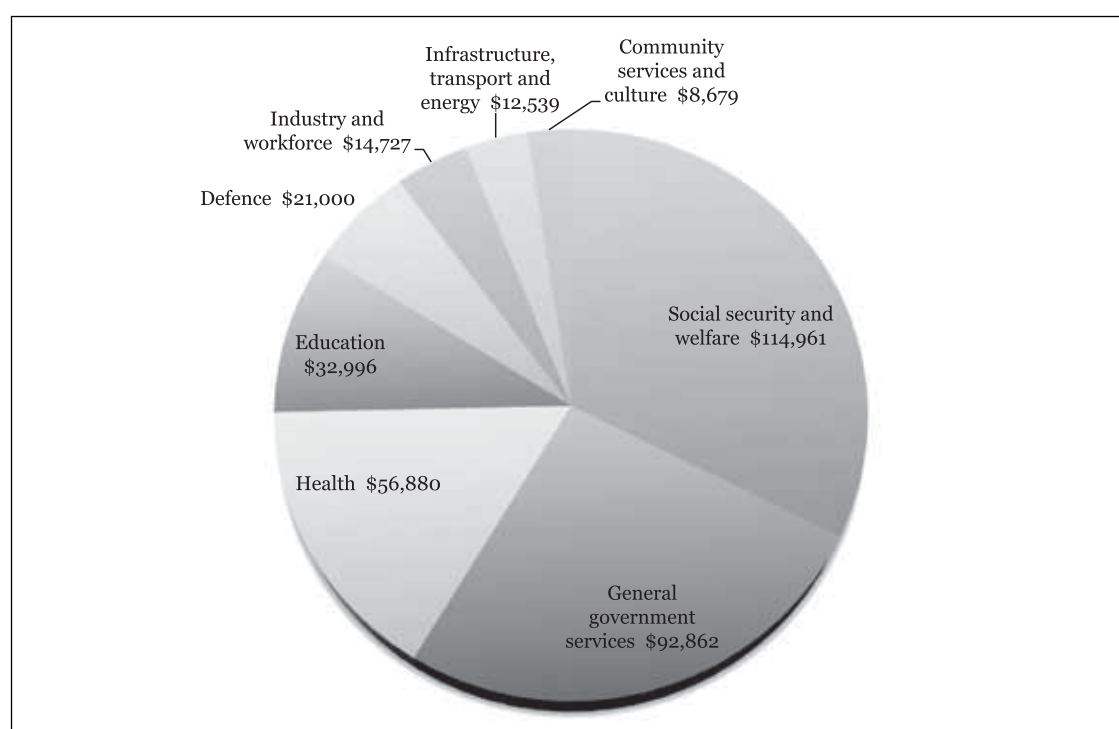


Figure 4: Total government expenditure 2010-2011 (\$Million AUD) ³⁵

This figure presents a global impression of public sector funding. Given the large number of government departments and APS agencies and the complex relationship between intra-agency spending and transfers including benefits, this report presents the budgets of just the largest APS agencies (Figure 5).

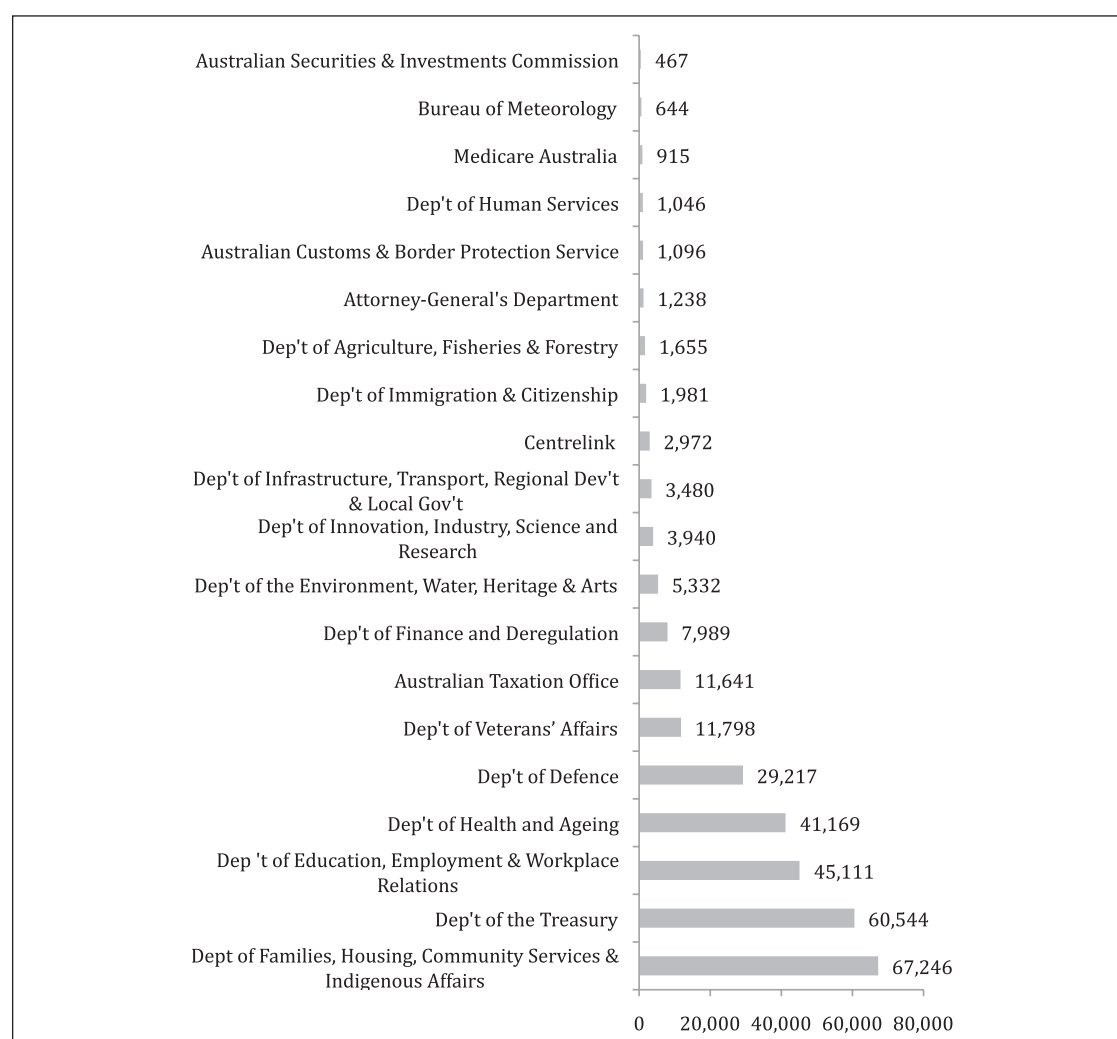


Figure 5: Budgets of 20 largest agencies and departments 2009-10 (\$ million AU) ³⁶

Note: Centrelink budget represents 'total allocations'. All other agencies' budgets represent total minus 'special accounts'

The absolute level of each year's budget (in dollar terms) provides one measure of funding for public services and transfer programs. Another useful measure that provides for international comparison is the proportion of Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that is invested in the public sector. Public sector funding represents 35% of Australia's GDP. Public service agency budgets are just one part of this investment. In an international context, this represents a comparatively modest public sector investment, significantly less than European nations such as France (53%), Denmark (52%), Germany (44%) and Norway (41%), the United Kingdom (47%), Canada (40%) and New Zealand (42%). Contrary to the popular impression that Australia has a more robust and extensive public sector than the United States, we actually invest 4% less of our GDP in our public sector.

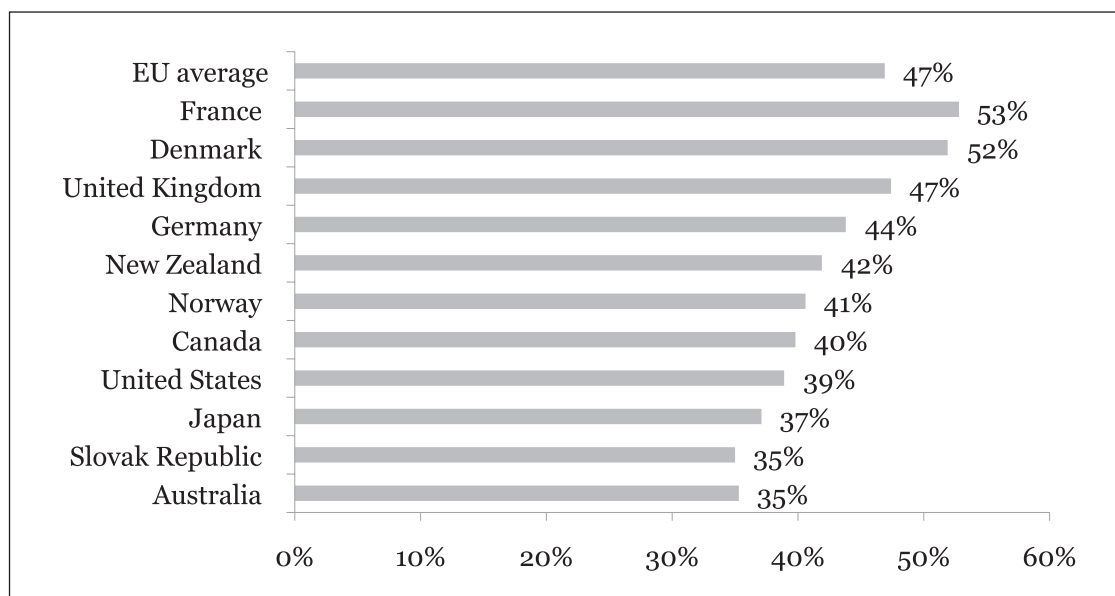


Figure 6: Public spending as a percentage of GDP (2008) ³⁷

Australia's low ranking in the proportion of our GDP invested in public spending mirrors our ranking in terms of personal taxation. By OECD standards, Australia's personal income tax is a modest proportion of GDP: just 10.2%, compared to Canada's 12%, New Zealand's 13.7% and Denmark's 25.2%.³⁸ Australia can be expected to have less demand on the public sector than some other

countries because we have a young population and have partially privatised retirement incomes. In many other countries outlays exceed revenue³⁹ but governments are unwilling to raise taxes.

The political climate in Australia has heightened pressure to reduce public sector funding. In particular, the bipartisan zeal to return the nation's budget to a surplus within just 1-3 years has prompted politicians in both the Labor government and Coalition Opposition to turn their attention to savings that might be made by freezing or reducing public service staffing levels and cutting agency budgets.

This manifests in pledges to 'take an axe' to the public service (explored elsewhere in this report) and in constant budget pressures such as the Efficiency Dividend.⁴⁰

This downward pressure on the Australian Public Service is not a straightforward reflection of economic circumstances. Australia's economy is performing very well by all measures. We have a very low level of debt by international standards and invest modestly in the public service and the public sector in general. Rather, the 'cut public service funding' argument can be explained as a persuasive device that reflects a broader 'anti-government' sentiment. The media tends to accept and perpetuate these frames as orthodoxy. The March 2011 'public service' themed edition of *The Economist* for instance, opened with the assertion that, "The state has kept on grabbing an ever larger share of the economy in the rich world for a century, and the state's regulatory sweep has increased as well."⁴¹ Our analysis of media coverage and politician's views (elsewhere in this report) revealed many instances of anti-government rhetoric, anti-public spending rhetoric, and anti-public service rhetoric, but these views did not necessarily go hand in hand. The stridently anti-government Tea Party in the United States, for instance,

“Public sector funding represents 35% of Australia's GDP. Public service agency budgets are just one part of this investment.”

initially proposed a national budget without any significant reduction in publicly funded health care or other benefits.⁴² In addition, we found many instances where people advocated public sector budget cuts while implying that public services themselves would remain untouched.

In response to this 'surplus fetish', politicians of various leanings promise to reduce both the scope and cost of the public sector through measures including downsizing and outsourcing. These measures may, unfortunately, have the opposite effect and lead to additional costs. Defenders of the public sector (and public service) make the link between sustained public sector investment and economic growth and resilience. Australian economist John Quiggin, for instance, argues that, "At a time when the world is realising that the private sector relied on the state to underwrite it and bail it out during the global financial crisis, downsizing the public service at the expense of good policy is ignoring the lessons of the credit crisis."⁴³

The private sector caused the credit crunch, the financial crisis, the global recession. The public sector bailed out the banks and brought the world back from the brink of ruin... the private sector is usually better at making money but, as that's its sole aim, it would be tragic if it weren't. The aims of public bodies are more complex, varied and, usually, worthwhile.

John Mitchell ⁴⁴

Given this focused interest in the capacity of the public service, the following section examines APS staffing levels and trends.

Staffing the public service

Main points

The staffing of the Australian Public Service (APS) generates heated debate in the media as well as in Parliament. View are polarised, with agency staff, their union representatives and public sector advocates asserting that staffing cuts are imposed arbitrarily and with a direct consequence for both the services delivered to community members and the working conditions of public servants. On the other hand, public service critics including conservative politicians and media commentators consider that public service agencies have grown beyond the level required to provide the services our society needs and expects.

Our research has examined APS staffing trends and metrics during the last two decades and found:

- » The APS experienced a dramatic fluctuation in staffing between 1990 and 2010. Approximately one-third of the APS workforce was retrenched between 1991 and 1999, under the Keating and Howard governments. Most of these retrenchments happened in the early years of the Howard government, when it sacked almost 30,000 APS staff over three years. Although APS staffing levels have almost returned since then to 1991 levels, the Australian population has increased more rapidly.
- » Since 1990, there has been a gradual shift towards a more ‘top-heavy’ APS. An increasing proportion of ongoing employees are in Executive or Senior Executive Service (SES) positions. Correspondingly, a decreasing proportion of employees are now in lower level positions.
- » There are significant gender-based disparities within the APS workforce. Women are significantly more likely than men to be employed part-time and in non-ongoing (short-term or casual) positions, and are less likely to be employed in SES positions.
- » The APS workforce is less diverse than the Australian community in general, with fewer people with disabilities, fewer Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employees, and a continued under-representation of women in the senior levels.

Our analysis contradicts the prevailing rhetoric about a burgeoning public service. On the contrary, the growth of the Australian Public Service has lagged behind the growth of the Australian population.

How many public servants are enough?

The size of the public service generates heated political debate. Anti-public service commentators typically resort to the ‘big government’ frame to promote the idea that the APS has too many employees. Conservative politicians, researchers and think tanks assert that the Australian Public Service has grown excessively and that, as a consequence, Australian citizens are over-regulated and excessively taxed.

Julie Novak, a research fellow with the right-wing Institute of Public Affairs, epitomised these arguments recently when she described civilian employees of the Department of Defence as an “army of pen pushers” and referred to public servants engaged in the national preventative health service as “federal health bureaucrats that consume our health budget without providing any medical services”.⁴⁵ Brushing aside the many APS agency functions that are not directly involved in service delivery, Novak sledged the 25% of public servants who “deliver no front-line public service of any kind.”

Novak is not alone in this anti-public service rhetoric; she is joined by many Liberal and National Party politicians and, not infrequently, by Labor politicians. Despite speaking highly of the APS, Kevin Rudd also referred to growth in APS staff during the latter years of the Howard Government as “administrative bloating”.



In his last key speech before the 2007 election, Mr Rudd said he was “dead serious” about trimming the size of the public service. “It just strikes me as passing strange that this [Howard] government that supposedly belongs to the conservative side of politics has not systematically applied the meat axe to its own administrative bloating for the better part of a decade.”⁴⁶

Hon Kevin Rudd, 2007



It is hard to take this government on face value. The Prime Minister said he would take a meat axe to the Public Service. Clearly, the meat axe I use on a leg of lamb is a little different to the one the Prime Minister uses, because staff numbers have actually increased. The Prime Minister has increased political staff numbers by 30 per cent. The Prime Minister has increased both the ranks of Public Service numbers and political numbers. I guess his meat axe is a little blunt.

Hon Stuart Robert (Fadden, Liberal Party) Hansard, 25/5/09

Pledges to reduce the size of public service agencies are a regular feature in the political cycle. In his response to the May 2011 Budget, for instance, Shadow Treasurer Joe Hockey promised to “slash” 12,000 public service jobs if the Opposition wins the 2013 election.⁴⁷ His pledge is consistent with the Liberal Party’s record: the Howard government cut 10,000 public service jobs in each of the three years after being elected in 1996 before then beginning to restore agencies’ staffing levels. Mr Hockey denied he was ‘Canberra bashing’, and argued that a reduction in APS staff would achieve some kind of equity: “How can you ask Australians to take a haircut if you are not going to do it yourself?” Gary Gray, Special Minister of State and the Public Service, pointed out the inconsistencies of Mr Hockey’s argument by noting the immediate economic consequences of the threatened retrenchments. During the following week, the Minister pointed to a short-term decline in APS staff numbers as evidence that “the bureaucracy has not blown out on Labor’s watch.”⁴⁸

Conservative politicians and their allies in right-wing think tanks routinely refer to ‘bloated public services’. This rhetoric follows an established pattern. Public service critics assert that there has been an unsustainable growth in public service employees and argue that to balance the budget, the incumbent government must axe thousands of these unnecessary jobs. What exactly is an ‘unnecessary’ public servant? Logically, one might assume that employees are unnecessary if the public service agency’s function can be effectively performed with fewer employees. In the to-and-fro of political debate, however, ‘unnecessary’ is rarely defined so carefully. New South Wales Premier Barry O’Farrell justified the retrenchment of 390 public servants because they were not in permanent positions; accusing the former Labor state government of “rorts” by “allowing hundreds of workers without jobs to remain on the payroll.”⁴⁹ Public servants on casual, short-term and other forms of non-ongoing tenure are sometimes described as ‘unattached’⁵⁰, and are the first targets for retrenchment. Most people on this ‘unattached’ list are still doing their jobs and have been technically redefined as ‘excess’ to meet budget targets or in response to mergers.

Without doubt, the Australian Public Service is larger today than it has been at earlier times. Since its formation, the APS has grown to encompass more than 100 agencies, which collectively employ approximately 160,000 people (listed in Appendix A). Three APS agencies account for almost half this total: Centrelink (16.7%), the Australian Tax Office (14.5%) and Defence (13.2%). The comparative sizes of Centrelink and the ATO are likely to reflect their ‘frontline’ or direct service delivery function.

