This background paper was authored by the Service Priority Review secretariat in consultation with, and to inform the work of, the Service Priority Review Panel. Every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy, currency and reliability of the content. The paper is not intended to be a comprehensive overview of the subject nor does it represent the position of the Western Australian Government. Changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact the quality of the information.

The following background papers are published in full on the Department of the Premier and Cabinet website: [www.dpc.wa.gov.au](http://www.dpc.wa.gov.au)

1. Agency capability reviews
2. Best practice regulation
3. Overview of the budget process
4. Counterproductive rules and processes
5. Digital transformation
6. Engaging with the community
7. Functional leadership
8. Government boards and committees
9. Government trading enterprises
10. Leader performance management and accountability
11. One sector workforce
12. Privacy and information sharing
13. Procurement of goods and services
14. Public sector employment framework
15. Role of the centre
16. Service design and delivery
17. Successful implementation of reform
18. Whole-of-government targets
SERVICE PRIORITY REVIEW - BACKGROUND PAPER

One Sector Workforce

Introduction

While individual public sector agencies and/or occupational groups generally appear unified from an operational perspective, it has been observed by stakeholders consulted during the Service Priority Review that the Western Australian public sector workforce lacks a shared vision and has a tendency to operate in silos. Ideally, employees should see themselves as part of a single public sector workforce guided by a common purpose and set of values.

This paper acknowledges that the public sector workforce is not homogenous, nor should it be expected to be so. The public sector is characterised by a highly diverse workforce operating within different organisational structures and servicing a range of customers across the State. However, this should not detract from the need for clarity and alignment of drivers and outcomes in delivering public value.

A ‘one sector’ approach will assist the public sector to meet the needs and expectations of the community and deliver outcomes that are aligned with the State Government’s strategic priorities by promoting a more collaborative and cohesive working style. It will also assist in driving a system level approach to workforce management that is cognisant of broader workforce issues.

Central agencies¹ have primary responsibility for promoting a ‘one sector’ culture and need to demonstrate cohesion and collaboration between agencies in order to model behaviours sought across the entire public sector (refer to Role of the centre background paper). This should in turn generate a stewardship culture from the top that treats the public sector as an integrated system, rather than a fragmented patchwork of agencies.

This paper draws on observations from other jurisdictions and addresses some of the key areas where the public sector would benefit from adopting a system-level approach to workforce management – specifically in terms of how workforce capability is defined, built and assessed and how talent is identified, nurtured and deployed.

Public sector identity statement

An identity statement (also known as an employee value proposition) can be used as a way to communicate a system’s values and culture, as well as the unique set of opportunities and experiences an employee will receive in return for the knowledge and skills they bring.

The underlying purpose of an identity statement is to enable existing and prospective employees to more strongly identify with the culture and ethos of the public sector. This paper notes that the WA Government is pursuing an ambitious public sector reform agenda including machinery of government changes; CEO Working Groups; Service Priority Review;

¹ In Western Australia, the centre of government is considered to be the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC), the Department of Treasury (Treasury) and the Public Sector Commission (PSC). The Department of Finance might also be seen to have a central role, depending on the issue under consideration.
Sustainable Health Review and Special Inquiry into Government Programs and Projects. The success of these initiatives will depend in part on having an engaged and willing workforce, whose members recognise the relevance and importance of the reform objectives to their work. A strong identity statement can assist in this regard.

In Western Australia the public sector has already established the preliminary foundations of an identity statement via Commissioner’s Instruction No. 7 – Code of Ethics, which requires all public sector bodies and employees to comply with the minimum standards of conduct and integrity as expressed under the principles of personal integrity, relationships with others and accountability. However, this code is firmly grounded in a rules and compliance-based approach to value. Some agencies also have their own value statements, but as an attempt to unify at an organisational level rather than a system level. In keeping with the objective of achieving cultural change in the public sector, there is an opportunity to expand on these principles and include a broader set of values (i.e. choice, opportunity, diversity) to develop a public sector identity statement unique to WA. Several stakeholders consulted during the review have expressed support for a statement of this kind.

Other Australian jurisdictions have started down this pathway. The New South Wales public sector employee value proposition ‘I work for NSW’ aims to challenge the traditional perspectives of working in government and supports the overarching goal of attracting and retaining the best and brightest people to the public sector. It encompasses two key drivers:

- Value: relating to the way in which the work of NSW public sector employees contributes and brings value to the community.
- Choice: conveying the opportunities available to develop capabilities and careers through the scope and scale of roles and the diversity of the NSW public sector.

