



30 May 2023

Australian Public Service (APS) Reform Office
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Ngunnawal Country, One National Circuit
BARTON ACT 2600
Submitted via [APS Reform – Have your say](#)

Dear APS Reform Office team

PROPOSED REFORM OF THE *PUBLIC SERVICE ACT 1999*

Thank you for providing the Public Sector Commission of Western Australia (Commission) with the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed changes outlined in the consultation paper: Proposed changes to the *Public Service Act 1999*.

We make the following comments on the paper's key focus areas:

Strengthening the core values and purpose of the Australian Public Service (APS)

The Commission supports the proposal to strengthen the APS's core values and purpose through a requirement for a clear and inspiring APS purpose statement, noting that wording of the statement itself is not proposed to be legislated.

While the WA public sector does not have a legislative requirement for a purpose statement, the Commission recently released our sector's strategic narrative, [Future Enabled](#), which provides the impetus for focused planning, leadership, capability and delivery across the incredible range of functions provided by our agencies and our people.

Developed and endorsed by the WA Public Sector Leadership Council, it describes a common direction and purpose for our sector and shares our story and the enduring spirit of service with the community.

Future Enabled identifies 6 key shifts required of the public sector over the next few years:

- Diversifying the economy for a stronger Western Australia
- Investing the economic dividend for public good
- Empowering First Nations people with a secure future
- Assembling collective intelligence for problem solving
- E-thinking services for lives and livelihoods
- Activating foresight for enduring service.

Legislation governing the WA public sector, the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* (WA), currently includes:

1. principles of administration and management of the public sector (s 7)
2. human resource management principles (s 8(1)(d) and (e))
3. principles of conduct for public sector bodies and employees (s 9).

The Service Priority Review commissioned by the WA Government in 2017 recommended that the WA public sector adopt and promote a public sector identity statement unique to WA that provides a collective vision and set of core values. We are currently considering targeted reforms to modernise our Act, including whether a set of clear, modern values for the WA public sector should be included in our *Public Sector Management Act 1994* (WA).

Build the capability and capacity of the APS

We support the APS's proposal to require regular, independent and transparent capability reviews to build organisational capacity and accountability. Whether the requirement to undertake these reviews is contained in legislation or otherwise is a matter for the APS.

The WA Public Sector Commission commenced the [Agency Capability Review Program](#) in 2021, similar to that proposed. This program was trialled between July 2021 and June 2023 with the review of 8 departments. Through the trial a number of adjustments were made to improve the process and the practical results the review delivers for the agency and the sector. The WA Government confirmed permanent funding for the program in the State Budget 2023 – 24.

This program is undertaken pursuant to the Public Sector Commissioner's general functions and powers provided by our Act (S24B[1]), rather than a specific capability review provision.

Create greater transparency

We note the amendments proposed to require agencies to publish aggregate results of their APS Employee Census, along with an action plan that sets out the agency's response to the findings.

Following on from a successful pilot of the WA Public Sector Census with 17 agencies in 2021, the Commission undertook a [full scale trial of the Census](#) in March this year.

The trial achieved a response rate of 28.5% (47,115) making the 2023 Census the largest WA workforce employee questionnaire collection undertaken to date. A summary of key results from the 2023 Census will be published on WA.gov.au later in the year.

Should you have questions regarding this submission, please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



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ACTING PUBLIC SECTOR COMMISSIONER