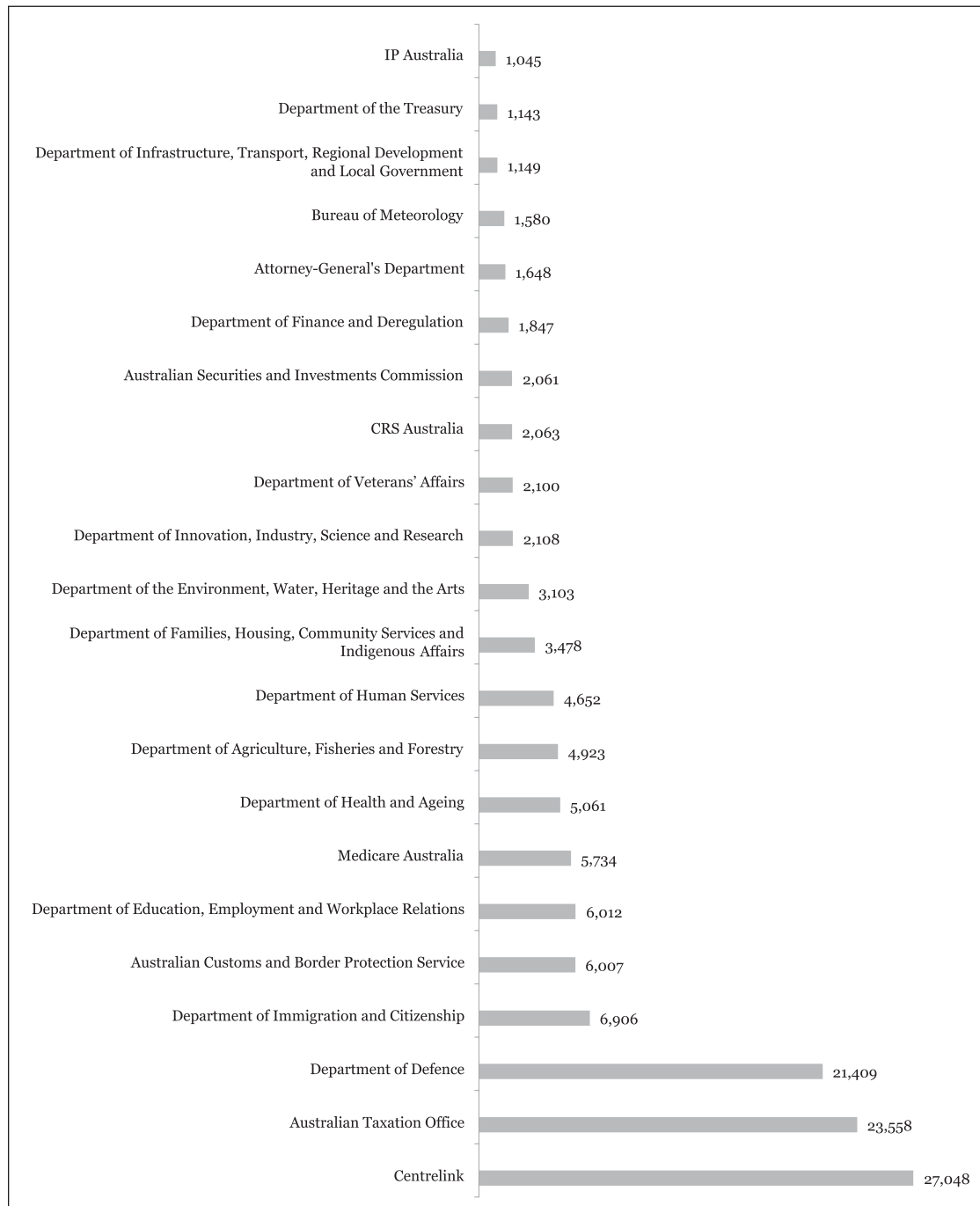


Figure 7: Staff levels of major APS agencies (2010)⁵¹

To interpret the growth in public service employment, contextual factors must be considered including:

- » the potential for efficiency through technological innovation and program simplification
- » community expectations about service provision: there is no evidence that we expect less of the Australian Public Service or of state public services. In fact, attitudinal research suggests the contrary.⁵² Is it realistic to demand continuous improvement in service provision while cutting thousands of jobs from public service agencies?
- » growth in the Australian population: public services are required by a growing number of citizens and
- » medium and long term public service employment trends.

Has the APS kept pace with a growing Australia?

The case for a 'bloated' public service is generally based on short-term employment patterns and is contradicted by longer-term trends. Between 1991 and 1999, the Keating and Howard governments reduced staff levels across the APS by approximately 50,000 (about one third of the total APS workforce). Since the low point of 1999, staff numbers have gradually returned to early 1990s levels as illustrated below.

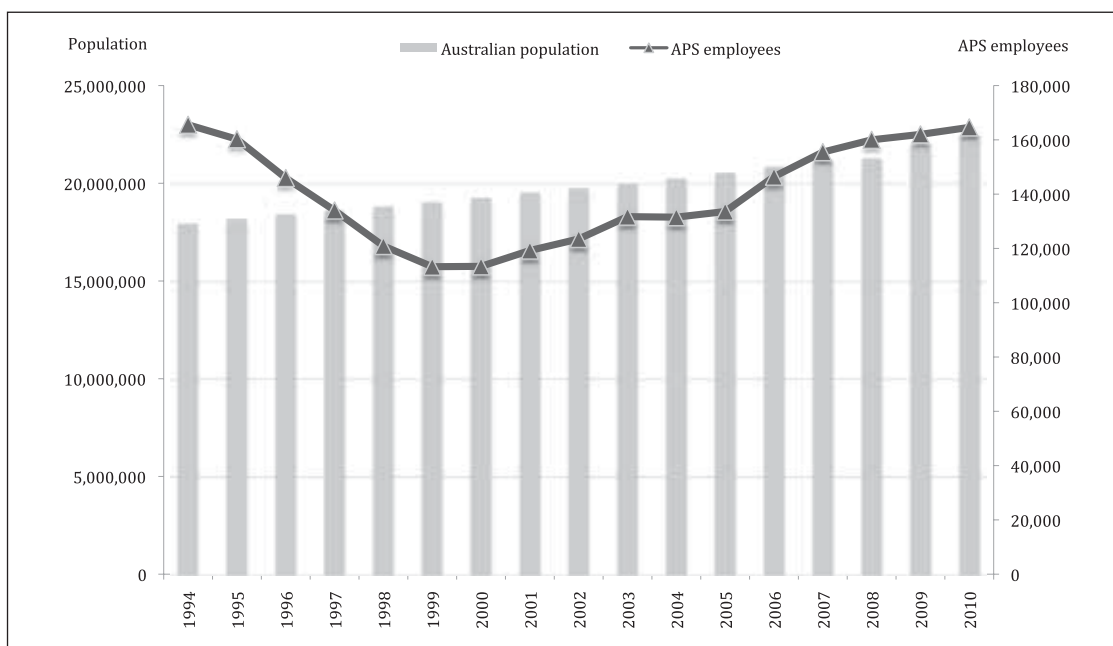


Figure 8: Number of ongoing APS employees and corresponding population growth 1994-2010⁵³

During this time, however, the Australian population has also increased – from 18 to 21 million people. As a result, the service delivery capacity of the APS has diminished with respect to the number of service recipients and beneficiaries. In 1991, there was one public servant for every 106 Australians. In 2009, there was one public servant for every 135 Australians. During the intervening years, the APS reached a low point of one public servant for every 169 Australians. To return the ratio of APS staff to Australian citizens to 1991 levels would require increasing APS staffing to approximately 214,000, an increase of around 50,000 staff.

This pattern is also evident in analysing state-based public services in Australia which are also considered by some commentators to have 'bloated'. New South Wales Premier Barry O'Farrell, for instance, justified his pre-election plans to freeze wages and cut staffing by drawing attention to the growth in the number of state public servants since the election of the (Labor) Carr Government in 1995. Our analysis shows that the increased number of NSW public servants since Carr's election has lagged behind the growth in the state's population during the same period. The NSW population has grown by 19% since 1995, from 6.1 million to 7.3 million. During the same period, the number of employees in state public service agencies grew by 15%, from 279,574 to 322,000. To keep pace with population growth, the public service would have actually needed another 10,000 employees.

To sustain the 'bloated public service' argument, Hockey, O'Farrell and other politicians making commitments to downsize the public service need to establish that:

- » community members expect less of the public service
- » an increasing population does not necessitate an increase in public service staff
- » public service agencies can fulfill their purpose and deliver services with fewer employees and reduced budgets.

Neither they nor other outspoken public service detractors have established this case.

Trends in APS employment

To analyse APS employment practices and trends, we have drawn extensively on the Australian Public Service Commission's thorough annual reports. Examining these reports between 1998 (when the first *State of the Service Report* was published) and 2010, several trends are evident:

- » a higher proportion of public servants are employed at higher levels and a lower proportion at lower levels
- » women are more strongly represented in more senior positions than previously, though men still dominate executive and senior executive positions
- » women are much more likely than men to occupy part-time, casual and non-ongoing positions
- » a small and contracting proportion of public service positions are held by Indigenous Australians, people with disabilities and employees with a non-English speaking background.

Shifts in the distribution of senior and junior public servants

During the last twenty years, the structure of the APS has changed considerably. In 2010, a much smaller proportion of APS employees are classified in the lower bands (trainees and APS 1-3) than previously. In 1975, APS 1 and APS 2 employees (who in 2011 earn between \$38,000-\$50,000) accounted for half of all ongoing employment in the APS. This proportion fell slowly until the mid 1980s, then more quickly throughout the 1990s.

“ To return the ratio of APS staff to Australian citizens to 1991 levels would require increasing APS staffing to approximately 214,000... 50,000 more staff. ”

Conversely, a much higher proportion of employees are now employed at the higher APS levels, in Executive Level (earning between \$83,000-\$150,000) and Senior Executive Service (SES) positions (earning more than \$150,000). The growth in the SES has out-stripped the overall growth in the APS. The Moran Review recommendations (Appendix C) include reviewing the size and role of the SES.

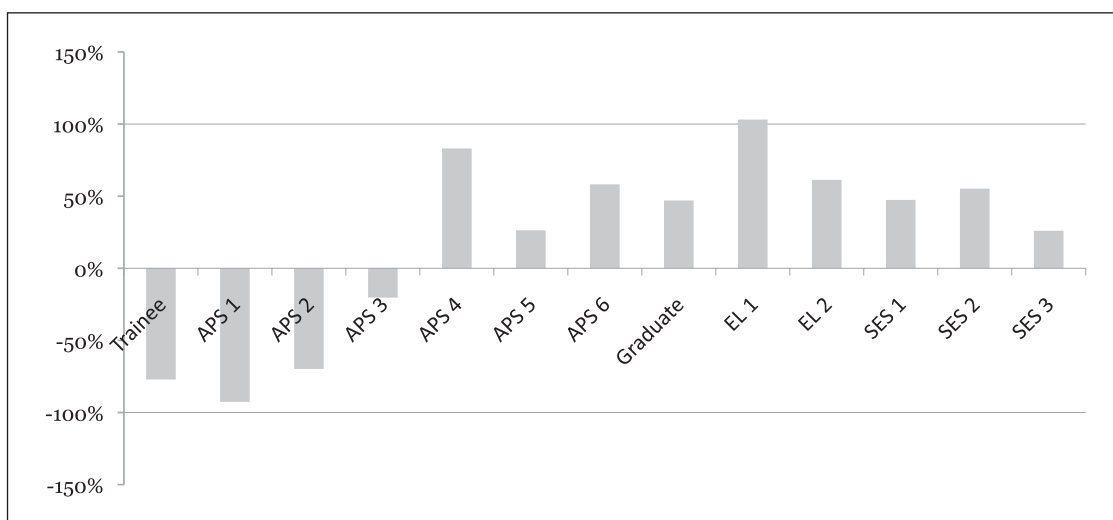


Figure 9: Ongoing employees by base classification % change 1996-2010⁵⁴

Figure 9 illustrates the changing proportion of APS employees engaged at each employment classification or level. The trend is clear: there is now a significantly lower proportion of employees in the lower levels and a corresponding growth in the levels APS 4 and above, including significantly more employees in the ranks of the Senior Executive Service. The Commission's annual *State of the Service* report has described this trend as a "general consolidation... towards an older and more skilled workforce" and, in 2003, described the 'typical' new starter in the APS as "a 31 year old with tertiary qualifications who is at the APS 4 level and more likely to be a woman than a man."



Now the total number of people on the Public Service payroll in this country is almost back to the level it was when the Howard government took office. But that is not all, because approximately 25 per cent of those nearly 140,000 people... are at the executive level, the senior management level. The proportion 10 years or so ago was 13 per cent. What has happened is the government have expanded the Public Service back out to where it was but with one important caveat, and that is that there are fewer workers, fewer people actually delivering services on the ground, and a lot more chiefs, a lot more fat cats, a lot more people at the top end earning very high salaries.

Hon Lindsay Tanner, Hansard, 12/2/07

Retrenchment and redundancy

The idea of a life-long public service career is both a stereotype created through public service commentary and a value enshrined in the Public Service Act 1999 where it is associated with effectiveness and cohesion (Section 10.1(n), see Appendix D). In fact, many agencies experience both significant growth and retrenchment. Hostile political rhetoric, coupled with budgetary pressures including the Efficiency Dividend,⁵⁵ create pressure on APS agencies to actively retrench, freeze recruitment and casualise their workforce. This may appease critics but has serious adverse impacts.

First, avoidable redundancies are very costly. Each year, retrenchments cost the APS tens of millions of dollars to fund leave entitlements and recruitment. These costs are incurred even when agencies grow. During the 2009-2010 reporting year, the Australian Taxation Office retrenched 307 staff members and Defence retrenched 91 even though both agencies actually *gained* staff over the same period.⁵⁶ This trend recently prompted Special Minister of State for the Public Service Gary Gray to issue a new 'Redeployment Policy' for the APS in order to retain the skills and experience needed to "deliver on the Government's agenda."⁵⁷

The Institute for Public Affairs' public service commentator Julie Novak refers to the 'big APS merry-go-round': where employees are treated as a 'protected species' and are simply reclassified from agency to agency and intended cost-savings turn into spending hikes elsewhere.⁵⁸ Judging from the data presented here, *Canberra Times*' public service reporter Marcus Mannheim's depiction of an 'APS see-saw'⁵⁹ that alternates between hiring and firing and in which public servants' tenure is increasingly insecure is closer to reality.

Second, abrupt staffing changes such as those experienced during 1996-1999 are likely to have long-term impacts on agencies' efficiency and their capacity to effectively acquit their responsibilities, as highlighted in the following observation made by Hon Anthony Albanese.



Two years ago, when Labor returned to office, there was not a single urban planner in the entire Commonwealth Public Service... Not one. They [the Howard government] got rid of them all.

Hon Anthony Albanese, *Canberra Times* 31/8/09



The Howard government abused the Public Service and undermined its institutional integrity through a combination of fear, institutional reforms - or claimed reforms - and blatant political jobbery. In its first years there were substantial across-the-board job reductions throughout the Australian Public Service, with over 30,000 staff made redundant. This cost \$300 million in redundancy payouts by the end of the government's first year in office. Over the following years, many of these staff were subsequently re-employed as expensive consultants and contractors as the Howard government realised that its cuts had been too crude and that it required the skills and expertise that it had cut out of the Public Service so unthinkingly.

Hon Kate Lundy (ACT, Australian Labor Party) Hansard, 23/06/08

A third unfortunate effect is the immediate impact on the economic circumstances of retrenched public servants, their families and communities. The mass retrenchments presided over by John Howard had a significant effect on Canberra's economy. Hon Gai Brodtman, Member for Canberra, observed that the Howard Government's public service cuts led to businesses closing and that there were still empty shops four years later.⁶⁰ Figure 10 highlights the extent of retrenchment during the first few years of the Howard Government and the longer-term trend.

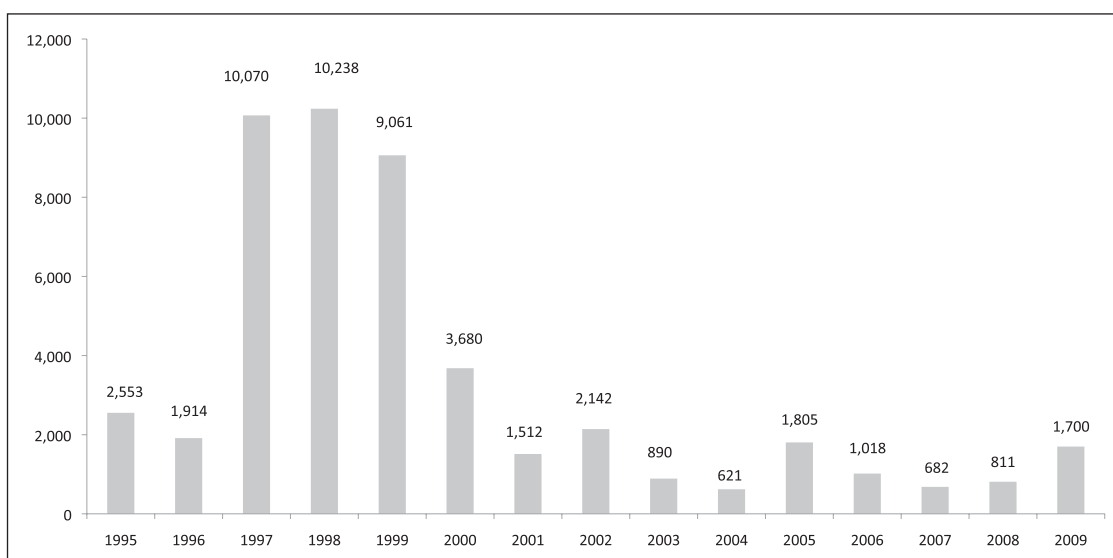


Figure 10: APS retrenchments 1995-2009⁶¹

Gender disparities

Employment trends in the APS reflect significant and persistent gender disparities. Until 1966, women were required to resign from the APS upon marriage.⁶² Things have changed, fortunately, and since 2000 women have represented more than 50% of the APS workforce. In general, though, women remain employed at lower classification levels than men. Between 1996 and 2010, the proportion of women in Senior Executive Service (SES) positions increased from 19.3% to 37.1%. While the gender gap at these higher level positions is slowly closing, a significant disparity remains. In 2010 1,641 men were employed in the SES (63%), compared to 969 women (37%). At the lower levels, on the other hand, women remain over-represented. In 2010 there were 24,468 women (57%) employed in the lower APS levels (APS 1-4) compared to 18,469 men (43%).

Women are also more likely to be employed on a part-time and non-ongoing (temporary and casual) basis than men. In 2010 there were 21,549 women employed on a part-time basis, compared to 4,300 men. Since 1994, women have consistently represented a higher proportion of non-ongoing APS employees than men. Female non-ongoing employees are more likely to be working part-time than any other group.⁶³

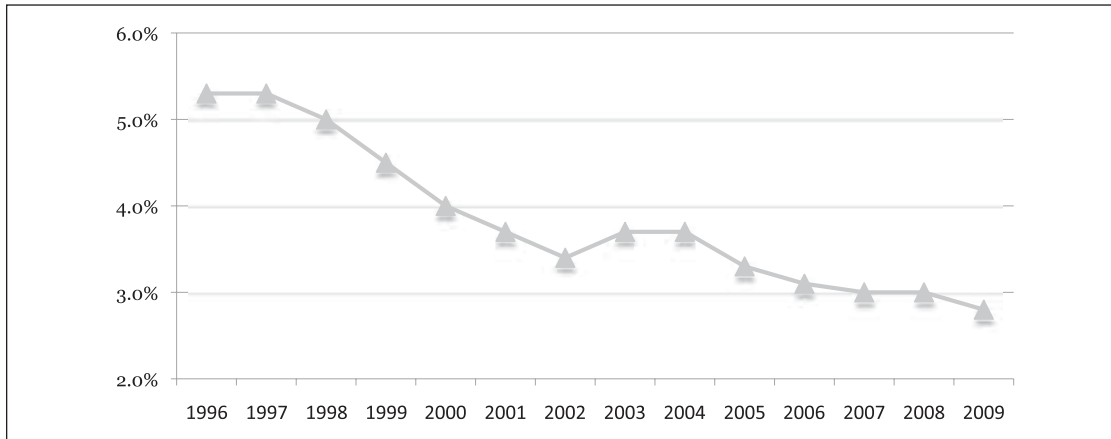


Figure 11: Part-time APS workforce⁶⁴

The gender gap depicted in Figure 11 is significant. In 2010, 83% of part-time APS employees were women. The gap has narrowed slightly since 2006 when women represented 86% of the Service's part-time workforce. This gender difference is much greater than in the Australian workforce overall, where women made up 70% of the total part time workforce in 2009.⁶⁵

Diversity in the workforce

The values articulated in the Australian Public Service Act 1999⁶⁶ include a commitment to providing a workplace that is “free from discrimination” and that “recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves” (Section 10.1(c)). This value is underscored by the APSC's claim that diversity of employment is a “traditional strength.”⁶⁷ Independent expert on equity and diversity Professor Glenda Strachan from the Griffith Business School reinforces the claim by observing that the APS has been a “leader in equity and diversity since the 1980s” by “promoting promoted diversity management and successfully linking diversity to equal opportunity.”⁶⁸

In fact, the agencies of the APS are not meeting this target. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are alarmingly under-represented in the APS workforce. Indigenous employees represented just 1% of the APS in 1996. This increased to 1.7% in 2002 before steadily declining to 0.5% in 2010.⁶⁹ With Indigenous Australians representing less than half of one percent of the its employees, the APS is well short of its target for Indigenous employment determined by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Partnership on Indigenous Economic Participation. This partnership commits APS agencies to an indigenous employment target of 2.7% by 2015, reflecting Indigenous Australians' proportion of the overall working age population.⁷⁰

During 2009-2010, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations worked with nine other APS agencies to develop and implement the ‘Pathways to Success’ program to increase the representation of Indigenous Australians, resulting in 75 new recruits. Commentators including Les Malezer have noted that despite significant investment in these programs over 40 years, public and private sector employment of Aboriginal Australians has actually decreased.⁷¹ The complexities of Aboriginal training and employment programs are beyond the scope of this report.