The Queensland Government has established the preliminary elements of an identity statement with The Queensland Plan, a 30-year vision for the State based on nine foundation areas. All foundations have a number of goals that highlight what Queenslanders said they wanted to be, do or achieve.

**WA public sector employee capability framework**

An employee capability framework establishes a common foundation for a range of workforce management activities, including role design and description, recruitment, learning and development, performance management, and strategic workforce planning. It also provides a shared language to describe the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform work across all agencies within the public sector.

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Potential benefits of an employee capability framework include:

- more consistent role descriptions across the public sector, providing a common basis for describing core capability requirements
- improved recruitment outcomes as managers and selection panels have a clearer picture of the type and level of capability required for the role and can apply targeted assessment methodologies
- improved performance development and management by assisting managers and employees to have a clearer understanding of role expectations and by providing a starting point for capability assessment and development planning
- increased mobility based on the consistent articulation of capabilities required in roles across the public sector
- more targeted learning and development activities (formal and informal) to specific capability levels
- improved individual career planning by enabling employees to identify career and development pathways based on the capabilities required for progression to chosen roles
- more strategic workforce planning by identifying current and future workforce capability needs and shortfalls.

Capability in the WA public sector is broadly measured through the Public Sector Capability Profile: Levels 1-6 and the Public Sector Leadership Capability Profile: Level 7 – Class 4. These profiles identify the critical capabilities at each classification level across the public sector. They are complemented by a number of more specific employee capability frameworks, including the:

- Policy capability framework
- Human resources capability framework
- Finance capability profile
- Information and communications technology capability framework
- Chief executive officer success profile
- Chief human resource officer joint success profile
- Chief finance officer success profile

For the purposes of this paper, these components are known together as the Western Australian Public Sector Employee Capability Framework (the framework). An overview of the framework is provided in Appendix 1.

Overall, the review secretariat considers the framework to be complex, inconsistent and potentially outdated (in comparison with similar frameworks of other jurisdictions and sectors) due to the significant overlap between profiles/frameworks, the variable...

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6 Limited to public servants and government officers, noting other groups (e.g. teachers, nurses, police officers) have their own professional standards and frameworks.
measurement criteria and the focus on measuring competency against classification level. This raises significant concerns around how workforce planning activities are conducted across the public sector.

Some other jurisdictions have moved away from measuring competency at classification level, acknowledging that each role may require capabilities at different levels depending on the nature of its functions. The NSW Public Service Commission has developed a whole-of-sector employee capability framework describing the capabilities and associated behaviours that are expected of all public sector employees, at every level and in every agency. The framework describes 16 capabilities across four core groups: personal attributes, relationships, results and business enablers. Another four capabilities within the people management group are for employees who manage people. The capabilities are measured against five level descriptors ranging from ‘foundational’ to ‘highly advanced’ and reflect a progressive increase in complexity and skill.8

The WA finance capability profile, developed by the Public Sector Commission (PSC), has adopted a similar measurement approach. The profile “recognises the wide variety of roles, position classifications and levels of responsibilities that exist within the central finance units of small, medium and large organisations. As these roles require a range of competencies at varying levels, the capability areas and sets are not based on specific classification and job role levels. This allows for a more holistic analysis of the competencies that contribute to a capable and effective finance function”.9 In other words, the profile enables agencies to look at the value proposition of roles, rather than simply traditional hierarchical levels. This helps to encourage simpler organisational structures and to strengthen accountability and empowerment by establishing an understanding of roles, responsibilities and performance expectations while allowing for a more holistic analysis of competencies.10

There is scope to review and measure the effectiveness of this model with the view to apply it more broadly into the other capability sets. Overall, the aim should be to streamline the framework and ensure consistency across measurement criteria.

A revised framework would also lay the foundations for further sequential change including the opportunity to:

- reassess current employee capability across the public sector
- re-evaluate job roles according to employee capability requirements
- address key employee capability shortfalls or areas in need of future investment
- recruit against new, more relevant employee capability criteria.

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**System level capability development**

As government priorities shift and community needs change, the workforce must have the capacity and resilience to adapt accordingly. A systematic approach to capability development is critical to build a more agile, responsive and contemporary public sector.

