

# Online conversation

## 19 Mar – 2 May 2019

467 comments were received against the 17 initiatives released with 'Priorities for Change'.

43% of all comments	Top 5 most commented	Number of comments	Summary of commentary
}	Strategic recruitment, development and mobility to build the workforce of the future	84	There was a level of contention around recruitment processes and mobility, with both positive and negative sentiment on the opportunities for internal applicants, the need to enhance access to opportunities outside of Canberra and the introduction of diversity targets.
	Empowered managers accountable for developing people and teams	55	Strong support through the majority of contributions to professionalising the role of managers and the use of 360 degree feedback. Many reflect that effective managers are good for productivity, that this requires a specific skill set, and that promotion into management should not be used as was to reward technical expertise.
	Dynamic ways of working and structures to empower individuals and teams – making collaboration the norm	54	General support. Many comments indicate this is an enabler for improved outcomes across the board – e.g. linking it to capability, performance, diversity, leadership, governance. The word 'flexible' has evoked some angst, with concerns it is a mask for job losses and more consultants.
	Common purpose and vision that unites and inspires the APS	42	Comments generally welcomed a common purpose for the APS, although some suggested that the APS should just 'get on with it'. Many proposed a shift to 'serving all Australians' as the key purpose of the APS rather than serving the government of the day. Some noted the importance entrusting the vision with the wider APS not just the SES.
	Professionalised functions across the service to deepen expertise	40	Many comments link professions with the need to look at the structure of the APS, in particular the need to separate generalist and specialist streams. Also some caution on maintaining flexibility, being future focused and working with existing professional bodies.

All comments can be viewed on the [APS Review website](#)

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Comments mostly focused on today's environment, rather than the future. Comments usually offered either:

### 1. Suggestions for **how to improve**

*"Future public service leaders need to be identified and developed for their capacity to lead cross-agency teams to produce results for government."*

### 2. Areas to be **clearer about**, or **explore more**, in the final report

*"I suggest that any recommendations concerning integrated advice should include environmental along with economic and social considerations. It may not fit the current government's priorities or political disposition, but I think it is most obviously a priority for Australian communities - be they in the Murray Darling Basin or in major cities."*

### 3. **Personal views** relating to the initiative:

*"I believe the time it takes for managers to effectively manage, support and build staff capabilities needs to be taken into consideration."*

#### One of the most liked comments

*Time and resources is allocated into conducting recruitment processes to fill a role an individual has been working in for, at times, up to 3 years. Where a process has been run initially to determine the suitability of a candidate, once they have performed the same role for up to 3 years, can a report not be presented to the delegate for consideration and the individual made ongoing. This is a better alternative than time and resources invested into long drawn out recruitment processes where the substantive candidate can demonstrate a higher level of knowledge and capability to perform the role than any other internal/external candidate. This would be an efficiency and cost saving into the thousands across the APS.*

*Less centralisation of employees and services in Canberra. For APS outside of Canberra, the opportunity to acquire skills and therefore contribute to a dynamic and changing work environment is severely reduced. The opportunities just are not there.*

#### One of the most contested comments

*A return to centralised pay and conditions would strengthen the 'one APS' mantra. Individual agency bargaining has been a ridiculous waste of time and resources. While the lawyers and HR firms will lament the loss of their snout in the trough, their contribution to Agreement making has been symbolic at best.*

#### One of the most liked comments

*This is by far the most important area to focus on if the APS is to build trust as a collective of public institutions. The lack of any Secretaries of colour or non white backgrounds, as well as a lack across most SES bands is a recipe for isolation, racial tension and all round disaster. When the demographics of the general population are changing but the public service leadership is not, how is the community to relate and have confidence. With the rise of right wing extremists in politics, the APS senior leadership should have a strong representation of cultural diversity so they can provide culturally sensitive advice to MPs. Having a whole bunch of graduates at the bottom and middle is not going to solve anything. You must lead by example from the top... Get this right, do it fast and you shall reap the benefits.*

#### The most disliked comment