Employees with a Non-English Speaking Background (NESB), on the other hand, are somewhat better represented than previously, representing 6.3% of APS employees in 2010 compared to just over 5.6% in 2001.

People with a disability

Between 1996-2010 the number of APS employees with a disability *decreased* by 2,485. In 1996, people with a disability represented 5.5% of the total APS staff. By 2010, this had dropped to 3.1%.⁷² This decline was recently described as ‘shameful’ and a ‘massive fail’ by Disability Commissioner Graeme Innes⁷³ who called on the Gillard Government to introduce quotas to force departments to change their hiring practices.



Surely if we want private sector employers to provide employment opportunities for people with a disability then the public sector should be taking a leading role and setting an example.

Hon Jodi Moylan (Liberal, Member for Pearce), Hansard, 28/2/11

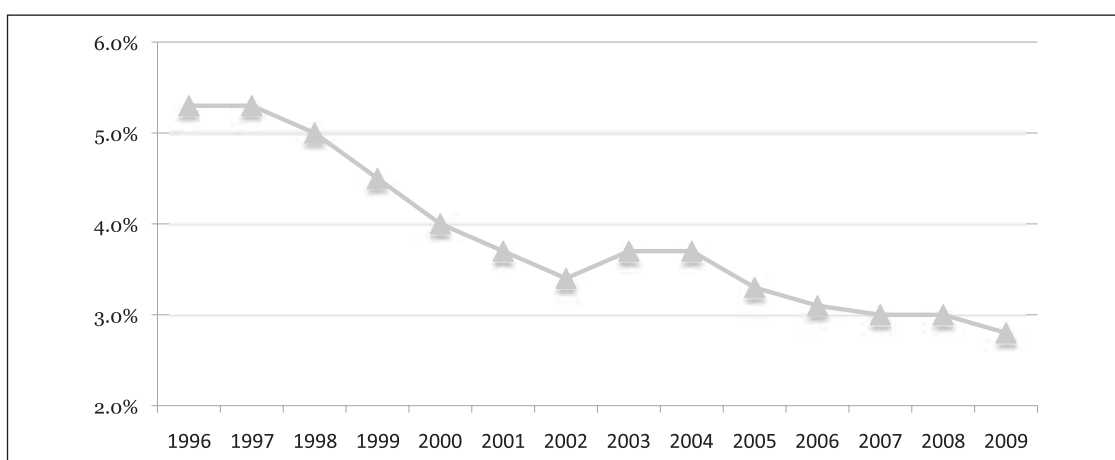


Figure 12: Percentage of APS employees with a disability⁷⁴

A 2004 Productivity Commission Review noted that this decline is often put down to the “downsizing and contracting out of lower level administrative positions” that had a higher representation of people with disabilities but that, in fact, the decline was seen across all levels of the APS, including senior positions.⁷⁵ The participation rate of people with disabilities in the wider workforce has remained fairly stable during this period.⁷⁶

According to the Australian Network on Disability, more than 16% of Australians of working age have some kind of disability.⁷⁷ They are grossly under-represented in both the private and public sectors, representing fewer than 3% of the workforce in both spheres, and mandatory targets have also been proposed for Australia’s ASX-500 companies.⁷⁸

Policy implications

This overview of employment patterns highlights the mismatch between rhetoric and reality about the Australian Public Service. In particular, it contradicts claims of 'bloating' (over-staffing) in APS agencies. By necessity, this is a less comprehensive analysis than the APSC's annual *State of the Service* reports and each agency's separate report. Other trends discernible in the Commission's reports include decreasing mobility between agencies, fluctuations in employees' length of service, recruits' rising levels of education and correlations between age and classification. The APSC also notes the significant difficulties that agencies report in recruiting and retaining employees with specific skillsets.

The key insight from this analysis is that, contrary to media and political commentary, the Australian Public Service has not grown out of control. In fact, the workforce of the 130-plus agencies is now at approximately the same level it was at twenty years ago.

Attitudes toward the Australian Public Service

Main points

This report presents a summary of attitudes toward public services and the Australian Public Service, drawing on a range of sources and examining the perspectives of community members, Australian politicians and public servants. Our synthesis draws on attitudinal studies conducted during the last twenty years by government agencies and researchers. We also examined the views of elected representatives by analysing contemporary media coverage and the Parliamentary record (Hansard) between 2006 and 2011.

Our main findings in relation to the public sector are that:

- » Most Australians support government exercising an active role in society and the economy.
- » There is strong community preference for public (rather than private) sector agencies to deliver services including transport, policing, health and education.
- » Outsourcing and privatisation occur despite and contrary to these preferences.
- » Australians are generally supportive of increased funding for a range of public services, even if that means paying higher taxes.
- » A majority of citizens express reservations about the current bipartisan determination to return the Australian budget to surplus as soon as possible. One survey indicates that this is not widely supported if it comes at the expense of adequately funded public services or requires increased taxes.
- » Surveys indicate a higher level of confidence in public service agencies than in major companies.

Shifting focus to public servants and the Australian Public Service, we conclude that:

- » The mainstream media communicates primarily negative stereotypes of public servants.
- » Australian politicians reinforce these stereotypes, expressing distinctly less positive attitudes toward the public service than those held by other community members. They are less likely than other citizens to express satisfaction, confidence or willingness to fund and regularly invoke starkly negative stereotypes.
- » Agency surveys provide an inadequate assessment of client satisfaction.
- » Studies of APS employees toward their workplaces and employer present contradictory impressions. Surveys administered by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) present a largely positive picture including high levels of employee satisfaction, motivation and sense of personal accomplishment. These surveys also indicate that many APS employees feel that their agencies discourage innovation and that their interactions with Ministers and other elected representatives are often difficult.
- » Surveys conducted by the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) present a significantly less positive impression. For instance, a significant proportion of female public servants report difficulty balancing work and life and speak of bullying in their workplaces.

Our research highlights shortcomings of the available attitudinal studies. In particular, there are few independent and longitudinal sources to measure trends and reliably indicate whether Australians are more or less satisfied with and confident in the Australian Public Service year by year. Instead, different questions are asked in different ways making trend analysis impossible. One solution to this problem would be to conduct a standardised national survey of Australian citizens' views and experiences of the APS. This would provide a reliable and independent assessment of community views to inform decisions about public service funding and staffing. A national survey of attitudes toward and expectations of the APS could be based on the 'Citizens First' survey which is administered every two years by the Canadian government. This was recommended in the 2010 Moran Review.

Overview

The Australian Public Service delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public.

Public Service Act 1999 'APS Values' Section 10.1(g)



The public are now much better educated about their rights as consumers of government services, and have great expectations of what and how services will be delivered. We will see more demanding consumers over time. ⁷⁹

Lynelle Briggs, Australian Public Service Commissioner 2005



As in many other countries, Australia faces unprecedented challenges to address citizens' increasing demands, rising expectations and seemingly intractable social problems in a tight fiscal environment. ⁸⁰

Terry Moran, Secretary, Prime Minister and Cabinet

Attitudes toward the public service matter. Important decisions are based on actual and assumed attitudes. Are there enough or too many public servants? Are public service agencies and the services they provide meeting our expectations? Do Australians feel we are adequately investing in public services? Answers to these questions inform significant political and economic decisions.

The 2009-2010 Moran Review⁸¹ of the Australian Public Service (APS) actively solicited community perceptions. Community members participated enthusiastically in the review's consultation processes, making more than 200 written submissions and posting 805 contributions to an online dialogue. On the basis of these and other inputs, review chair Terry Moran concluded that the leading challenge facing the APS is rising citizen expectations. How is the APS travelling with respect to these expectations? Do Australian citizens consider that the APS is meeting our needs?

To examine attitudes toward the APS, we have drawn on a robust body of attitudinal research conducted by a range of organisations over more than two decades. This research focuses variously

on attitudes toward the APS and other public service entities (such as state public service agencies), public servants and the public services they deliver. The breadth and diversity of these sources allows researchers to identify trends with some confidence. Despite the breadth of existing research, we do not consider that there is the basis for a comprehensive or reliable picture and we think that further research is warranted. Before presenting our summary, we note three limitations.

First, attitudinal studies are often idiosyncratic: many are conducted just once with a unique set of questions. While this approach provides a snapshot to inform contemporary political debate, such as the regular surveys conducted by Essential Media, Roy Morgan and the Australia Institute, it does not generate data to monitor longer-term trends. These trends require longitudinal studies with consistent survey design and sampling approaches.

Second, it is difficult to distinguish between attitudes toward the Australian Public Service agencies and attitudes toward state-based public service agencies. While the current research cannot verify the claim, it is reasonable to assume that relatively few Australians accurately distinguish between public service agencies administered by the Commonwealth and those administered by state governments with which we may have more frequent interaction. In responding to surveys, people are likely to conflate the Commonwealth agencies and state-based agencies that deliver services such as health and education. In fact, several of the studies we examined look at attitudes toward these primarily state-based services, but their interpretation is extrapolated to 'public services' in general. This distinction is especially difficult with respect to public services that are delivered by both state and Commonwealth agencies, such as environmental protection and infrastructure.

Study	Focus	Sample size & sampling approach	Frequency
Australian Public Service State of the Service 'Employees' Attitudes' 2009-10	Perceptions of recruitment experience; leadership, engagement, innovation, satisfaction, work-life balance, interaction with stakeholders, perceptions of service delivery	Stratified random sample of 8,732 employees from APS agencies with at least 100 APS employees (in 2009)	Annually since 2003
Australian Election Study	Confidence in public institutions; political efficacy, government responsiveness	National postal survey of 2,010 voters (in 2001)	2001, 2004, 2007
Australian Social Attitudes survey	Community attitudes toward work, globalisation, industrial relations reform, retirement, citizenship, political trust and family and community life	4,000 respondents selected randomly from the Australian Electoral Roll	2005, 2007
Community and Public Service Union's 'What Women Want' survey	Working conditions, experiences and perceptions of female public servants	Online survey of 9,000-10,000 respondents	Annually since 2006
Essential Media Communications	Preferred service provider; willingness to fund services; attitudes toward taxation (different topics each week)	Approximately 1,000 respondents	31 January 2011; 4 April 2011
Parliamentary Library research ⁸²	Attitudes toward social spending and taxation	Macro-analysis of attitudinal polls over 20 years	Various

Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission	Queensland public attitudes toward local councils, police and (state) public service agencies: Do public servants behave well? Are they honest? Has their behaviour changed for the better or worse over recent years?	1,505 respondents (in 2006)	1991, 1993, 1995, 2002, 2005, 2007
Quantum Market Research 2002	Role of government	National face-to-face survey of 1,950 respondents	2002
Throsby & Withers 1994	Willingness to pay for public goods and services	600 adult respondents	1994
World Values Survey	Confidence in civil service and other social institutions, values and a wide range of related indicators	Representative national sample of >1,000 people in more than 80 nations	5 year 'waves' of surveys since 1981

Table 2: Studies of Australians' attitudes toward the public service

Third, attitudinal research can conflate attitudes toward government, political parties and the public service. This is especially the case with respect to questions of confidence and trust. Peri Blind⁸³ claims that this is a common occurrence in social surveys because political trust can be directed at the political system, government agencies and individual politicians but the perceived failure of any one entity can influence levels of trust and confidence in the others. Clive Bean and David Denemark similarly ask, 'Do the roots of the problem [of distrust] lie less in the public service itself and more in politically elected government?'⁸⁴

As much as possible, the focus here is on attitudes toward the APS specifically. To understand and contextualise these attitudes, though, we have also drawn on studies with a broader focus on public services (including the agencies of Australian states and territories) and the public sector in general.

In exploring attitudes toward the APS, this report presents three related perspectives: those of citizens, of politicians, and of employees of APS agencies.

Citizens' attitudes

Citizens' views toward the public service are the subject of sustained interest and attention. Although the surveys and studies listed in Table 2 canvassed a range of questions, four themes have received regular attention and serve as the structure for the following synthesis:

- » defining a role for the public service and government
- » willingness to fund
- » satisfaction and confidence and
- » stereotypes and the depiction of public servants in the popular media.

Defining a role for the public service: Big government or contracting state?

The anti-government invective has now reached near hysterical levels... the emergence of the Tea Party has demonstrated that government bashing and tax hating is still popular among some Americans. This... is a response to this one-sided, distorted, and misleading depiction of government. It makes the case that government – despite its flaws – plays a valuable and indispensable role in promoting the public good.

Government is Good⁸⁵

There is a belief in boardrooms and among America's tax-cutting right that a monstrous, ever-growing state is the creature of make-work bureaucrats and leftist politicians, and sometimes that is true.

The Economist 17/3/11⁸⁶

Fundamentally deep down when you strip away the debate about this policy and that, Zac, we believe that government's role is to enable you to do your best, right? Labor's view is that government is there to tell you what is best and that's the fundamental difference.

Hon Malcolm Turnbull (Member for Wentworth) 28/2/11⁸⁷

Given the prevalence of the 'big government' frame in political discourse and media such as *The Economist*, it makes sense to start here. Do Australian citizens resent the size and cost of the APS? Or, conversely, is there political support for increased levels of staffing and funding so that public service agencies can meet the needs of individuals and communities?

Concerns about the size of the public service are not new. The 1977 Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration chaired by H.C. (Nugget) Coombs concluded that:

the most frequent criticism... is based on outright hostility to the size and cost of the public bureaucracy. This feeling is not peculiar to Australia and has inspired a variety of 'anti-big government' movements of both right and left in many western countries in recent years... it is essentially a protest against the activities of government itself and can only be evaluated in terms of the propriety of government interventions in fields such as health, welfare, pensions, transport and countless and increasing others.⁸⁸

'Big government' critics assert that government institutions are prone to failure, including corruption, inefficiency, producer-bias and democratic deficits. How widely held are these attitudes? Would Australians prefer that these flawed institutions stay out of our lives? This was certainly the impression created by Senator Wilson Tuckey's comment, "I reckon about 50 per cent of the workforce today employed in the public service is in some sort of activity to tell you what you cannot do" (*Hansard*, 10/03/09). On the contrary. Terry Moran, Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet, recently drew attention to attitudinal research showing that "the Australian public welcomes an active role for government." Mr Moran cited polling by Quantum⁸⁹ that demonstrated strong and consistent support during the last two decades for the view that "government has an important role to play in both business and in taking care of people who can't help themselves":

Around 85% of Australians support this proposition. The Quantum survey reveals an interesting paradox. Reforms that have successfully shifted the role of government and increased the influence of markets have continued, despite community attitudes and

values which favour a strong role for government in the Australian economy and in Australian society.⁹⁰

Mr Moran asked, “How has this been allowed to happen?” His observation echoes the conclusion drawn in the Australian Election Study conducted in 2001⁹¹ which found that over 60 per cent of Australians agree that ‘government by its nature is the best instrument for promoting the general interests of society’.

Just as we look to government to address community needs, surveys consistently indicate that Australians prefer government agencies rather than private sector organisations to provide essential community services. In 1994, David Throsby and Glenn Withers asked 600 adults their preferences regarding public and private sector provision of transport infrastructure, police, hospitals, schools and airlines. Figure 13 shows the results: a clear preference for public provision. More than twice as many respondents supported public over private provision of health and education services and five times as many people supported public provision of motorways. As Moran noted, the steady trend toward privatisation of these services during the ensuing years has occurred despite these expressed preferences.

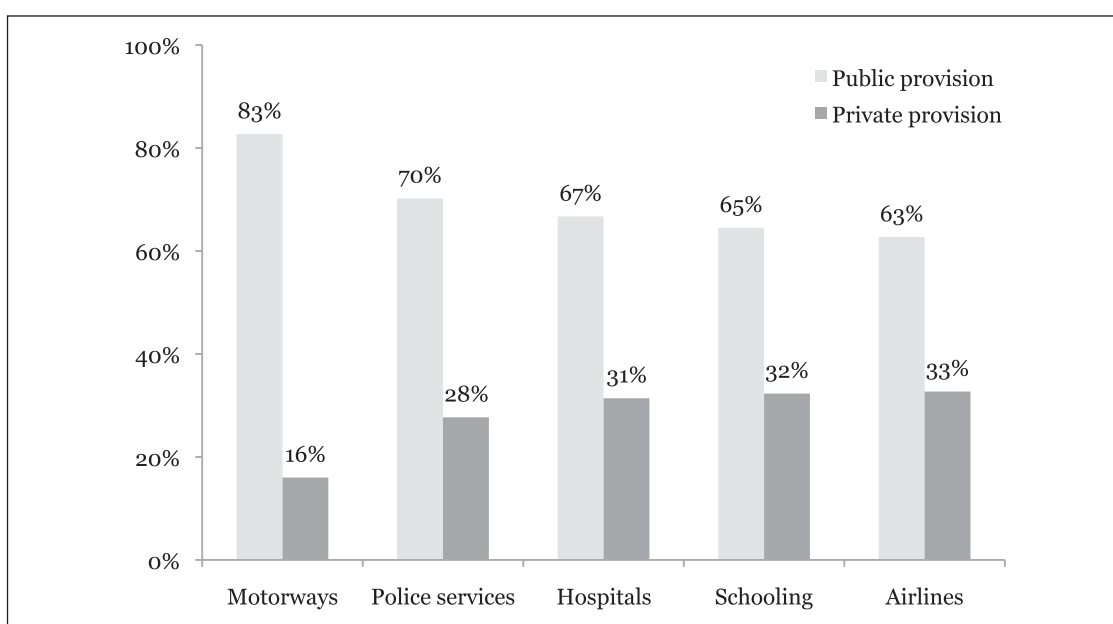


Figure 13: Preference for public or private sector provision of community services (1994) ⁹²

The Australian Social Attitudes (ASA) studies reinforce these trends. These surveys of more than 4,000 citizens have revealed strong and consistent support for government (public sector) agencies to deliver education and health services. Figure 14 illustrates the very high level of support for government provision of education services (83%) reported in the 2005 survey. By comparison, only 10% of respondents identified the private sector as their preferred provider of schooling and other educational services.

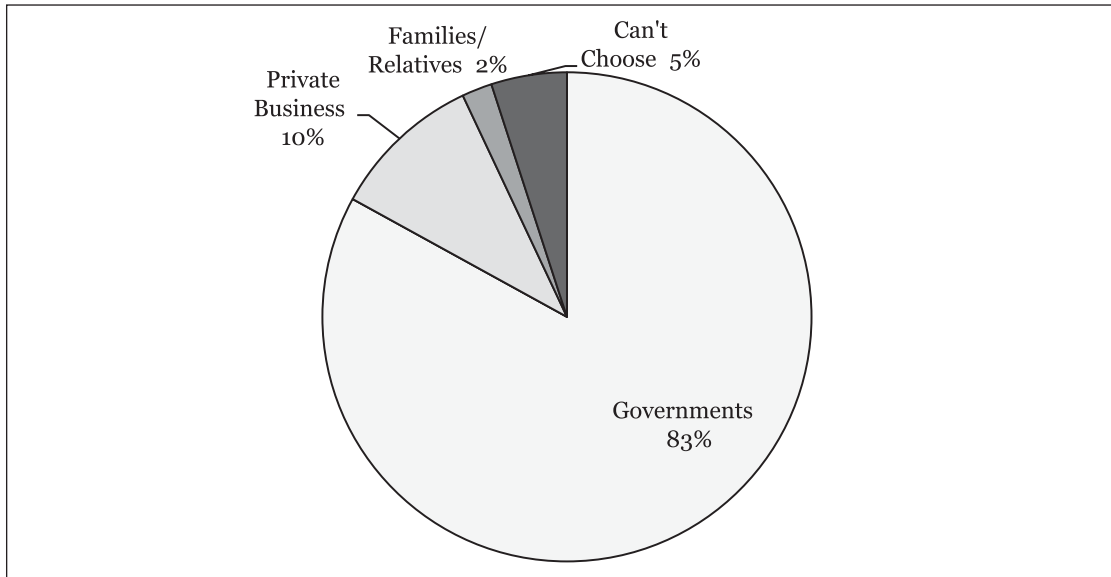


Figure 14: Who is best suited to deliver education services?⁹³

Similarly, most Australians prefer health services to be delivered by government agencies. Figure 15 shows that 80% of ASA survey respondents expressed a preference for government agencies to deliver health services, compared to 14% support for private sector health services.