While line agencies play a significant role in developing capability at the organisational level, it is vital that central agencies take the necessary steps to build capability according to system level needs as part of the ‘one sector’ approach. This section of the paper identifies the key areas for improvement identified by stakeholders and the mechanisms adopted in other public sector jurisdictions.

**Key occupational groups**

While capability development will involve an investment in new technical skills (e.g. data analytics), there is also a need to address existing skill gaps. Stakeholders consulted during the review identified an immediate need to address capability requirements in several areas across the public sector, including policy, strategic human resources and industrial relations, information and communication technology (ICT), data analytics, procurement and contract management.

Efforts to build capability have already been made in some of these functional areas. For example, the PSC has taken preliminary steps to build human resources capability through tailored training, the development of separate human resources and chief human resource officer (CHRO) employee capability frameworks, and the establishment of a CHRO community of practice. A similar approach has been taken to the financial stream. However, this approach appears to lack:

- an overarching workforce planning framework that takes account of existing pockets of expertise and addresses broader system capability deficits as they emerge over time
- clarity in supporting advice and materials to agencies
- built-in measurement and evaluation systems to ensure initiatives are achieving intended outcomes.

A number of stakeholders within the public sector have commented that the human resources function must evolve to become more strategic. This is a recurring theme across many public sectors:

Once designed primarily as a compliance function, today’s HR organisation must be agile, business integrated, data driven and deeply skilled in attracting, retaining and developing talent.\(^{11}\)

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To support human resources professionals to be strategic business partners, the Queensland Public Service Commission partnered with an external company to develop the strategic human resources capability assessment and development (SHR-CAD) initiative. The initiative has three interlinking components:

- Strategic Human Resources Competency Framework
- online capability assessment of competencies through multi-rated feedback (self, supervisor and customers)
- individual report with data on strengths and areas for development, a ‘development prioritisation’ matrix, and a 70:20:10 development guide.\(^\text{12}\)

Sixty-nine per cent of strategic human resources professionals surveyed by the SHR-CAD pulse survey (a cross-section of employees from the majority of departments) agreed that the SHR-CAD, underpinned by the SHRC, raised their awareness of strengths and areas for development.\(^\text{13}\)

As a steward of the WA public sector workforce, there is an opportunity for the PSC to look to similar approaches to formulate and implement a measurable strategy to develop the capacity of key occupational groups across the public sector so that they are in a better position to inform and contribute to strategic decision making. This will involve a long-term investment, drawing upon a mix of experiential, social and formal learning.

**Senior leaders**

Strong leadership capability is essential to navigate the complex public sector environment and the pathway to reform. While leadership should operate at all levels of the public sector, it is particularly important among the senior cohort.

The senior executive service (SES) is generally considered to be highly professional and hardworking, and tends to possess strong technical expertise within specific agency and/or policy areas. However, the SES is not perceived by some stakeholders as a highly strategic or collaborative leadership group (at least from a broader systems level perspective). The PSC facilitates a number of leadership programs to build capability in this area, including the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) executive fellowship program, executive masters in public administration, executive workshops, leadership seminar series and leadership essentials.\(^\text{14}\) While these programs are beneficial, the overall approach to leadership development could be more strategic and include further evaluation and monitoring.

The Victorian public sector has established the Victorian Leadership Academy (VLA) to improve leadership capability in a structured, evidence-based manner. The VLA goes beyond traditional development programs by using data and analytics to understand leadership


strengths and public sector needs as a whole, and to inform the selection of leaders who will participate in development programs. These opportunities are tailored to both the needs of the public sector, as well as the individual, with experiential learning as the central principle.\footnote{15}

In New Zealand, following the 2013 amendments to the \textit{State Sector Act 1988}, chief executives have statutory responsibilities for both their individual agencies as well as for the responsiveness of their agencies to collective interests. As part of this, the State Services Commission has introduced career boards to collaboratively identify and support the development of promising leaders and to coordinate the movement of senior leaders across the public sector to achieve government priorities.\footnote{16}

\textit{Graduates}

Several agencies in the public sector oversee graduate programs aligned to specific needs. Many have had considerable success in attracting and recruiting talented individuals (see case study – \textit{Interagency Graduate Program}). In addition, the PSC oversees the graduate development program which brings 50 graduate officers together from across the public sector to undertake training from a whole-of-sector perspective.\footnote{17} However, during the review’s consultations, several stakeholders raised the introduction of a whole-of-sector graduate program to bring younger talent into the public sector, address known capability shortfalls, improve diversity representation rates, and improve mobility across the sector. Other Australian jurisdictions (including Queensland, NSW and Victoria) manage whole-of-government graduate programs that share the following characteristics:

- specific streams in certain capability areas, such as science, policy, human resources (HR) and ICT
- placements across various agencies
- combination of on-the-job experience and formal training
- mentor and/or sponsor
- attainment of further qualifications.

