What we’ve Heard so far...

Employer of choice

### Below is a selection of the reflections we’ve received through our workshop consultations and submissions that have informed our thinking on why it is important for the Australian Public Service to be an employer of choice.

“We need great diversity. We have to change the lens on how decisions are made. If we want a fairer Australia, we need a public service that reflects our Australia.”

* **Workshop participant**

“In my long career, I’m aware of less than a handful of cases where people have been suspended or lost their jobs, and these were all for spectacular cases of poor judgement or actual criminal behaviour. Those who are ‘merely’ poor performers, yet who suck the life out of managers forced into long and complex under-performance management processes, de-stabilise teams, and make productivity gains so hard to achieve, seem to linger on forever.”

* **Submission, Anonymous**

“Government as an employer should be setting a gold standard example – not only meeting minimum standards but going above and beyond to strive for excellence, innovation and best practice as an employer. Government should adopt modern and progressive work practices and set a high standard and best practice in employee relations and conditions of employment for employers.”

* **Submission, CPSU**

“An example of the impact of being no longer being an ‘employer of choice’ is highlighted by my Division’s experience in trying to recruit technical employees. It is very hard to recruit and engage skilled technical people and one example is an attempt by my work area which recently advertised a technical position and received only two suitable applications and the successful applicant then declined the position.”

* **Submission, Anonymous**

“[I]t does not make sense when one department is paid more or provided with better conditions than another.”

* **Submission, Anonymous**

“As an agency that has had historically one of the lowest pay scales across the APS… AIATSIS’ competitiveness for APS officers is impacted by pay scales out of step with much of the APS, including within our own portfolio of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. For example, mobility between the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, particularly the Indigenous Affairs Group, and AIATSIS is hampered by wide disparities in pay scales for the same classification levels.”

* **Submission, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies**

“Among a cohort of 329 deputy secretaries and equivalents…those with non-European background accounted for 2.4% and Indigenous backgrounds for 1.8%. This significant under-representation of cultural diversity calls into question whether the APS is making the most of the talents of Australia’s diverse population.”

* **Submission, Australian Human Rights Commission**

“The graduate programs are not currently recruiting from a diverse class background…lower socio-economic students are regularly locked out of the program because they [do not] have the pre-requisites for the program.”

* **Submission, Anonymous**

“The APS culture is also affected by, and reflected in, the APS employment model also discussed further below. Agencies do require a degree of flexibility in staffing matters, and this has been an ongoing theme now for some thirty years, but not at the expense of professionalism, investment in learning, corporate knowledge and experience, application of the merit principle and assurance of consistent, impartial administration and policy advising. There is reason for concern that we have gone too far with devolution of [Human Resource Management] (particularly relating to remuneration and classification), and given excessive emphasis recently to flexibility in employment.”

* **Submission, Andrew Podger**

“It is valuable for the APS to have access to skilled and experienced personnel from with a private sector or non-government background. The movement of skilled personnel from the APS to the private sector and non-government organisations can increase those organisations’ ability to understand and respond constructive to policy and regulation. We support change that will increase the ability to exchange skills between the government, business and the not-for-profit sectors.”

* **Submission, ANZ Bank**

“Professor Ian Anderson has described the current approach to building the public sector Indigenous workforce as ‘well past its use-by-date. It focusses on entry-level programs and assumes a sort of ‘trickle up’ model that looks increasingly constrained given the growing numbers of skilled and experienced Indigenous professionals working outside of government.’ (Anderson 2017)

This has left many First Peoples being located at the lower and middle levels of the APS, and relatively few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the SES. Increasingly agencies are recognising the need to better engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants, make greater use of their talents, and increase the number of Indigenous staff.”

* **Submission, ANZSOG**

“The APS would benefit from a more modern approach to recruitment, which results in reduced timeframes for reviewing applications and offering positions to candidates, whilst also ensuring that applicants can demonstrate their talents and experience in a fulsome and comprehensive way.”

* **Submission, Department of Home Affairs**

“The Review could consider going further and recommend the rotation of public servants through core elements of the APS. Future leaders, graduates and those seeking to progress through a profession could systematically be placed in a number of departments, engaged in a variety of positions, across a range of geographic localities, to fully embed the idea of a ‘one APS’. This will ensure that aspiring leaders and valued specialist staff are exposed to the methods and priorities of a number of departments and agencies, and would be a light touch way of organically supporting the development a ‘one APS’ culture.”

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We suggest that the Panel consider recommending the introduction of Professional Tracks which encourage mobility of public officials between departments; between the private sector and the public service; and, geographically. This is important to ensure that public servants are given clear signals for potential career pathways and understand that the successful public servants will need a focused set of skills gained across a broader range of postings. Professional Tracks will mandate a learning journey for public officials to guide them through their career development. These could include placements in operational delivery, policy implementation, ministerial offices and policy advice to give public servants the opportunity to apply their skills across the whole of the public service.”

* **Submission, Melbourne School of Government**