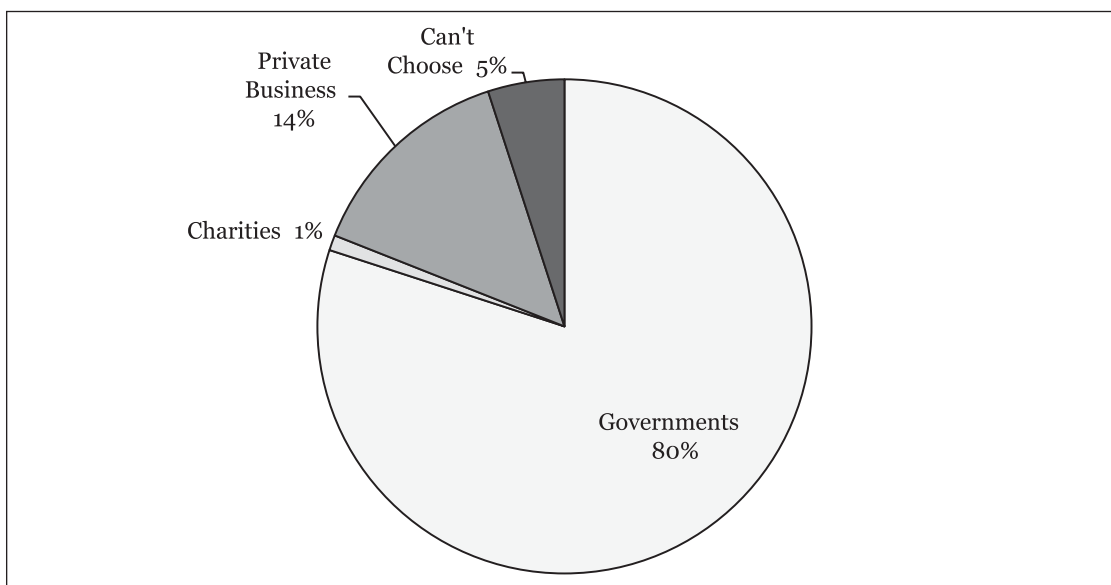


Figure 15: Who is best suited to deliver health services?⁹⁴

Health and education are highly visible services with a strong tradition of public sector provision. Do these attitudes extend to other services in an era of increasingly outsourced and privatised services? Essential Media Communications (EMC) recently examined community attitudes toward a range of services, asking 1,053 respondents, 'Which of the following are better run by the private sector and which are better run by Government?'⁹⁵ Their study found that a substantial majority of respondents consider the government to be better than the private sector at running prisons (76%), community

services (71%), water (70%) and motorways (70%). These preferences were a deciding factor in the NSW Government's decision not to privatise Sydney's ferry services. However, Australians are slightly more likely to consider the private sector better at delivering property insurance (55%) and broadband services (53%).

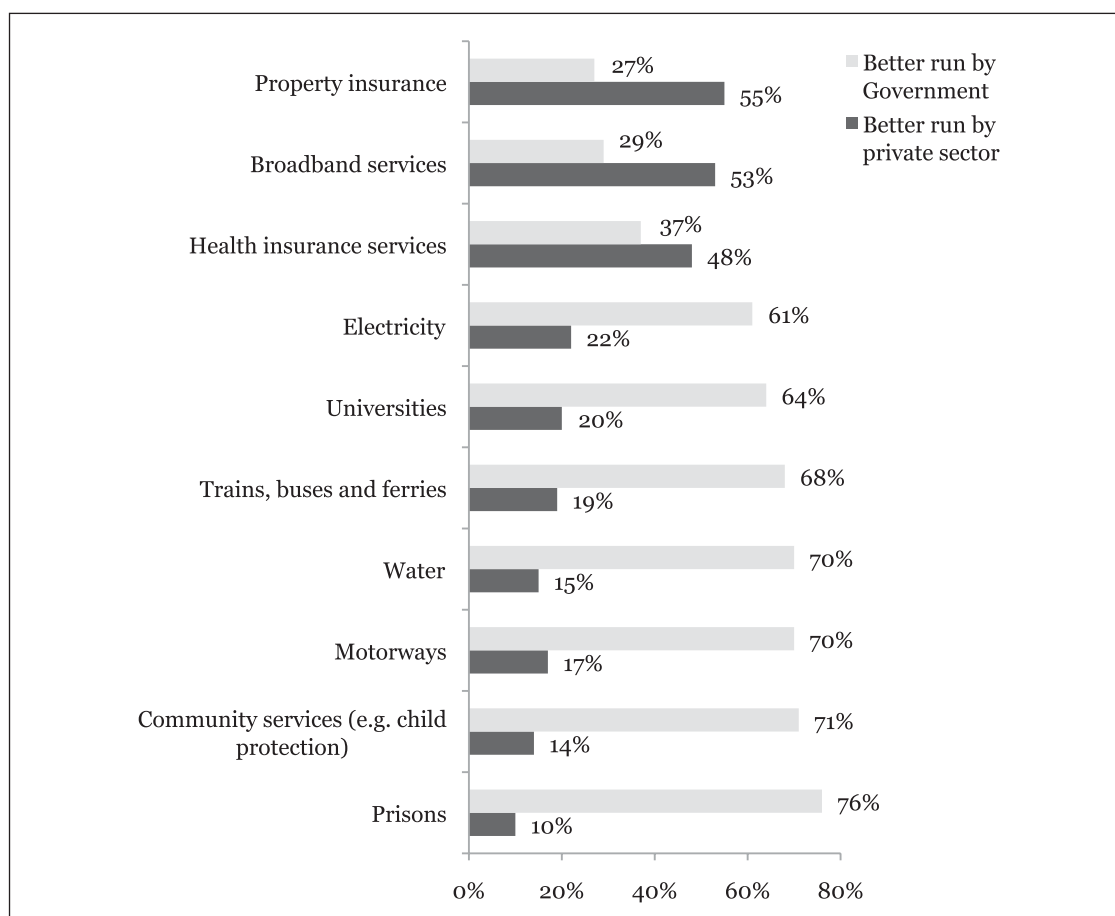


Figure 16: Which services are better run by the private sector and which are better run by Government? ⁹⁶

EMC also examined whether these preferences were influenced by respondents' voting preference. They concluded that,

Although Liberal/National voters were a little more likely to favour the private sector on most issues, they also supported the Government running most services except for broadband services (63% private/24% Government), health insurance (59%/32%) and property insurance (65%/23%). Labor voters favoured the private sector to run broadband (44%/38%) and property insurance (50%/31%) but were split on health insurance (41% private/43% Government).

This finding is especially noteworthy given the distinction between the major parties' positions on public services that is examined elsewhere in this report. Although conservative politicians are much more likely than their Labor counterparts to espouse anti-public service views, there is little difference between Coalition and Labor voters' support for services being delivered by public service rather than the private sector.

Willingness to fund public services

Given the polarised political debate about public sector funding, social scientists and others are interested in citizens' willingness to fund public services. Would citizens prefer to increase or decrease funding for Australian Public Service agencies and public services in general? Studies tend to contradict the news headlines referred to elsewhere in this report: Australians are generally supportive of increased public service funding, and would be willing to pay higher taxes for services such as education, health and environmental protection. Researchers have arrived at this conclusion through studies utilising a range of data collection and analysis approaches and techniques.

The Australian Social Attitudes (ASA) reports provide a useful long-term picture of support for 'social spending' including investment in public services between 1967 and 2005, as summarised in Figure 17.

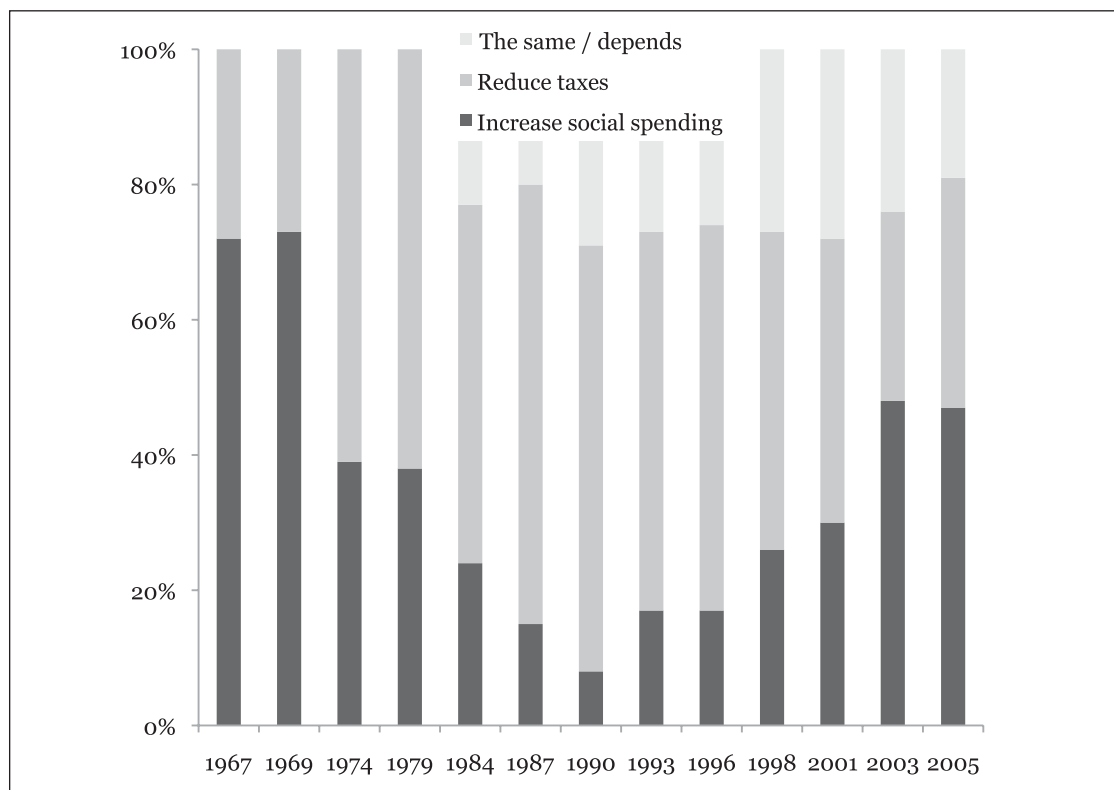


Figure 17: Public support for lower taxes or increased social spending 1967-2005⁹⁷

This synthesis shows strong and growing support for increased social spending, following a low point during the 1990s when a higher proportion of Australians favoured tax cuts. In 2003, 48% of respondents supported increased social spending (47% in 2005) whereas just 28% favoured income tax cuts (34% in 2005). This pattern was reinforced by Per Capita's 2010 Tax Survey in which 79% of respondents supported increased government spending on public services, including 52% who felt governments should spend much more.⁹⁸

The ASA report concluded that, "Australians were more willing to forgo income to pay for major welfare services in 2003 than they have been at any time in previous two decades"⁹⁹ Figure 18 highlights the relationship between two trends: support for lower taxes and support for increased spending on social services. Since the mid 1980s, there has been a significant decline in the proportion of Australians who favour lower taxes and a corresponding increase in support for increased social spending (including

the conditional support shown in Figure 18). These two trend lines crossed over in 2004, crossing back somewhat in 2010.

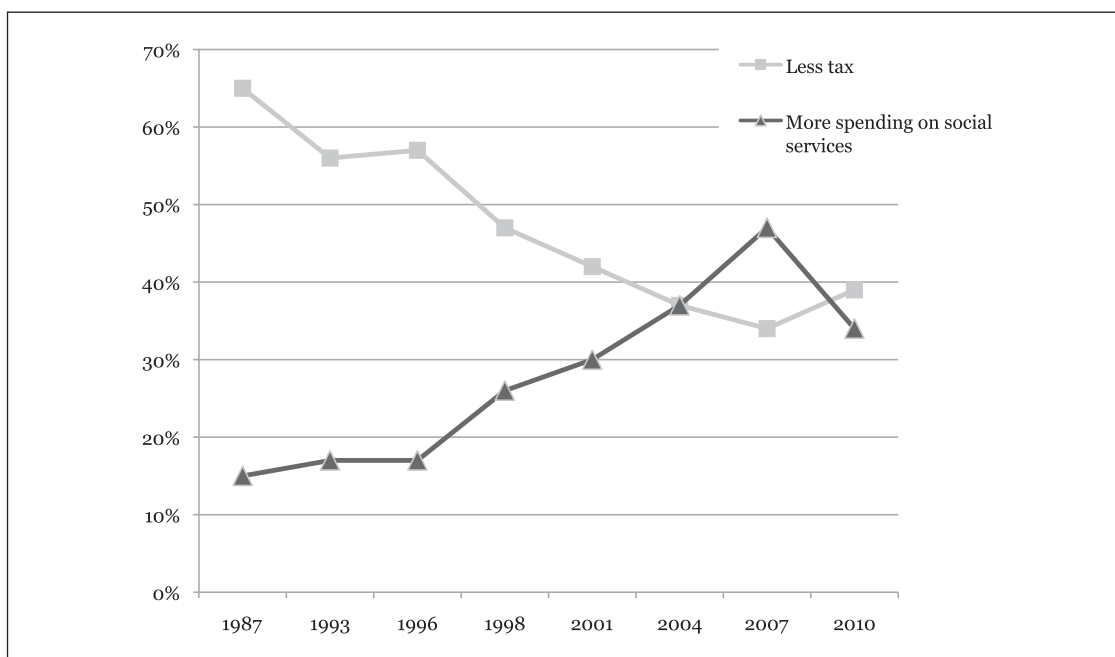


Figure 18: If the government had a choice between more spending on social services or less tax, what do you think it should do? ¹⁰⁰

Willingness to pay higher taxes in order to fund public services is differentiated, in some studies, according to specific services or public service functions. The ASA study found that more citizens were willing to pay increased taxes to fund health and education than for environmental protection or welfare benefits. As Figure 19 illustrates, more than two-thirds (67%) of respondents were willing to pay ‘a little’ or ‘quite a bit more’ tax in order to increase funding for health and Medicare compared to 34% for welfare benefits.

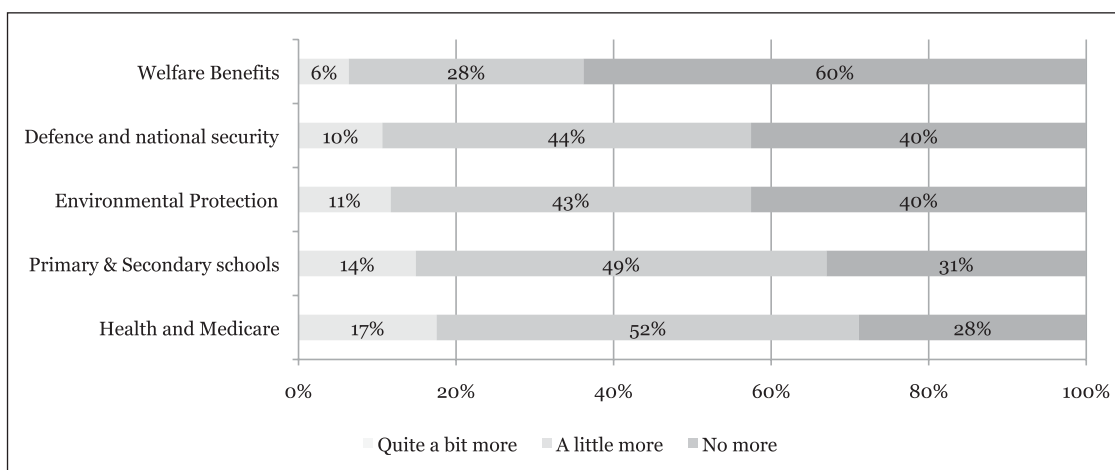


Figure 19: Willingness to pay increased tax for public services (in 2003) ¹⁰¹

Figure 19 shows a strong contrast between the high level of support for services that are delivered directly and those that are funded through transfers (welfare benefits).

The strong community support and demand for health and education services and the relatively lower level of willingness to fund welfare payments is echoed in other studies. This suggests that community members ascribe far greater value to services that are delivered directly by public servants than those funded through transfers such as welfare payments. Figure 20 summarises Throsby and Withers' survey which compared 'willingness to fund' responses across a wider range of portfolios.

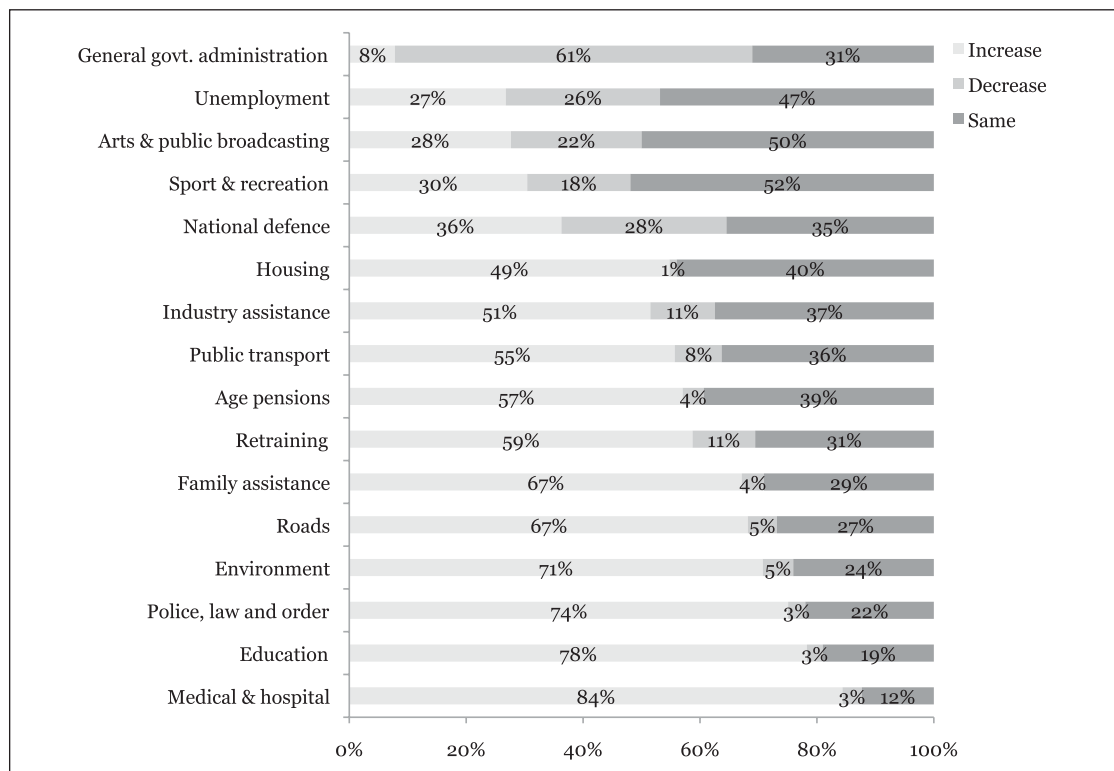


Figure 20: Public support for increased or decreased government expenditure for services¹⁰²

Figure 20 reiterates the high level of community support for increased government investment in health and education services and indicates a relatively lower level of support for expenditure on sport, the arts and welfare. Transfer payments including unemployment benefits and age pensions also receive considerably less public support than direct services such as health and education. Another noteworthy result is the relatively low level of support for general government administration. Public servants working in this area tend to be the first target for politicians seeking to reduce staffing levels. In part, this may reflect (and is certainly consistent with) the negative stereotypes of public servants ('bureaucrats') identified through our analysis of contemporary media and the Hansard Parliamentary record. It may also reflect the high level of visibility of service providers and the comparative 'invisibility' of public servants engaged in administration, law making, rule making, policy development and managing government finance. Of course, 'frontline' public servants cannot effectively deliver their services without these parallel and less visible and popular support services.