This model has been trialled to some extent in the WA public sector with existing entry-level employment programs, such as apprenticeships, traineeships and cadetships\footnote{18}, and can easily be extended to the university graduate level.

Case Study – Interagency Graduate Program

ISSUE

Three State Government agencies – the former departments of Mines and Petroleum, State Development and Regional Development – recognised the need to build policy skills in key areas, as well as to recruit younger talent into the public sector.

ACTION

The departments established the interagency graduate program, which provides university graduates with three-month rotational placements over an 18-month period. Graduates acquire professional skills, grow their networks and gain exposure not only to each department but to the public sector as a whole. They undertake research, policy and project activities that are helping develop the State and contributing to the business activities of the departments. The graduates are allocated a line manager in each department and receive support from a sponsor and a mentor.

OUTCOME

The interagency graduate program demonstrates a ‘one sector’ approach to workforce mobility, collaboration and talent management. Graduates have voted it Australia’s second best graduate employer program and it has been named the top State Government graduate employer in Australia.

Talent management

Talent management is a business strategy to ensure that an organisation has the bench strength needed to rapidly respond to changing business needs and that the right people with the right skills are ready to step into critical business roles.19

While the PSC offers a range of leadership development programs to chief executives, SES officers and emerging leaders across the public sector, there appears to be no standardised approach to talent management in WA. Most talent management seems to occur through informal arrangements within and across agencies by mentoring or coaching. This is largely dependent on proactive leaders identifying and investing in capability development.

High-potential employees

Agencies that understand which employees have high potential can use these insights to:

- gauge internal talent for critical roles and reduce reliance on candidates from the external market
- quickly identify talented people for taskforces, projects and other emerging priorities
- mobilise and rotate talented people across the public sector to help build capability in other areas.20

In the United Kingdom civil service, there are multiple streams of talent management. The civil service high potential stream is a corporate talent pool managed across the

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organisation to create a succession pipeline of exceptional leaders for senior roles. Participants are selected for their aspiration to progress, their engagement in the civil service and their ability to work in a variety of different environments. A secretaries committee centrally manages senior executive talent; heads of profession lead talent management for their job families (e.g. finance, HR); and agencies manage junior and middle management talent.21

In New Zealand, all agencies use a talent management toolkit.22 The toolkit contains resources to support agencies to mature and extend a consistent approach to talent management at all levels. It helps agencies attract, identify, develop, deploy and retain great people – from early-in-career to the most senior levels. In addition, the State Services Commission has worked with agencies to establish talent exchange, an online talent management information system that provides agencies and individuals with access to a large, shared database of talent from across the public service. For the first time, leaders in NZ are able to benefit from utilising talent management data to support their careers outside their current agency and allow the State Services Commission to use this data to support the development and deployment of talent across the wider public service.23

Ideally, the public sector should have a standardised talent identification approach to assist agencies and individuals to identify talent; make a targeted investment in the development of talented employees; maintain the engagement of talented employees; and draw on identified talent to fill critical workforce gaps.

**Workforce diversity**

Workforce diversity injects a variety of skills, knowledge, backgrounds and capabilities into an organisation to achieve better outcomes; assist an organisation to meet the needs and expectations of its diverse customer base; and help foster a more inclusive working environment that is attractive to potential employees. The public sector should act as a role model for equal employment opportunities and employ people from diverse backgrounds so that the workforce is reflective of the broader WA community.

There has been significant investment in addressing diversity representation in the WA public sector through strategy setting, workforce planning, target setting, awareness raising, and employee/employer support arrangements and training.

Despite various efforts, diversity representation rates in the public sector have not shown significant improvement in the past five years, as indicated in Table 1 below.24

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Table 1. WA Public Sector Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation (%)</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal people</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>People with disability</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women in the SES</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>34.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>People aged 24 years and younger</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Various factors may contribute to these results, including:

- ongoing financial corrective measures
- rigid recruitment practices
- poor take up of flexible working arrangements
- lack of leadership commitment to increased workplace diversity
- lack of professional development opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds
- lack of measurement and review following the implementation of diversity initiatives.