Another way that attitudinal studies have assessed ‘willingness to fund’ has been to examine citizens’ perceptions of the benefits of public services. Figure 21 presents a ranking of the perceived benefits to individuals and the community of a range of public services. The rank order follows a strikingly similar pattern to Figure 17 (public support for increased government expenditure).

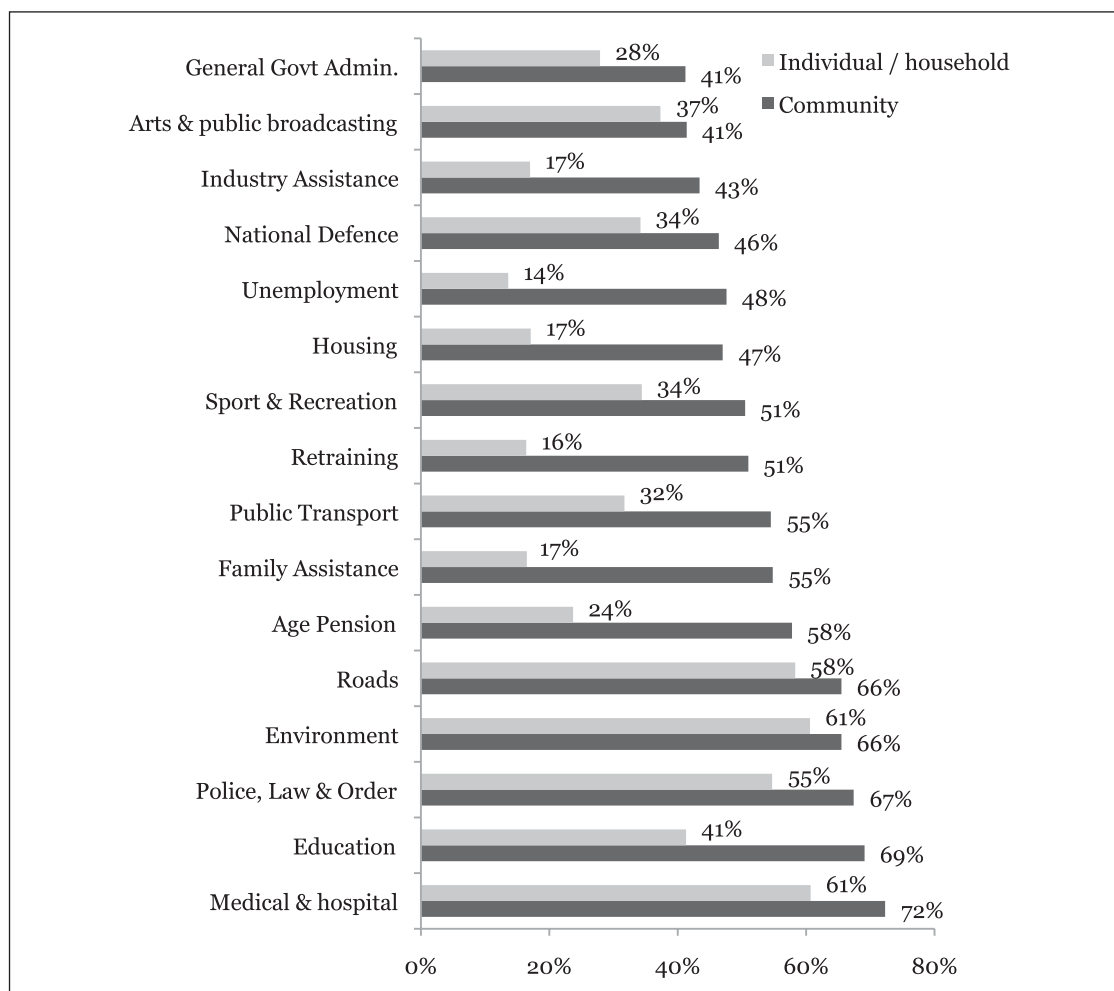


Figure 21: Public services perceived to provide ‘a reasonable amount’ or ‘a lot’ of benefit to the individual/household or to the community¹⁰³

These results demonstrate that some popular services such as policing, law and order and education are seen to provide more significant benefit to communities than they are perceived to provide to individuals’ families and households. This result suggests that attitudes toward public sector investment are shaped by altruism and a sense of community, rather than simply self-interest.

Another recent EMC poll¹⁰⁴ confirmed these ‘willingness to fund’ trends and put them in the context of political and economic rhetoric. Joe Hockey and others who pledge to reduce the staffing levels of public service agencies do so by appealing to public support for a budget surplus and its assumed benefits to individuals. This report does not examine the prevailing ‘surplus fetish’ and its economic rationale other than to note it is a persuasive device utilised by both major parties to justify their current economic management preferences. EMC’s research asked citizens to consider the relative merits of

returning the budget to surplus by 2012-13 versus cutting public services and increasing tax levels. A clear majority (69%) of respondents supported delaying the return to a surplus, a preference that is diametrically opposed to the preference of both Labor and Coalition politicians. Only 14% supported the 'surplus push'. Almost half of the respondents (49%) supported maintaining current public sector spending and 15% advocated increased spending while just 22% supported further cuts.

Confidence and satisfaction

Attitudinal surveys have also examined the question of whether citizens are satisfied with the performance of public service agencies. To what extent do Australians consider public services are delivered in a professional and ethical manner? How confident are we in APS agencies and their staff?

As noted elsewhere in this report, it is difficult to reliably separate confidence in the public service from confidence in government. And there is evidence that confidence in government institutions is in decline globally. The World Values Study¹⁰⁵ measures confidence in a range of social institutions including the legal system, the press, the federal government, the public service (termed 'civil service' in the study), unions and major companies. Since 1981, their surveys in more than 80 countries have tracked a 'sharp decline' in confidence in many of these institutions, but not in the public service. During this time, Australian citizens' confidence in the public service has declined modestly from 41.6% (respondents who express 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence) in 1981 to 39.1% in 2005. Results of attitudinal studies in Australia are comparable to those for the United States (41.5%) and indicate a somewhat lower level of citizen confidence in the public service than in Canada (55.8%), New Zealand (43.9%) and the United Kingdom (43.8%).

Australian citizens tend to have considerably more confidence in the public service and in government than we do in major companies.

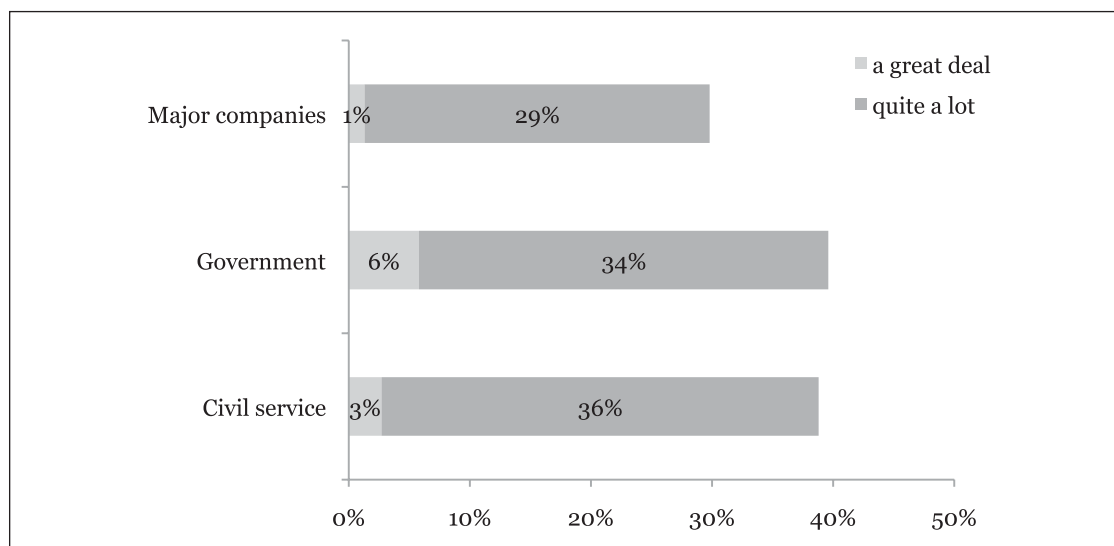


Figure 22: Confidence in institutions¹⁰⁶

To the extent that citizens conflate government and the public service, declining confidence in one is likely to influence attitudes toward the other. Figure 22 shows comparable levels of confidence in both.

Accessibility to the APS is one indicator to gauge citizens' levels of satisfaction. Since the 1977 Coombs Commission, Australian citizens have expressed dissatisfaction with their level of access to Commonwealth public servants, about one-third of whom are based in Canberra.¹⁰⁷ Citizens residing outside state capitals and in remote and rural areas are most likely to report this source of dissatisfaction, and calls to situate public service offices in rural areas are not uncommon.¹⁰⁸

Another indicator measured in surveys of citizen satisfaction is the apparent level of public servants' commitment. More than half (54%) of the respondents to the 2005 ASA survey considered public servants 'somewhat committed' and a further 10% described them as 'very committed'.

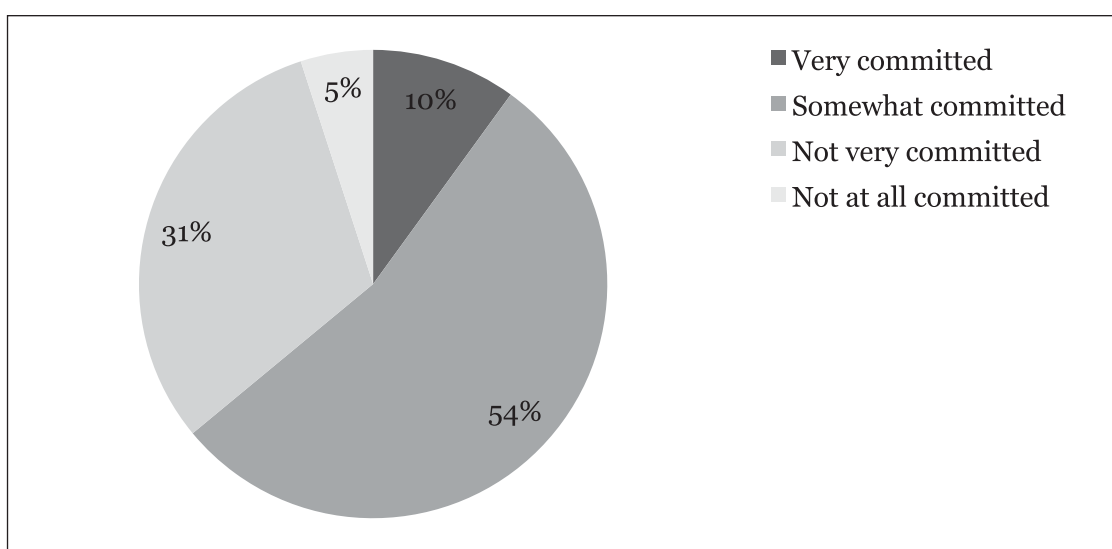


Figure 23: How committed is the APS to serving the Australian people? (2005) ¹⁰⁹

Measuring satisfaction

Most APS agencies routinely measure levels of client satisfaction: 93% of agencies with public contact have a link for web-based feedback and complaints and 74% have complaints hotlines.¹¹⁰ The most recent survey of APS employees found that 70% use this feedback from customers and clients to improve the services they deliver.¹¹¹ Many agencies also conduct or commission client surveys to complement these routine feedback mechanisms. The Department of Human Services, for instance, gauges Child Support Program client satisfaction through its 'Customers Having a Say' point-of-service customer survey. This agency-administered survey suggests a high level of satisfaction, with 70-75% of client satisfaction during 2009-10.¹¹²

The Australian Tax Office (ATO) has commissioned an annual 'Community Perceptions' survey since 1996 to monitor community perceptions of the ATO and its administration of the tax system. Their survey of 2,000 adult clients provides useful metrics to guide the agency. The 2009 report¹¹³ highlighted positive aspects of the agency's performance. Respondents felt the ATO was:

- making it easier for taxpayers to complete their income tax return (73% agree)
- listening and responding to complaints (77%)
- being fair and professional in how it administers the tax system (80%)
- providing enough guidance to answer questions sufficiently (80%)

In addition, most survey respondents reported that staff were “really helpful” (85%) and that their overall experience with ATO representatives was positive (75%). The survey also generates feedback about agency weaknesses and challenges. For instance, 40% of respondents to the 2009 survey said they “feel very confused about taxation matters.” The overwhelmingly positive impression communicated in these ATO reports was contradicted, however, by recent media reports¹¹⁴ that the Commonwealth Ombudsman had received a record number of complaints about the ATO’s performance: 50,000 complaints during the 2010-2011 financial year, a sharp rise from 40,665 and 27,942 in the previous two years. Although most (77%) respondents to the ATO’s survey agreed that the agency “listens to and responds to complaints” these Ombudsman complaints are not referred to in the ATO’s Community Perceptions Survey. As a result, two starkly contrasting impressions were created: Commonwealth Ombudsman Allan Asher and his team spent 20% of their time investigating complaints about the ATO while taxation commissioner Michael D’Ascenzo reported that 83% of survey respondents thought the Tax Office was doing a “good job.”

This highlights an issue with over-reliance on agencies’ self-administered client surveys as evidence of citizen satisfaction: they tend to emphasise supportive feedback. There are other reasons to look beyond agency reports. They are also difficult to locate on many agencies’ websites, they’re often slow to be published (the ATO’s 2010 report is not yet available online in mid-2011) and tend to be lengthy reports ostensibly written for an internal audience.

There are exemplary models for agency surveys. The Queensland Crime and Misconduct Commission’s biennial survey¹¹⁵ solicits feedback from approximately 1,500 citizens to provide an assessment of public servants’ honesty and behaviour, and confidence in agencies’ complaints mechanisms. The rigour of this report is perhaps a reflection of its purpose and mandate: the state’s Crime and Misconduct Commission has legislative responsibility for monitoring and responding to corruption.

The architects of Canada’s annual ‘Citizens First’ survey (Appendix E) assess five dimensions of citizens’ satisfaction with public services: “timely service; staff knowledge and competence; an approach to service that is not only courteous and friendly but goes the extra mile to assist the citizen; fairness; and outcome.”¹¹⁶ It is fair to conclude that few, if any, APS agencies provide such a rigorous and balanced appraisal of client satisfaction, or generate metrics that are comparable from agency to agency. The merits of this survey and its applicability in Australia are discussed further below.

Public service depictions in popular culture

Popular culture presents another set of impressions of the public service. How are public servants depicted in magazines, newspapers, electronic media and film? Michelle Pautz and Laura Roselle¹¹⁷ examined the depiction of public servants in Hollywood films, examining the top ten box office grossing films in the United States between 1992 and 2006. They started with the premise that “government bureaucrats are among those individuals that Americans love to hate” and that “bureaucrats - with the word uttered in contempt - are alleged in all quarters to be lazy, incompetent, devious, and even dangerous.” Films such as ‘Batman Begins’ (2005) reinforce these stereotypes. In Gotham City, few police officers are honest and the city’s administrators are corrupt and unable (or unwilling) to control crime. Conversely, Pautz and Roselle’s study identified several Hollywood films with ‘bureaucrat heroes’ and observed that filmgoers “have a good chance of seeing civil servants depicted in film.”

We expected, and found, a negative depiction of government in general. Overall, out of 105 films that contained some depiction of government, 40 percent of the films portrayed govern-

ment as competent, efficient, and/or good, whereas 60 percent depicted the government as inefficient, incompetent, and/or bad.¹¹⁸

To gain an impression of how public servants are depicted in popular culture, CPD examined more than 500 newspaper articles containing the expressions ‘public service’ or ‘public servants’ printed in Australia and the United Kingdom during 2010 and 2011. Our thematic analysis identified vocal public service advocates and detractors, the recurring themes in their commentary and the frequency of these themes. This analysis revealed some very positive portrayals including “hard-working, ethical and capable”¹¹⁹ and “a precious, civilising embodiment of our best collective endeavours.”¹²⁰ On balance, though, newspaper articles, opinion columns and editorials tend to present negative stereotypes much more frequently. A sample of these stereotypes is presented below.

- “Wasters, lazy jobsworths, leeches, freeloaders”¹²¹
- “Lazy”¹²²
- “Work-shy public servants taking endless coffee breaks on my tax money!”¹²³
- “Fat cat bureaucrats”¹²⁴
- “Cardigan wearers”¹²⁵
- “A mess... waste and inefficiency”¹²⁶
- “The Soviet Union but without the nuclear threat: all drab suits, grey offices, unattractive women and queues... that gloomy bureaucratic Mariana trench”¹²⁷
- “Bureaucratic obesity”¹²⁸
- “Generally more pre-occupied with the benefits they can receive than the actual benefits of the services they provide to the public.”¹²⁹
- “The enemies of enterprise ... taxing, regulating, smothering, crushing, getting in the way... the bureaucrats in government departments who concoct those ridiculous rules and regulations that make life impossible for the community, particularly smaller businesses”¹³⁰

Figure 24: Derogatory expressions used to describe public servants ¹³¹

In the synthesis of politicians’ view that follows, many of these negative stereotypes are invoked.

Politicians’ attitudes toward the public service



Experience shows public servants are an easy target. In fact, the pleasure taken in bureaucrat bashing has of late reached new extremes, fired by the passions of our political opponents. This trend had proved a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the Australian public service is constantly exhorted to sharpen up, trim down, reach out and rein in. And to some degree, that’s fair enough. The public demands improvements. The press castigates failure. The pressure for faster, cheaper and better outcomes is relentless. But we have also learned, to our cost, that constant negativity has its perils. When you lose sight of all but stuff-ups and past failures, you may well lose faith that success can be achieved. We have set ambitious goals for a richer, fairer and greener Australia, and we cannot deliver them without public servants of the highest calibre.

Senator Kim Carr, Canberra Times 7/2/11



Public servants have not always benefitted from the rhetorical support of government... I am an avid believer in the importance of the public service to deliver... The opposition leader's desire to see 12,000 public servants out of work perhaps gives more insight into the Liberal Party's irrational, populist and unhelpful attitude to the public service.

Gary Gray, Special Minister of State for Public Service and Integrity¹³²

Senator Carr's observation is consistent with our research into political commentary. The compendium of statements about the APS made by Australian politicians in the following pages reflects the adversarial and opportunistic nature of much of this commentary. Debates in the Australian Parliament and Senate present a bipolar impression of APS agencies. On one hand, public servants are 'dedicated', 'competent', 'honourable', 'invisible heroes' doing 'great work'. On the other, politicians such as Wilson Tuckey, Stuart Robert and Joe Hockey would prefer a much smaller public service that essentially 'kept out of the way'.

To understand Australian politicians' attitudes toward the public service, CPD analysed five years of Hansard, the Parliamentary record. This analysis highlights four recurrent issues that dominate political discourse:

- » The size of the public service: agencies' budgets and staffing levels
- » The efficiency of APS agencies: Joe Hockey and Wilson Tuckey's comments exemplify the negative end of this continuum; Chris Ellison, Doug Cameron and Kim Carr's comments characterise the positive end
- » The value and independence of public servants' policy advice, and the associated issue of politicisation and
- » Issues associated with outsourcing and privatising public service functions.

Politicians' views are clearly divided. To some extent, this polarisation reflects party lines: Coalition politicians invoke the 'big government' frame and negative stereotypes of public servants while Labor politicians generally describe the public sector and public servants' contribution to society in positive terms. This distinction is not consistent, though, and some politicians espouse elements of both anti and pro-public service and public sector rhetoric. As Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd simultaneously invoked both positive and negative frames, promising to 'take a meat axe' to the public service while providing the reassurance that this would not result in a "reduction in federal government services... I am talking about the administrative budgets of departments."¹³³

Politicians in both major parties speak of waste and the importance of economising. The Greens and politicians who represent Canberra and the Australian Capital Territory (Gary Humphries and Gai Brodtmann) express the most consistently positive portrayals of the APS.

The attitudes of Australian politicians differ markedly from those of the Australian community: they are less likely than other citizens to express satisfaction, confidence or willingness to fund.



If you want to start with cuts we have said we will cut 12,000 public servants out of Canberra. That is the starting point.

Hon Joe Hockey, 11 May 2011¹³⁴

The extreme anti-public service position is expressed in threats to arbitrarily ‘axe’ public service agency budgets and staffing levels. A recent example was Opposition Treasury spokesperson Joe Hockey’s response to the May 2011 Australian Budget. Mr Hockey pledged to retrench 12,000 public servants if the Coalition wins government at the next federal election. His stated rationale¹³⁵ for these drastic staffing cuts is that the Australian Public Service has “exploded” under the Rudd and Gillard governments, that the employment of an additional 20,000 public servants in Canberra had not created “better government” and that a rapid return to surplus budget cuts is crucial.

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) responded to Mr Hockey’s claims by challenging the accuracy of his calculations.¹³⁶ According to the CPSU, the figure of 20,000 included several thousand Army Reservists and Australian Defence Force personnel who are not employed in the Australian Public Service. Several Labor Party politicians¹³⁷ including Special Minister of State for the Public Service and Integrity Gary Gray¹³⁸ issued media releases restating the CPSU’s case.

Liberal Senator Gary Humphries, shadow spokesperson for the Public Service, corrected Mr Hockey’s interpretation of Coalition policy by stating that staff numbers would be reduced “not by sacking people but by making natural attrition do the job of reducing the size of the public service” and that the 12,000 targeted public service employees would not all be in Canberra.¹³⁹

Contrary to Mr Hockey’s assertion of rapid and ongoing growth in the number of public servants, the 2011 Budget did not actually signal significant changes in APS staffing. The intended changes were described in detail: 37 APS agencies would gain a total of 5,762 staff during the financial year and 29 agencies would have their workforce reduced by 4,220 employees, resulting in a net increase of 1,542 employees¹⁴⁰ – a growth of less than 1% during the financial year.

Despite Mr Hockey regularly repeating his election commitment since May, there has been no substantive debate about its significance or implications beyond these superficial reactions. This seems remarkable. In any other context, 12,000 retrenchments would receive saturation media attention, generate fierce political debate and prompt rapid and decisive political action. When the Executive Director of the Australian Coal Association Ralph Hillman declared that the price on carbon would lead to the closure of 18 coal mines in Queensland and New South Wales and contribute to the loss of 4,700 jobs,¹⁴¹ Prime Minister Julia Gillard immediately reassured miners that “there’s a great future in coalmining” and that “if their sons want to follow them to this industry, then they will have a future in coalmining too.”¹⁴² The Prime Minister offered similar assurances to the 20,000 workers employed in Australia’s steel industry when the CFMEU national president Tony Maher declared that the carbon price “shouldn’t cost a job.”¹⁴³ Clearly, there was no such reassurance for the 12,000 public servants targeted by Mr Hockey.

Why is this the case? Why is it that public servants are treated so differently from other workers? What does this imply about attitudes toward the public service? Why should retrenching 7.5% of the

Australian Public Service's workforce be the preferred option to cut public sector spending? What savings would be achieved this way and what are some alternatives? What impacts might be expected from such a dramatic reduction in agency capacity?

Gary Gray hinted at these impacts, noting that "the proposed cuts to the capability of the Australian Public Service would be disastrous for families and communities,"¹⁴⁴ but there have been no attempts to assess these potential impacts or consider how to mitigate them.

The following pages present politicians' statements about the Australian Public Service to illustrate the range of attitudes expressed in both houses of the Australian Parliament.

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ON THE RECORD:

Politicians' attitudes toward the Australian Public Service

HON ANTHONY ALBANESE

Member for Grayndler (ALP)

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport

"Two years ago, when Labor returned to office, there was not a single urban planner in the entire Commonwealth Public Service... Not one. They [the Howard government] got rid of them all." Canberra Times 31/8/09

SENATOR SIMON BIRMINGHAM

South Australia (Liberal)

"This is a case of the government deciding that it is about serving the Public Service and creating a bigger bureaucracy before it actually gets on with talking about policy decisions and policy actions... the response is simply to set up an agency - not to consider any of the other substantive recommendations of the report but to swell the ranks of Canberra's Public Service a little bit more by setting up an agency." Hansard 28/10/09

HON BRONWYN BISHOP

Member for Mackellar (Liberal)

"When we were in government and when I was the minister for aged care, we did abolish the Public Service compulsory retirement age of 65. So we now have people in the Public Service who are working well into their 70s and giving splendid performance." Hansard 28/2/11

SENATOR RON BOSWELL

Queensland (National)

"The Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment Bill 2010 is a bad bill to fix a bad law based on a bad policy. It appears that the scale and pace of a program has, again, overpowered the ability of the Public Service to manage and monitor it." Hansard 21/06/10

HON ANTHONY BYRNE

Member for Holt (ALP)

"The coalition's proposed public service freeze will significantly undermine the Public Service capacity to deliver essential services" Hansard 21/6/10

SENATOR DOUG CAMERON

New South Wales (ALP)

"They [the coalition] are going to cut back on the Public Service. When you cut back on the Public Service you cut back on services to the public." Hansard 4/2/10

"Over the 2½ years I have been here, I have been really surprised at the talent and diversity and capacity of the public service to act in the national interest. Nothing will be more important in the forthcoming period, when we have to deal with the floods in Queensland, the flooding in northern New South Wales, the fires in Western Australia and the flooding in Victoria, than having the public service operate effectively and efficiently to deliver the restructuring and rebuilding of this country." Hansard 9/2/11

HON DARREN CHEESEMAN

Member for Coorangamite (ALP)

"I rise today to put on the public record my concern about the opposition's plans to cut the Public Service and the particular impact that may have not only on my community but also across many parts of rural and regional Australia." Hansard 21/6/10

SENATOR STEPHEN CONROY

Victoria (ALP)

"The government is confident that the Australian Public Service's lead role in policy development is absolutely central. The government is committed to the development of evidence-based policy making, with policy design and evaluation driven by analysis of all available options. Governments of different persuasions over a long period of time have used consultants, and that should not be seen as a vote of no-confidence in the public service." Hansard 25/11/09

SENATOR DAVID JOHNSTON

Western Australia (Liberal)

"Without the economic boom associated with the resource industries... the Western Australian economy, already preyed upon to fund an ever-increasing and bloated state public service, would be in serious trouble." Hansard 7/2/07

”



”

SENATOR KIM CARR

Victoria (ALP) Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research

“What we are talking about here is the suggestion that somehow or other Australian public servants cannot be independent. That is the allegation that is being made. I find that an offensive remark... The Australian Public Service is made up of extremely competent, professional nation builders. They do not get everything right, but in my experience they are highly competent people who provide high-quality advice to government on most occasions. They are professional in their approach.”

Hansard 10/3/10

“The nomination of threatened species or heritage sites for listing... (is the type of action) one expects from the Australian Public Service, the sorts of actions that have given us an international reputation as a country that produces some of the best public servants in the world.”

Hansard 29/11/06

ON THE RECORD:

Politicians' attitudes toward the Australian Public Service



”

**SENATOR
BOB BROWN**

Tasmania
(Australian Greens)

“The coalition is about to extend the threat to the Australian Public Service with a freeze for two years on new public service jobs... (the) Abbott government is slinging off at the Public Service, without which this country would not be what it is and who work in the country's interest”

Hansard 13/5/10

“In the recession, Public Service jobs should be retained rather than shed. We are pleased that there will be new Public Service jobs flagged in this budget.”

Hansard 14/5/09



”

**HON
GAI BRODTMANN**

Member for Canberra (ALP)

“Those invisible heroes are our public servants... are people who are dedicated to the service of this country, to improving people's lives, to improving the economy, to keeping our country safe... they are often derided by people in this House and by people around Australia. I find that really sad. These people should be lauded for what they do. They are dedicated to improving people's lives and to public service.”

Hansard 24/11/10

“The coalition does not care about Canberra; it does not care about the Public Service. It has complete disdain for it.” Hansard 25/11/10

“As long as I am in this place I will defend the women and men in the Australian Public Service, because public servants are, after all, servants of democracy.”

Hansard 18/10/10



SENATOR CHRIS ELLISON

Western Australia (Liberal)

“As a minister, I have received the support and advice of a Public Service who are too often overlooked and too often not noticed for the great work that they do in the service of their country. Whether it be Centrelink during times of emergency, Medicare providing valuable services to the people of Australia or the AFP and Customs keeping Australia safe and secure, I have seen outstanding work.”

Hansard 3/12/08

HON MARTIN FERGUSON

Member for Batman (ALP)

“Over the last few years the Public Service has been under siege, and the reputation of the vast majority of hard-working public servants has been sullied by the few who have not upheld appropriate values and ethical standards. Many of them have felt powerless, in the face of political pressure to alter advice, to stay silent or to simply do nothing lest unpalatable truths emerge. Labor believes in rebuilding the Public Service and sees the restoration of its faith and courage to do the right thing by the Australian community as a top priority. I think it is very appropriate here today to remember that, despite the pressure the Public Service is under and despite the despair in many departments and agencies around Australia, there are many stories of outstanding public service and commitment.” Hansard 22/3/07

SENATOR STEVE FIELDING

Victoria (Family First)

“The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet will grow by 65 people... (This is) a ‘little gift’ for the Prime Minister tucked away in the budget. At a time when Australians are told to cut back and make do, this excess by the Prime Minister is obscene.” The Australian 14/5/09

HON BOB KATTER

Member for Kennedy (Independent)

“We are continuously told in this country how wonderfully well off we are. If you look at the internal economy, then I think the government would get about 80 per cent. They have done a good job and their Public Service has done a good job.” Hansard 16/8/06

“Joe Hockey said part of the answer was to sack 12,000 public servants in Canberra, as if that wouldn’t make ‘things harder for Australians’. Unless of course public servants are not Australians and they don’t have families to feed.”

ABC’s The Drum 11/5/11

HON GARY GRAY

Member for Brand (ALP)

Special Minister of State for the Public Service and Integrity

HON KELLY HOARE

Member for Charlton (ALP)

“The real benefit of the (Access Card) scheme for the government and the Public Service executives is the enhancement of social control. They want to be able to exercise more power over the public.” Hansard 27/2/07

“It is not clever to slash Public Service jobs when, according to this government, they have a range of new reforms they want to carry out which will need an experienced, well-resourced Public Service. Cutting of the kind they are talking about now will be counterproductive in that regard.”

Hansard 13/3/08

SENATOR GARY HUMPHRIES

A.C.T. (Liberal)

ON THE RECORD:

Politicians' attitudes toward the Australian Public Service



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**HON JOE
HOCKEY**

Member for North Sydney
(Liberal)

“... that document might be floating around somewhere in that ocean of paper that comes out of the public service on a daily basis.”

Hansard 3/2/10

“The last three years of Labor has been a servant-master relationship in the public service and we’re going to bring it back to what it was a partnership between the elected officials and honourable individuals working hard in the public service.”

Canberra Times 16/8/10

HON SUSSAN LEY

Member for Farrer (Liberal)

“Mr Tanner, as the Minister for Finance and Deregulation, is with his razor gang - and it always happens at this stage of the political cycle - going through the Public Service expenditure line by line, slashing and burning.” Hansard 04/02/09

“Under the government’s new Paid Parental Leave scheme, Australian taxpayers are having to contribute twice for these employees. This is not a criticism of the Public Service - we love them and they do good work - but this is not right.” Hansard 28/02/11

SENATOR JAN LUCAS

Queensland (ALP)

“Senator Xenophon... the Public Service is there to provide excellent, well-briefed, well-researched advice to government. That is its job, and it is tasked to provide it in the baldest way: ‘Tell us the facts and then when we have all of those facts decisions can be made.’ My concern with your amendment is that that encourages the Public Service to behave in a different way than we would ordinarily expect of it. It would then be tailoring advice to try to understand or pre-empt what the government of the day is thinking.” Hansard 17/11/10

SENATOR KATE LUNDY

A.C.T. (ALP)

“The Howard government abused the Public Service and undermined its institutional integrity through a combination of fear, institutional reforms - or claimed reforms - and blatant political jobbery... In its first years there were substantial across-the-board job reductions throughout the Australian Public Service, with over 30,000 staff made redundant. This cost \$300 million in redundancy payouts by the end of the government’s first year in office. Over the following years, many of these staff were subsequently re-employed as expensive consultants and contractors as the Howard government realised that its cuts had been too crude and that it required the skills and expertise that it had cut out of the Public Service so unthinkingly. The Rudd government, by contrast, values the importance of a professional, impartial Public Service and will be working to restore the values of the Westminster tradition to the Australian Public Service. The Rudd government has ambitious policy goals and a determination to deliver on its commitments to the Australian people. We are looking forward to working with the Public Service in delivering better outcomes for all Australians.” Hansard 23/6/08



HON RICHARD MARLES

Member for Corio (ALP)

“Most of us who grow up in political parties may tend to undervalue the role that the public service plays.” The Australian 17/4/10

“Those on the other side continue to attack the Public Service. The Public Service are just that: they are there to serve the public. The sorts of attacks we saw from the Treasurer, and then from the Prime Minister, on the Public Service sends a shiver down the spine of anybody who has any respect for the worthiness of others and for the professional advice that I know comes from those departments.”

Hansard 3/6/08

HON IAN MACFARLANE
Member for Groom (Liberal)

SENATOR IAN MACDONALD

Queensland (Liberal)

“We have now learnt from question time today the enormous bureaucracy that will be set up to administer the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. If there are to be any jobs at all made out of the emissions trading scheme, quite clearly they are going to be in the Public Service. Senator Trood’s question very skilfully highlighted the enormous bureaucracy that will be built up around the emissions trading scheme.” Hansard 11/3/09

SENATOR NICK MINCHIN

South Australia (Liberal)

“I indicate our strong support for what we know from our years in government is an extremely professional and confident Australian Public Service. As Senator Evans has indicated, they are involved in assistance on very many levels across the breadth of the Public Service. I thank him for his explanation of the circumstances surrounding Centrelink and for dealing with that.” Hansard 11/02/09

HON JUDI MOYLAN

Member for Pearce (Liberal)

“It has taken time for governments and the Public Service to adopt such an open, accountable attitude and to accept that information in the public sphere is not the enemy... attitudes are changing, and the Public Service, led by ministers, has been increasing (in) transparency.” Hansard 12/5/10

HON BRENDAN O’CONNOR

Member for Gorton (ALP)

“Customs and Border Protection is providing officers to assist Centrelink to process food related claims. As the minister responsible for these two agencies for the past 18 months, I am used to seeing outstanding acts of public service. Once again I have been impressed by the level of commitment and dedication shown by both these agencies in dealing with the task at hand. Their response to this disaster is just another fine example of the magnificent work they do to serve the community.” Hansard 22/2/11

HON ROD SAWFORD

Member for Port Adelaide (ALP)

“The politicisation of the federal Public Service... and the imbalance between the public and private good diminish this nation.” Hansard 15/08/07

HON STUART ROBERT

Member for Fadden (Liberal)

“I want the government to be small. I want the public service reduced, if that is what it is going to deliver. What the community wants is a say. What the community wants is to have ownership over its own affairs. What the community wants is government to get out of the way so that the community can get on with doing what it does best - which is delivering great things within the community.” Hansard 22/11/10

ON THE RECORD:

Politicians' attitudes toward the Australian Public Service



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HON WILSON TUCKEY

Member for O'Connor
(Liberal)

“I reckon about 50 per cent of the workforce today employed in the public service is in some sort of activity to tell you what you cannot do.”

Hansard 10/03/09

“That is communism and that is socialism where you have a new elite; they are called the public service.”

Hansard 01/06/09

“Then I ran into the brick wall called the Public Service.”

Hansard 01/06/09

HON LINDSAY TANNER

Former Member for Melbourne (ALP)

“We have no agenda to start hacking into the total size of the public service, unlike our opponents, who clearly regard it as open season on services and on jobs.” Canberra Times 6/2/10

“More than \$1billion will be saved over four years... We are focused on finding savings in government operations, but that is concentrated on increasing efficiency in the way government works and removing waste.” The Australian 14/5/09

“Unfortunately, the opposition neglected to note that when you freeze Public Service numbers in enforcement agencies - for example, people in the Australian Taxation Office chasing tax avoidance activities - you lose revenue.” Hansard 25/5/10

“We have put forward a dramatic change in the structure of procurement in the processes of government... These are all things that the Howard government could have and should have done but refused to do because of its obsession with mimicking the private sector.” Hansard 13/5/10

HON DAN TEEHAN

Member for Wannon (Liberal)

“Instead of a new tax, the government needs to... put a freeze on Public Service recruitment.” Hansard 24/2/11

HON CAMERON THOMPSON

Member for Blair (Liberal)

“Do not let Sir Humphrey in. Avoid the temptation to allow the overly bureaucratic tendencies that sometimes flourish within the Public Service. Stamp them out and seek always more effective ways of doing things.” Hansard 20/6/07

HON MALCOLM TURNBULL

Member for Wentworth (Liberal)

“Squeezing public servants probably appeals to some people. I think the critical thing to ensure is that Government delivers its services efficiently at every level but you’ve just got to be smart about it.” Canberra Times 7/5/09

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HON KEVIN RUDD

Member for Griffith (ALP)
Minister for Foreign Affairs

“Australians are generally well served by honest, capable and highly committed public servants... (but) the community still sees government agencies as bureaucratic and unresponsive to individual needs.”

Canberra Times 21/11/09

“The model of government, which those opposite are advancing, is this: the responsibility of ministers is to stand up here simply as the mouthpiece for government departments... for public servants. This government has a different view: not only do we welcome advice from public servants but we will engage in debate with the Public Service. We will not always agree with the Public Service and, as I have said repeatedly, we will take advice from beyond the Public Service. We welcome the contribution of the Public Service to the debate. The contribution of the Public Service is absolutely critical.”

Hansard 29/5/08

“Do we respect the independence of the Public Service? Have we maintained the heads of the Commonwealth agencies? When those opposite assumed office, they took out the revolver and shot them one by one by one, creating a climate of fear in the Public Service. That is not the way in which this government proposes to govern.”

Hansard 23/6/08

“Mr Speaker, I note that the Leader of the Opposition routinely disputes the advice provided to us by the independent Public Service of Australia. It is part of a routine behaviour: attack the Secretary of the Treasury when you do not like what the Treasury advice is, and on this day, attack the Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship because you happen to disagree with what his advice is.”

Hansard 16/11/09

Employees' attitudes

Public servants' attitudes towards their agencies provide a complementary set of insights to those of citizens and elected representatives. As insiders, public servants are well situated to provide an informed view of their agencies and of the service as a whole. Compared with politicians and media commentators, public servants have a very direct interest in the efficient functioning of their workplaces. Further, employee satisfaction is arguably a necessary precondition for agencies' stability and performance.

This part of our synthesis of attitudes toward the public service is primarily informed by two annual studies: the Australian Public Service Commission's employee survey and the 'What Women Want' survey conducted by the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU).

The APSC employee survey has been conducted annually since 2003. The 2010 survey was conducted by ORIMA Research on behalf of the Commission. It sought the views of a representative sample of APS employees in agencies with at least 100 APS employees: 5,607 valid responses were received, representing a 64% response rate. The questionnaire addressed the topics listed below.

- Recruitment experiences
- The quality of SES leadership
- APS employee perceptions compared with UK and US government employee data
- Employee satisfaction for the employee engagement factors
- Areas for improvement in employee engagement
- Engagement and willingness to be innovative
- Engagement and intention to leave
- Satisfaction for factors by classification
- Satisfaction for factors by length of service
- Satisfaction regarding Work-Life Balance
- Extent of employee interaction with non-government stakeholders
- Service delivery employee perceptions
- Agency mechanisms for collecting feedback from the public
- Perceptions of APS innovation

Figure 25: APSC employee survey topics ¹⁴⁵

'What Women Want'¹⁴⁶ has been conducted by the CPSU annually since 2006 and surveys between 9,000 and 10,000 female employees in the public services agencies of the Commonwealth, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. In 2010, 9,167 women participated in the survey, providing feedback on the range of issues listed in Figure 25.

These two surveys are wide-ranging in scope and present very detailed findings. This report examines a subset of the topics examined by the APSC and CPSU: job satisfaction; mobility and preference for public sector employment, and interactions with elected government.