There is a possibility that following the reduction of the SES by 20 per cent\(^\text{25}\), diversity representation levels may decrease even further.

It is important to note that low diversity representation rates are an issue faced by various public sector jurisdictions and there is no single solution to improve outcomes. Cultural change requires sustained leadership commitment and a clear message to convey why diversity is a priority for the WA public sector workforce. Some diversity measures require longer-term management and a variety of approaches, while progress against others can be achieved more quickly.

The South Australian Government supports initiatives to increase women’s leadership and participation. The Office for the Public Sector is responsible for SA’s strategic plan target 52: “Have women comprising half of the public sector employees in the executive levels (including chief executives) by 2014 and maintain thereafter”. As at June 2016, about 47 per cent of all public sector executives were women.\(^\text{26}\)

This year, the SA Commissioner for Public Sector Employment launched the Commissioner’s women’s mentoring program. The 12-month program aims to find and support the next

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\(^{25}\) Australian Broadcasting Corporation. 2017. *Number of WA government departments slashed by 40pc.* 

\(^{26}\) Office for the Public Sector. *Women in Leadership.* Government of South Australia. 
generation of female public sector leaders and contribute to building capability within the SA public sector.\textsuperscript{27}

Over the past decade, there has been a particular emphasis on increasing the diversity of government board and committee members. As at July 2017, about 43 per cent of government board members in WA were women.\textsuperscript{28} The State Government is aiming to increase the number of women appointed to government boards and committees to 50 per cent by 2019.\textsuperscript{29} In 2017, the State Government launched OnBoardWA, a website and register encouraging diverse representation on government boards or committees.\textsuperscript{30}

The following initiatives are considered key components:

- demonstrating leadership commitment to diversity in the workplace
- addressing any framework, policy and/or procedural barriers that may limit the recruitment of people from diverse backgrounds
- delivering structured diversity training and education programs
- increasing visibility of agency diversity representation rates
- conducting regular reviews to measure the effectiveness of whole-of-sector diversity strategies and initiatives.

\textbf{Options for reform}

In response to prevailing financial and economic conditions, the State Government has implemented various financial ‘corrective’ measures to rein in public sector labour expenditure. The perpetuation of these measures places a significant bearing on the capacity of directors general to plan for the current and future workforce.

There is a spectrum of options available to create a more unified and capable public sector workforce, all of which are dependent on sustained leadership and support from central agencies to drive change and implement sector-wide reform.

There is an opportunity to develop a public sector identity statement unique to WA that provides a collective vision and set of core values for the public sector and, in turn, helps support system-level activities such as capability building and talent management.

There is a need to reassess the way in which employee capability is measured and developed in the public sector. This would involve a review of the current WA framework to


\textsuperscript{30}Government of Western Australia. \textit{OnBoardWA}. 
ensure it is fit for purpose and meets the needs of a contemporary workforce. This will then provide the opportunity to:

- reassess current capability across the public sector
- re-evaluate job roles according to capability requirements
- address key capability shortfalls or areas in need of future investment
- enable recruitment against new, more relevant capability criteria.

An employee capability framework should not be applied in isolation. It must be supported by a suite of complementary initiatives to build capability more broadly. It is vital that the PSC, as a steward of the public sector workforce, supports strategic and systematic talent management at all levels. This could be achieved by:

- developing a talent management toolkit that provides agencies and individuals with guidance on how best to manage talented people across the public sector
- building employee capability in key occupational groups with a focus on emerging and future demand for particular knowledge and skills
- adopting a more strategic approach to the development of senior leaders
- developing a whole-of-sector graduate program
- measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of whole-of-sector diversity strategies and initiatives.
References


Government of Western Australia. 2017. OnBoard WA.


Government of Western Australia. 2017. Women to make up half of all Government board appointments.


# Appendix 1 – Overview of the Western Australian Public Sector Employee Capability Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSGOGA Classification</th>
<th>1</th>
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<td><strong>Chief finance officer success profile</strong></td>
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**Notes:**
- The measurement criteria for each profile/framework vary significantly.
- Collapsed cells indicate where levels are merged under the profile/framework.
- ICT capability is measured against the Skill Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) model – an industry-accepted tool used globally.