Caring responsibilities
 Hours of work and overtime
 The intrusion of work into women's non-work time
 Flexible working arrangements
 The capacity to influence work and levels of job satisfaction
 The availability of training and career opportunities
 The impact of financial factors on career decisions
 Performance pay
 Bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination
 Occupational Health and Safety
 Travel – both to/from work and work-related travel
 Superannuation

Figure 26: CPSU 'What Women Want' survey topics¹⁴⁷

Job satisfaction and work-life balance

The record of the APS as an employer was one of the main criticisms noted by the 1977 Coombs review.¹⁴⁸ Since the 1970s, employees' levels of satisfaction and perceptions of the APS have been studied closely. The benchmark for employees' attitudes and experiences is set by the Public Service Act 1999 which articulates fifteen values (which are included as Appendix D in this report), ten of which relate to the workplace.

Employees' satisfaction with their work and workplace is the focus of many questions in both the APSC and CPSU surveys. The most recent APSC survey found that:

- » 78% of employees enjoy the work in their current job
- » 82% are motivated to do their best possible work
- » 97% are willing to put in extra effort to get the job done when needed and
- » 63% have a feeling of personal accomplishment from their job.

These results have remained steady in recent years. The APSC survey also found that 84% of employees would recommend the APS as a good place to work and 66% would recommend their agency as a good place to work. Conversely, these results highlight an area of justified concern: about one-third of public servants do not report a sense of personal accomplishment and would not recommend their agency as a good place to work.

Both surveys assess attitudes toward work-life balance. The CPSU survey reports that many women (50%) find it difficult to combine work and family and that 20% are dissatisfied with the balance between work and other life responsibilities; 40% feel that taking time out for family reasons would disadvantage their career prospects and nearly 20% of women are working an additional ten or more hours each week with "little or no influence over whether they work additional hours."¹⁴⁹ By comparison, a national study of fulltime employees in the general Australian workforce found that 25% of women and 20% of men were dissatisfied with their work-life balance,¹⁵⁰ suggesting that APS employees' satisfaction with their work-life balance is consistent with other Australian workplaces.

The authors of the two survey reports communicate results quite differently: in general, the APSC adopts a 'strengths-based' approach whereas the CPSU report adopts a 'deficit' approach that focuses on weaknesses and concerns. This approach is consistent with the survey's purpose: it is intended to inform and direct the union's advocacy. The APSC results (summarised in Figure 27) show that

50% of SES respondents and 73% of employees at lower levels in the Service are satisfied with their work-life balance. Not only is this a ‘glass-half-full’ interpretation, it actually shows a higher level of employee dissatisfaction than the ‘glass-half-empty’ version reported by the CPSU: 50% and 27% (APSC) compared to 20% (CPSU).

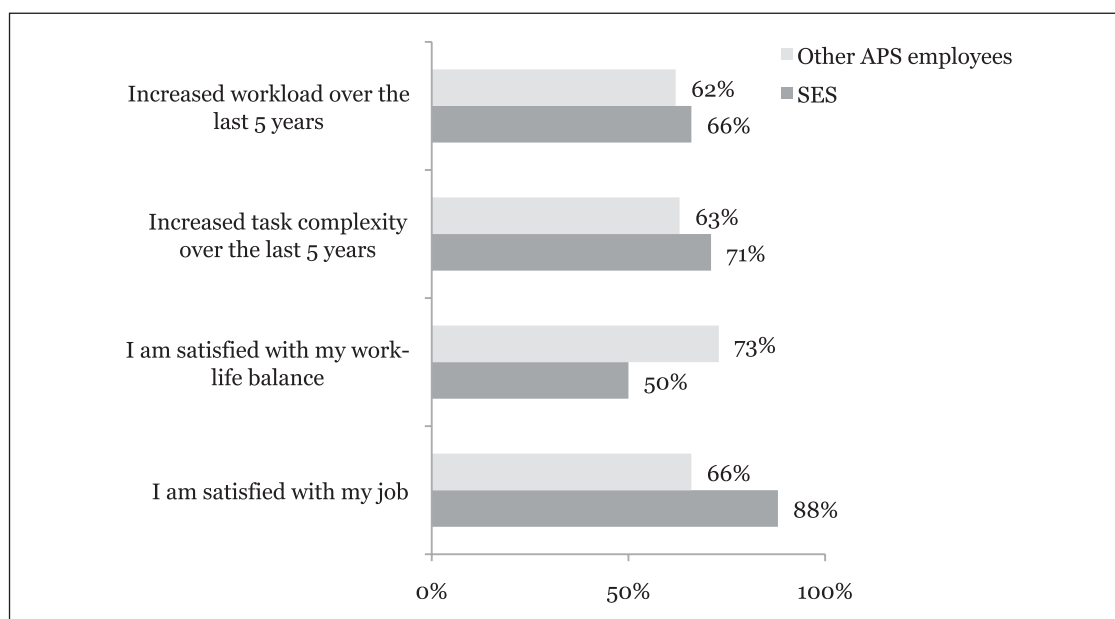


Figure 27: Job satisfaction in the APS ¹⁵¹

There are other differences between the perceptions and attitudes of senior and junior public servants evident in Figure 27. Employees in SES positions are generally more satisfied with their job but less satisfied with their work-life balance than public servants employed in lower bands. They are also more likely than APS staff at lower levels to have experienced an increased workload and task complexity during the last five years.

Most APSC survey respondents report that their learning and development needs have been fully (33%) or partially (51%) identified and agreed with their manager and that they are satisfied with their agency’s arrangements for access to learning and development opportunities (58%). By contrast (continuing the ‘glass-half-empty’ analysis), the CPSU survey found that 20% of women have applied for and been denied training in the past year.

Mobility and private-public sector preference

Many respondents to the APS survey (59%) reported interest in gaining “broader work experience” through a secondment or short-term transfer outside of their agency: either to another APS agency (53%), another level of government (21%) or in a private sector organisation (15%).

A recent study instigated by the Canadian public service commission examined employees’ attitudes toward the public and private sectors.¹⁵² Comparing the attitudes of new recruits to the attitudes of the same employees twelve months later, the study revealed some “troubling shifts.” In particular, researchers found that the importance that employees ascribed to the opportunity to be creative had declined by 9% during their first year with the public service, and the importance they attached to the

prestige associated with their jobs fell by 10%. Conversely, more than half (57%) of 'settled' employees expressed a preference for a job in the public rather than private sector and ascribed this preference to the work-life balance and other benefits including job security and pensions. Employees had more positive attitudes than potential recruits regarding public sector working conditions including opportunities to work autonomously, attractive compensation, advancement opportunities and meaningful work.

The APSC survey also examines attitudes toward innovation and creativity. The survey's 2010 results show 47% of respondents said that their agency is prepared to pilot and trial new ideas and 34% of employees agreed their agency celebrates its success in innovation and learns from everything it does. These results suggest that in many agencies the majority of employees feel that innovation is discouraged and that innovation is infrequently celebrated or learnt from.

Both the APSC and CPSU surveys examine attitudes toward workplace behaviour, ethics and values. The APSC's 2010 survey reported that more than 90% of respondents felt that colleagues, supervisors and SES leaders act in accordance with the APS Values: that their workplaces are characterised by merit-based employment decisions, freedom from discrimination, high ethical standards, accountability, equity and cooperation (see Appendix D, especially values 10.1a-d and h-o). The CPSU survey, on the other hand, reported that more than 25% of women have experienced bullying and harassment at work in the past 12 months, contrary to these values. Alarming, of those who reported these incidents, just 12.5% were satisfied with their managers' response.

Interactions with government

The values enshrined in the Act set high expectations regarding public servants' interactions with the legislature or elected arm of government. Under the Act, APS agencies and their staff are to be apolitical, impartial and professional, act with the highest ethical standards, be openly accountable for their actions and responsive to the Government in "providing frank, honest, comprehensive, accurate and timely advice and in implementing the Government's policies and programs" (see Appendix D, especially sections 10.1a, d-f).

The APSC survey asks public servants whose work entails direct contact with ministers and their advisers about their experience in meeting these expectations. In 2010, 31% of Senior Executive Service and Executive Level employees reported that they faced a challenge in "balancing the need to be apolitical, impartial and professional; to be responsive to government; and to be openly accountable in dealing with ministers and/or their offices." Since 2003, this proportion has fluctuated between 23% (in 2007-08) and 41% (2003-04, 04-05). This problem is also experienced at an agency level: 30% of APS agencies report that a shortfall in staff with high level policy and research skills have a 'moderate' or 'severe' impact on their capacity.¹⁵³

These interactions were also examined by Kathy MacDermott¹⁵⁴ who found that departmental secretaries were more confident in balancing the APS values than lower level appointees: "public servants as a group are less confident than their departmental secretaries in their interactions with ministers and their advisers: they are less likely to be familiar with any conventions or protocols that apply to such interactions - and have less power to assert any such knowledge."

Policy implications

This report opened by noting the relationship between attitudes and political decisions. Policies and decisions to increase or decrease the staffing and funding of the APS are regularly justified by reference to actual or purported community opinion. In a participatory democracy, popular opinion is and should be one factor in these decisions. It is not helpful, though, to distort or misrepresent community attitudes. The negative stereotypes presented in the media and political discourse should not be used to justify decisions that potentially affect the beneficiaries of public services – Australian citizens who invest willingly in these services.

“ The negative stereotypes presented in the media and political discourse should not be used to justify decisions that potentially affect the beneficiaries of public services – Australian citizens who invest willingly in these services. ”

To generate a more reliable indication of community attitudes toward the APS and its 130 plus agencies, the Australian Government is considering implementing a regular survey similar to Canada’s biennial ‘Citizens First’ survey. This survey of attitudes toward local, regional and national public services was initiated by a consortium of senior government officials who established the Citizen-Centred Service Network. The survey has been conducted every two years since 1998. Since 2005, it has been managed by the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service, working with a consortium of partners that represent federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and regional jurisdictions.¹⁵⁵

The survey utilises the Common Measurements Tool¹⁵⁶ (Appendix E) which asks respondents to assess five dimensions of service delivery: responsiveness; reliability; access and facilities; communication; and cost. The survey provides feedback on:

- » citizen satisfaction with services (timeliness, staffing, outcomes, experiences, service quality)
- » feedback on the channels that citizens use to access services
- » expectations and
- » confidence (whether agencies are considered to be fair, honest and in touch with the community).

The Moran Review of the APS tasked the APSC with developing a similar survey for use in Australia (Appendix C Recommendation 2.2).¹⁵⁷ The Review concluded that a survey based on the Canadian model would have a range of benefits, helping the Australian Government:

- » understand current views of citizens in regard to individual agencies
- » understand citizens’ desire for service delivery
- » identify drivers of citizen satisfaction with government services (including regulation) and opportunities and
- » develop a better data set for benchmarking the Australian Government against other jurisdictions, including internationally, and tracking progress over time.¹⁵⁸

The Canadian survey instrument focuses primarily on service delivery. There is more to the Australian Public Service, of course, and it is equally important to assess citizens’ views toward functions including policy development, law making, rule making, and monitoring and enforcing laws and regulations. Ideally the survey should be further developed to assess these public service functions before its deployment in Australia.

The APSC has completed their analysis of options for a citizen survey, but at this stage it has yet to be presented to government.

Conclusion

The Australian Public Service is a large and complex set of agencies and departments, constituting more than half of the total Australian Government Administration. It employs a workforce of approximately 164,000 men and women. Contrary to assertions that APS staff levels have ‘exploded’, there are now approximately as many people employed in APS agencies as there were in 1990, despite the Australian population growing by more than 16%. Following the retrenchment of almost one-third of APS employees between 1991-99, the workforce has gradually grown back to its former size.

Since 1990, the APS has become more top-heavy, with a growing and male-dominated Senior Executive Service and a corresponding reduction in the lower employment bands. There are enduring gender-based employment disparities including a higher proportion of women in lower-ranking positions and in non-ongoing and part-time employment. Despite most APS agencies adopting programs to achieve equal employment, people from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds, people with disabilities, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are severely under-represented in the APS workforce.

The future of the APS is far from certain. With a change of Government widely predicted in the 2013 Australian Election, the stated policy of the alternative government is to reduce the APS workforce by 12,000 in its first year in office: to retrench 7.5% of the staff who deliver services, develop policies, make rules and laws, monitor and enforce laws and regulations, collect taxes and manage government finance. These staff cuts will inevitably have a significant impact on the capacity of the APS to fulfill these responsibilities, and on the recipients and beneficiaries of services.

The Opposition’s determination to reduce the size of the public service is based not on a considered appraisal of the effectiveness and efficiency of existing arrangements, nor a detailed argument that a smaller workforce can meet the needs of the Australian community and government. Instead, it appears to be fuelled by a belief in small(er) government, and in the capacity of private and community sector organisations to deliver services that, in Australia, have traditionally been the responsibility of public service agencies. These arguments resemble those of conservative governments in other western democracies and, especially, British Prime Minister David Cameron’s ‘Big Society’ vision and its corresponding contraction of the state. The Australian Opposition’s pledge to retrench public service employees is also explained by their determination to return the budget to a surplus, a determination shared by the incumbent Labor party.

Other than the protestations of the union representing these workers and a few Labor backbenchers, this stated intention has generated surprisingly little analysis or debate. In fact, the APS receives very little attention in public policy debates despite its important social role and function. This is evident in the general lack of interest in the current wave of APS reforms being implemented in the wake of the wide-ranging Moran Review of the Australian Government Administration, which concluded in mid-2010. Although the review generated interest, debate, many submissions, and a set of strategies for change that were widely endorsed, there is a little ongoing interest and involvement in the implementation of these changes beyond the confines of APS agencies.

The Coalition’s desire to reduce the size and cost of the Australian Public Service taps into ‘small government’ movements that have been prevalent here and in other western countries since at least the 1970s. The values, visions and policies of these movements are currently expressed by the Tea Party in the United States and ‘Big Society’ in the United Kingdom.

The appeal of these movements confounds community attitudes. Only one-fifth of Australians share the view held by the Government and Coalition that public sector funding should be cut in order to restore a budget surplus. Attitudinal research conducted during the last 20 years provides reliable evidence that citizens:

- » support government as the best instrument for promoting the general interest of society
- » have a clear preference for public (rather than private) sector provision of community services
- » hold greater confidence in the institutions of the public service than in major companies
- » support increased social spending even when that means forgoing income or tax cuts and
- » believe public servants are committed to serving.

Conversely, Australians hold less favourable views toward government administration and toward public servants who are not engaged in ‘frontline’ delivery of public services such as health, education, policing, housing, roads and transport. We support public services, but are positively disposed primarily toward those public servants and parts of the public service we associate with the most tangible and immediate benefits. Administrative functions and staff are less valued for their role in fulfilling the range of purposes for which the APS was established. This contributes to an unrealistic view that public services only require frontline staff. This dualistic view allows Australians to simultaneously value public services, while acquiescing to populist attacks on public servants and their negative stereotyping in Parliament, the media and popular culture. This concurrence of views creates opportunities for the policies of the Tea Party in the U.S., for Big Society in the U.K. and for the arbitrary retrenchment of thousands of public servants here.

Decisions about the size, role and structure of the Australian Public Service are decisions about the kind of society we live in. They warrant active and inclusive deliberation and a strong evidence base on the performance, efficiency and capability of the APS. These deliberations should be informed by a robust assessment of citizens’ attitudes toward and experience of the Australian Public Service. The proposed citizen survey would measure this in a more reliable, systematic and objective way than the existing agency-specific feedback mechanisms. But data alone will not engender the kind of debate that this important matter of public policy warrants: the beneficiaries of public services and public sector advocates need to be much more actively involved if citizens are to influence the outcome.

Appendix A: Australian Public Service agencies and employees ¹⁵⁹

Agency	No. of employees
Aboriginal Hostels Limited	524
Administrative Appeals Tribunal	166
Attorney-General's Department	1,648
Australian Agency for International Development	994
Australian Bureau of Statistics	2,887
Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research	51
Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity	22
Australian Communications and Media Authority	639
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	803
Australian Crime Commission	516
Australian Customs and Border Protection Service 6	6,007
Australian Electoral Commission	878
Australian Fisheries Management Authority	228
Australian Human Rights Commission	115
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies	124
Australian Institute of Family Studies	79
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare	352
Australian National Audit Office	366
Australian National Maritime Museum	124
Australian Office of Financial Management	40
Australian Organ and Tissue Authority	37
Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority	160
Australian Public Service Commission	238
Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency	154
Australian Research Council	114
Australian Securities and Investments Commission	2,061
Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority	64
Australian Taxation Office	23,558
Australian Trade Commission	556
Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre	331
Australian Transport Safety Bureau	102
Australian War Memorial	294
Bureau of Meteorology	1,580
Cancer Australia	22
Centrelink	27,048

Comcare	576
Commonwealth Grants Commission	43
Commonwealth Ombudsman	167
ComSuper	537
Corporations and Markets Advisory Committee	2
CrimTrac Agency	201
CRS Australia	2,063
Defence Housing Australia	703
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	4,923
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy	724
Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency	877
Department of Defence	21,409
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations	6,012
Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs	3,478
Department of Finance and Deregulation	1,847
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	3,064
Department of Health and Ageing	5,061
Department of Human Services	4,652
Department of Immigration and Citizenship	6,906
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government	1,149
Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research	2,108
Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism	438
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts	3,103
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	703
Department of the Treasury	1,143
Department of Veterans' Affairs	2,100
Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency	24
Fair Work Australia	264
Family Court of Australia	647
Federal Court of Australia	399
Federal Magistrates Court of Australia	187
Food Standards Australia New Zealand	121
Future Fund Management Agency	66
Geoscience Australia	741
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority	232
Insolvency and Trustee Service Australia	318
Inspector-General of Taxation	6
IP Australia	1,045
Medicare Australia	5,734
Migration Review Tribunal and Refugee Review Tribunal	265

Murray-Darling Basin Authority	302
Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House	86
National Archives of Australia	499
National Blood Authority	45
National Capital Authority	57
National Competition Council	7
National Film and Sound Archive	223
National Health and Medical Research Council	257
National Library of Australia	548
National Museum of Australia	311
National Native Title Tribunal	234
National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority	56
National Water Commission	56
Office of National Assessments	140
Office of Parliamentary Counsel	55
Office of the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner	150
Office of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions	573
Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman	816
Office of the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security	12
Office of the Privacy Commissioner	55
Office of the Renewable Energy Regulator	22
Private Health Insurance Ombudsman	12
Productivity Commission	195
Professional Services Review	33
Royal Australian Mint	183
Safe Work Australia	102
Screen Australia	70
Social Security Appeals Tribunal	115
Torres Strait Regional Authority	86
Wheat Exports Australia	17
Total	162,237

Note: Data to 6 April 2010. This table includes semi-autonomous parts of agencies.

Appendix B: Government Business Enterprises ¹⁶⁰

Government Business Enterprises	Employees
Medibank Private	34,000 direct 1,500 indirect ¹⁶¹
Air Services Australia	3,600 ¹⁶²
Australian Postal Corporation	3,400 ¹⁶³
Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC)	1,700 ¹⁶⁴
Australian Rail Track Corporation	1,400 ¹⁶⁵
Defence Housing Australia	690 ¹⁶⁶
Australian Government Solicitor	330 ¹⁶⁷
National Broadcasting Network Corporation Ltd	unknown
Australian River Corporation Ltd	unknown
Australian Industry Development Corporation Ltd	unknown
Snowy Hydro Ltd	unknown
Albury-Wodonga Corporation	unknown

Appendix C: Moran review recommendations ¹⁶⁸

Delivering better services for citizens

- 1.1 Simplify Australian Government services for citizens
- 1.2 Develop better ways to deliver services through the community and private sectors
- 1.3. Deliver services in closer partnership with State, Territory and local governments
- 1.4 Reduce unnecessary business regulatory burden

Creating more open government

- 2.1 Enable citizens to collaborate with government in policy and service design
- 2.2 Conduct a citizen survey

Enhancing policy capability

- 3.1 Strengthen strategic policy
- 3.2 Build partnerships with academia, research institutions and the community and private sectors
- 3.3 Improve policy implementation

Reinvigorating strategic leadership

- 4.1 Revise and embed the APS Values
- 4.2 Articulate the roles and responsibilities of Secretaries
- 4.3 Revise employment arrangements for Secretaries
- 4.4 Strengthen leadership across the APS
- 4.5 Improve talent management across the APS

Introducing a new APSC to drive change and provide strategic planning

- 5.1 New APSC with responsibilities to lead the APS

Clarifying and aligning employment conditions

- 6.1 Ensure employment bargaining arrangements support one APS
- 6.2 Assess the size and role of the SES

Strengthening the workforce

- 7.1 Coordinate workforce planning
- 7.2 Streamline recruitment and improve induction
- 7.3 Expand and strengthen learning and development
- 7.4 Strengthen the performance framework
- 7.5 Encourage employees to expand their career experience

Ensuring agency agility, capability and effectiveness

- 8.1 Conduct agency capability reviews
- 8.2 Introduce shared outcomes across portfolios
- 8.3 Reduce internal red tape to promote agility

Improving agency efficiency

- 9.1 Review the measures of agency efficiency
- 9.2 Strengthen the governance framework
- 9.3 Small agencies to improve the efficiency of their corporate functions

Appendix D: Public service values ¹⁶⁹

The APS values, as defined in the Public Service Act 1999, are as follows:

- (a) the APS is apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner;
- (b) the APS is a public service in which employment decisions are based on merit
- (c) the APS provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves
- (d) the APS has the highest ethical standards
- (e) the APS is openly accountable for its actions, within the framework of Ministerial responsibility to the Government, the Parliament and the Australian public
- (f) the APS is responsive to the Government in providing frank, honest, comprehensive, accurate and timely advice and in implementing the Government's policies and programs
- (g) the APS delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public
- (h) the APS has leadership of the highest quality
- (i) the APS establishes workplace relations that value communication, consultation, co-operation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace
- (j) the APS provides a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace
- (k) the APS focuses on achieving results and managing performance
- (l) the APS promotes equity in employment;
- (m) the APS provides a reasonable opportunity to all eligible members of the community to apply for APS employment;
- (n) the APS is a career-based service to enhance the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia's democratic system of government;
- (o) the APS provides a fair system of review of decisions taken in respect of APS employees.

Appendix E: Common measurements tool¹⁵⁶

The following survey is copyright Canadian Centre for Management Development, and is the basis of Canada's citizen survey.

Instructions to organizations

At first glance, the Common Measurements Tool (CMT) looks like a “ready-to-use” client satisfaction survey, but it is not. The CMT, as it exists here, is lengthier than most organizations would want for a client satisfaction survey. Customization by the user is critical to its effectiveness in implementation. The CMT provides a comprehensive collection of potential survey items that public service organizations may select from in designing a client satisfaction survey.

Before proceeding with customization, there are a few methodological recommendations that organizations should consider. The CMT was designed to facilitate consistency and comparative analysis among similar public organizations, who choose to use it. In addition, the CMT will offer organizations an easily accessible survey system to use to build benchmarks within their own organization. This is achieved by using the tool in the same way repeatedly and then comparing results.

For the aforementioned reasons, it is important to maintain the measurement scale and the wording of the items that are selected by the organization. In addition, item ordering should also be maintained. The CMT has a prescribed section where organizations can add questions unique to their organization – placement of these questions should also be maintained in the designated section to decrease the effects these questions have on the other items included in the survey.

The customization process will involve the following steps:

1. Define the goals of your client satisfaction survey
2. Review the CMT in its entirety
3. Decide which items are relevant to your organization and the goals of your study
4. Identify any questions you want to ask that may not be included in the CMT
5. Design those questions and add into the designated section for additional questions
6. Customize the wording of the Introduction to suit your organization
7. Customize the wording (service/product) throughout the CMT to make it relevant to your organization and the specific service transaction the survey applies to.

It is recommended that organizations conduct pre-testing of the customized tool before implementing the survey. Pre-testing will indicate where any adjustments might be necessary before implementing the survey, avoiding errors that clients will be exposed to.

Client satisfaction survey

This client satisfaction survey is intended to provide (organization fills in name) with information that will assist in better serving your needs. This survey provides you, the client, with the opportunity to tell us how we are doing and how we can improve. We are interested in what you have to say about our service/product and value the time you take to complete this survey. Thank you!

We are surveying clients who have used our service in the last (organization fills in time period). Participants are selected on a random basis (or organization fills in otherwise). The information collected in this survey will be used by (organization) to better understand your needs and help us make improvements to the way we deliver our service/product. Your responses will remain anonymous as we will be summarizing all the information we receive.

This survey asks questions about many aspects of your experience with our services/product. These include how you were served, how reliable our service/product was, how easy it was to access, and others.

When you have completed this survey please (method of return specified by organization, i.e. place it in the box provided, mail it into our office with the self-addressed envelop) by (fill in date).

If you have any questions about this survey and the use of this information, feel free to contact (fill in contact person) at (fill in contact number).

Section I – Service/product delivery

This section asks about the way this service/product was provided to you by the service staff.

For the following questions (#1 – 10), please circle the one response that best describes your experience.

1. Have you received the service/product or is the service delivery process continuing at this time?

- a) service/product received → **go on to question #2.**
- b) service/product delivery in process or ongoing → **go to question #6.**

2. How long did it take to receive the service/product – from the time you first contacted the organization that provided the service/product until you first received service/product?

Note to Organizations: The intervals for question 2 & 3 can refer to minutes, hours, days or weeks depending on the nature of the organization using the instrument.

0-4 5-9 10-14 15-19 20-24 25-29 30+

3. What is an acceptable amount of time to receive this service/product?

0-4 5-9 10-14 15-19 20-24 25-29 30+

4. How many contacts did it take for you to receive this service/product? A “contact” is each different phone call, e-mail, posted letter, fax, or office visit.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8(+)

5. What is an acceptable number of contacts required to receive this service/product?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8(+)

6. Did you visit a service location to access the service/product?

a) **Yes go to question → #7**

b) **No go to question → #9 on next page**

7. How long did you have to wait at the service location before having contact with the staff who provided the service/product? **Responses are in minutes.**

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-30 31-45 46-59 60(+)

8. What is an acceptable amount of time to wait at the service location before having contact with staff who provide the service/product? **Responses are in minutes.**

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-30 31-45 46-59 60(+)

9. How many different people did you have to deal with in order to get what you needed?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 or more

10. What is an acceptable number of people to deal with in order to get what you need?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 or more

11. In the end, did you get what you needed from our organization?

a) Yes

b) No

c) I got part of what I needed

12. Was the service/product provided without error?

a) Yes

b) No

If you answered NO to the question # 12, please comment on the errors you experienced in receiving our service/product.

Please circle the response that best describes your satisfaction with the following aspects of our service/product.

	How satisfied were you with this aspect of our service/product? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied N/A – Not Applicable	How important is this aspect of our service/product to you? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Unimportant 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very Important N/A – Not Applicable
A. Time required to deliver the service/product.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
B. Number of contacts with the organization required to receive the service/product.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
C. Waiting time at the service location.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
D. Number of people dealt with to get the service/product.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
D. Number of people dealt with to get the service/product.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
E. The service was provided in a fair and equitable manner.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
F. It was clear what to do if I had a problem.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
Service staff were:		
G. Courteous	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
H. Helpful	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
I. Good listeners	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
J. Competent	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
K. Had up-to-date information	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
L. Respectful	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
M. Flexible	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
N. Met my safety and security needs	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
O. Protected my privacy/confidentiality	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
P. Overall, how satisfied were you with the way the service/product was provided by the service staff?	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Q. If we could only improve in **three** of the above areas, which should we focus on? **Please circle three.**

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O

13. Please provide us with any further comments you may have about the people who served you.

Section II - Access & facilities

Please circle the answer that best describes your experience in these areas.

	How satisfied were you with this aspect of our service/product? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied N/A – Not Applicable	How important is this aspect of our service/product to you? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Unimportant 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very Important N/A – Not Applicable
The facility that provided this service/product:		
A. Was easily accessible by telephone	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
B. Was conveniently located	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
C. Had adequate hours of service	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
D. Had adequate parking	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
E. Was easily accessible (e.g., there were no barriers to physically entering and using the buildings)	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
F. Had offices and waiting areas that were comfortable	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
G. Had signs that were easy to locate	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
H. Had signs that were easy to understand	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
I. Appointments with service staff were easy to make	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
J. Offered various methods of access (i.e., fax, internet, telephone, e-mail)	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A

M. If we could only improve in **three** of the above areas, which should we focus on? **Please circle three.**

A B C D E F G H I J

1. If you found that the service location was not convenient, where would you like the facility to be located?

2. What are your preferred ways of accessing this service?

Please write in the numbers 1, 2, and 3 next to three of the items below to indicate your preferences.

- ☐ In Person
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Fax
- ☐ Internet
- ☐ E-mail
- ☐ Posted mail
- ☐ Courier
- ☐ Other _____

3. Do regular office hours meet your needs for accessing this service/product? Regular office hours are defined here as Monday to Friday (approximately 08:30 am – 4:30 pm).

- a) Yes
- b) No

If you answered NO to question # 3 please answer the following question:

If regular office hours as described above do not meet your needs, and we were able to extend hours, what is your preference for extending office hours? (Circle one response)

- a) Open office earlier in morning one day a week (07:00 am for example)
- b) Keep office open later one evening a week (07:00 pm for example)
- c) Open office one day during weekend
- d) Other suggestions (fill in blank) _____

4. Please provide us with further comments that you may have about the access and facilities through which you received the service/product. (For example, do you have any special needs that were not met?)

Section III - Communication

To receive this service/product a number of aspects of our communications with you may have affected your experience. Please circle the response that best describes your service experience.

	How satisfied were you with this aspect of our service/product? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied N/A – Not Applicable	How important is this aspect of our service/product to you? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Unimportant 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very Important N/A – Not Applicable
In receiving this service/product:		
A. My questions were answered.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
B. The information that I needed was available.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
C. I received consistent information/advice.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
D. Written and verbal language was clear (e.g., not complicated).	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
E. I had a choice of English or French languages	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
F. Service staff were easy to understand.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
G. Documents and other information were easy to understand.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
H. Forms were easy to understand and fill out.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
I. Procedures were straight forward and easy to understand.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
J. It was easy to find out how to get the service.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
K. I was informed of everything I had to do in order to get the service/product.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
L. How satisfied were you with our communications?	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	

M. If we could only improve in three of the above areas, which should we focus on? Please circle three.

A B C D E F G H I J K

1. Which of the following would be the best way(s) for us to communicate with you about our service/product? **Circle as many as you wish.**

- a) media advertisements (e.g., newspapers, radio, TV)
- b) pamphlets/booklets in the mail
- c) posters d) information on the internet
- e) e-mail f) other (fill in blank) _____

2. Please provide us with further comments that you may have about the communications that supported the product/service you received.

Section IV – Cost

To receive this service/product you paid a fee (e.g., license, registration, toll fee). Please circle the response that best describes your service experience relating to cost.

	How satisfied were you with this aspect of our service/product? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied N/A – Not Applicable	How important is this aspect of our service/product to you? 1 = Very Unimportant 2 = Unimportant 3 = Neutral 4 = Important 5 = Very Important N/A – Not Applicable
A. Billing for the service/product was timely.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
B. The billing process was straight forward.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
C. The method of payment was convenient.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
D. The payment period was reasonable.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
E. The cost was reasonable.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
F. Overall, how satisfied were you with the costing of the service/product you received?	1 2 3 4 5 N/A	1 2 3 4 5 N/A

G. If we could only improve in **one** of the above areas, which should we focus on? **Please circle one.**

A B C D E

1. What is your preferred method of payment? **(Please circle one)**

- a) Cash
- b) Cheque
- c) Debit Card
- d) Credit Card

2. The most reasonable payment period would be within: (Circle one)

- a) 1 week
- b) 2 weeks
- c) 3 weeks
- d) 4 weeks
- e) 5 weeks
- f) More than 5 weeks

3. An acceptable range of cost for this service/product would be:

(Fill in blanks) \$ _____ to \$ _____ .

4. Please provide us with further comments that you may have about the cost of the service/product you received.

Section V - General questions

Please circle the answer that best describes your use of this service/product.

1. If you have used this service more than once, how often do you use it? First time users → **go to question #3**

Every:

- a) week or less
- b) 2 weeks
- c) month
- d) 2-5 months
- e) 6-11 months
- f) year
- g) 2-5 years

2. When was the last time you used this service?

In the last:

- a) week or less
- b) 2 weeks
- c) month
- d) 2-5 months
- e) 6-11 months
- f) year
- g) 2-5 years

3. My use of this service was:

- a) a legal requirement → **go to question #6**
- b) my choice → **go to question #4**

4. Will you use this service again?

- a) Yes → **go to question #6**
- b) No → **go to question #5**

5. Please tell us why you will not use this service again.

6. Did you have any of these problems while getting the service? **Check all that apply.**

- _____ I didn't know where to look
- _____ I couldn't find the service in the Blue Pages of the telephone book
- _____ I got bounced around from one person to another
- _____ Telephone lines were busy
- _____ I had trouble with automatic telephone answering systems or voice mail
- _____ I was given incorrect information
- _____ I got conflicting information from different people
- _____ I had to travel too great a distance
- _____ Parking was difficult
- _____ No one took time to explain things to me
- _____ Other (fill in blank) _____

Please circle the response that best describes how much you agree or disagree with the following general statements about this service/product.

	1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree N/A – Not Applicable
A. This organization was responsive to my needs.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
B. The staff who served me did an excellent job.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A
C. When I needed this service, I knew where to go to get it.	1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Please circle the number that best describes your overall level of satisfaction with this service/ product delivery.

	1 = Very Dissatisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Neutral 4 = Satisfied 5 = Very Satisfied
D. Overall, how satisfied were you with this Service/product?	1 2 3 4 5 N/A

7. If we could only improve **three** areas of this service/product delivery, in which three of the following should we make improvement upon?

Please write in the numbers 1, 2, and 3 to indicate the first, second and third most important areas for improvement next to the three items you select.

- _____ amount of time to receive service/product
- _____ number of contacts required to receive service/product
- _____ waiting time in line ups
- _____ waiting time on telephone
- _____ waiting time for mailed response
- _____ more methods to access service/product (e.g., internet, email, fax)
- _____ adequate office hours
- _____ convenience of office location
- _____ courtesy of service staff
- _____ skill/competence of service staff
- _____ ease of accessing information about the service/product
- _____ simple forms
- _____ clear instructions/directions
- _____ accurate and consistent information
- _____ dependability of the service
- _____ convenient payment methods
- _____ reasonable cost for service/product
- _____ other (fill in blank)

***Note: This is where organizations can place additional customized items.**

Section VI – Information about you (for external clients):

We would like to know more about our clients to better understand your needs for this service/product. This information is used to assist our organization in planning improvements in the way we delivery our service/product to you. We would appreciate it if you would answer the following questions. This information will be **confidential** – we have no way of identifying any specific people who fill in these questions.

Please circle response that most closely describes your situation.

1. Gender

- a) Female
- b) Male

2. Age

- a) 18-24 yrs
- b) 25-34 yrs
- c) 35-49 yrs
- d) 50-64 yrs
- e) 65+ yrs

3. Please indicate the type of residence you live in.

- a) Single Family Dwelling
- b) Multi-Family Dwelling (townhouse, duplex)
- c) Secondary suite in a single family residence
- d) Apartment
- e) Other

4. Do you:

- a) Rent
- b) Own

5. Please indicate the type of household in which you live.

- a) Couple with no dependent children b) Couple with one dependent child or more c) Single parent with one dependent child or more d) Single adult e) More than 1 single adult sharing a residence f) Extended family g) Other _____

6. Are you presently employed?

- a) Yes → **go to question #7**
- b) No → **go to question #10**

7. If you are employed, do you work?

- a) Full time (35 or more hours/wk)
- b) Part time (less than 35 hours/wk)

8. What is your primary occupation?

- a) Homemaker
- b) Manager, executive, business owner
- c) Office work, sales, service

- d) Professional
- e) Self-employed
- f) Student
- g) Trades, factory worker
- h) Other

9. Please circle the appropriate letter to indicate the type of organization in which you work.

- a) Municipal government
- b) Provincial or Territorial government
- c) Federal government
- d) Other publicly funded organization, e.g., public health system, school system, university, courts, etc.
- e) None of the above

10. If you are not employed, are you:

- a) Retired
- b) Student
- c) Receiving Employment Insurance
- d) Other _____

11. Which of the following do you have personal access to? **Circle all that apply.**

- a) Computer
- b) Internet
- c) Fax machine
- d) Electronic Mail (E-mail)

12. What formal education do you have, to date?

- a) Some public or high school
- b) Completed high school
- c) Some post-secondary
- d) Completed college or university
- e) Graduate or professional degree

13. What is your approximate total household income, before taxes? Your household includes all members of your family who are living with you.

- a) Under \$10,000
- b) \$10,000 to \$19,999
- c) \$20,000 to 29,999
- d) \$30,000 to \$49,999
- e) \$50,000 to 69,999
- f) \$70,000 to 89,000
- g) \$90,000 or more

14. Are you a member of a visible minority group?

- a) Yes
- b) No

15. Are you Aboriginal?

- a) Yes
- b) No

16. Where do you live?

(organization inputs relevant options here) (e.g., within community, region, province).

17. How long have you lived in Canada/Province/Region/Municipality/Community?

(the organization selects the appropriate variable)

- a) All my life
- b) Ten years or more
- c) Less than ten years

Section VII - Information About You and Your Organization: (For Internal Clients)

We are collecting information about you and your organization to bring more meaning to the answers you have provided us with. This information is used to assist our organization in planning improvements in the way we deliver our service/product to you.

Please fill in blanks.

1. The name of your organization. _____
2. The name of the division or area in which you work. _____
3. Your position/title. _____
4. Length of time you have worked in this position (in number of months). _____
5. The length of time you have worked for this employer (in number of months). _____
6. The number of people who report directly to you. _____

Section VIII - We are Most Interested in Your Comments

Please write any other comments you have about this government service/product. Feel free to elaborate on questions from the survey or any other thoughts you wish to convey relating to the delivery of service to you.

Thank you for providing this information!

Appendix F: An annotated history of the Australian Public Service

1900	Australian states and territories federated to form the Commonwealth. The Australian Public Service was created, with Sir Robert Garran as its first and only public servant. ¹⁷⁰
1976	The Royal Commission Report into Government Administration ¹⁷¹ (Coombs Commission) instigated by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. The Commission recommended: “more accountability for public servants; mechanisms to improve the relationship between officials and the community; an emphasis on managerial skills; more efficient and responsive service delivery; devolution of responsibility, as well as greater flexibility and diversity in organisational styles; more efficient and economical use of human resources; and a more open public service.” ¹⁷²
1983	The Reid Review ¹⁷³ of Commonwealth Administration (September 1982 - January 1983) emphasised: “the importance of quality management (including financial management and personnel management), as well as issues relating to machinery of government, ministerial responsibility and administrative review.”
1984	Public Service Reform Act, Bob Hawke’s response to the Reid Review, emphasised efficiency, effectiveness, equity and responsiveness to Ministers and the Parliament.
1987	Australian Public Service Commission established, replacing the Public Service Board
1995	<p>The Report of the Public Service Act Review Group recommended that the Public Service Act 1922 (Cth) be replaced by a new Act that will be “built around the principles and values which stress the centrality of an apolitical public service with merit-based staffing, high standards of honesty and integrity, a strong focus on efficiency and results, and responsiveness and accountability to the government of the day while maintaining a capacity to provide quality and impartial advice.”</p> <p>Public Service Merit Protection Commission created through the amalgamation of the Public Service Commission and the Merit Protection and Review Agency.</p>
1999	Comprehensive review of the Public Service Act. Notable revisions included the addition of “responsiveness”.
2002	Public Service Merit Protection Commission renamed as the Australian Public Service Commission, with priority on “indigenous employment in the APS, evaluation responsibilities, and partnerships with agencies to improve management practices.”
2010	Reform of Australian Government Administration (the ‘Moran Review’) led by Terry Moran, Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet with the vision that “Australia can have the world’s best public administration.”

Figure 28: Key events in the history of the Australian Public Service¹⁷⁴

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