



had an unsuccessful job application showed significantly less confidence in recruitment and selection decisions). Nevertheless, the scores shown in this report suggest there may be some room for improvement on these issues. Interestingly, as for the 2005 Survey, those employees who have participated on a selection panel showed noticeably greater confidence in recruitment and selection processes. It should be noted that there has been an increase in the percentage of respondents participating on a selection panel; this participation over time may increase confidence in recruitment and selection processes, although such an increase was not evident across the 2005 and 2007 Surveys.

- Mirroring results from the 2005 Survey, of all the issues measured in the Survey, employees showed their lowest level of confidence in the way their managers handle employees who are performing poorly. Similarly, approximately only half of employees agreed that good performance was sufficiently recognised. As was suggested in the 2005 report, a potential reason for this lack of confidence is that many employees believe that managers and supervisors give insufficient feedback about performance. Once again, matching results from the 2005 Survey, the 2007 Survey found that those employees who have had a sit-down performance management discussion with their manager or supervisor reported noticeably greater overall confidence in the way performance is managed.
- As mentioned previously, there was a noticeable increase in awareness of, and confidence, in formal grievance handling procedures. Nevertheless, still only half of the workforce has confidence in the formal processes and in the way their manager would handle grievances. Only a minority of employees felt confidence in these processes and felt that they would not suffer any negative consequences if they lodged a grievance. Additionally, compared to the 2005 Survey results, there was a decrease in employees' confidence regarding their manager's or supervisor's capacity to deal with grievances and disputes in the workplace.
- The majority of employees showed support for the quality of leadership within their workplace. Also, more employees felt that leadership was of a high standard than they did in the 2005 Survey. Nevertheless, a large minority of employees expressed a lack of confidence regarding leadership quality and a majority lacked confidence in the way change is managed. It should be noted that leadership is commonly a poorly performing section of many employee surveys, in part because employees often have insufficient knowledge of their senior leaders to have strong

confidence in their abilities. A further possible reason identified in the current survey for this lack of confidence might be the lack of opportunities for leadership training reported by some employees.

- Compared to the 2005 results, slightly fewer employees are reporting satisfaction with their workload, although there is evidence that levels of stress have marginally decreased. Overall, only half of the workforce is reporting being satisfied with workload and stress levels.
- Most employees reported their workplaces as being free of bullying or harassment. Nevertheless, a significant minority of employees disagreed. Indeed, reports of experiencing bullying or harassment have marginally increased since the 2005 Survey. As was found in 2005, there is a significant correlation between personal experience of bullying or harassment and overall satisfaction levels. In the 2007 Survey, a far more detailed set of questions was included to improve understanding of the source and nature of bullying and harassment. Bullying and harassment are perceived to be equally enacted by fellow employees as well as managers and supervisors, and to a still significant but noticeably lesser extent by clients. The most common forms of bullying and harassment are intimidating and aggressive body language, shouting and offensive verbal behaviour, verbal threats, persistent criticism, sarcasm and humiliation, gossip and rumours being spread, inequitable treatment, withholding information, and being isolated and ostracised.
- Finally, a gap analysis and key driver analysis were conducted to explore the potential priorities arising from the Survey. The two issues identified by both of the analyses as being key areas for improvement were building a fair internal grievance resolution system and creating a more rewarding workplace. These two issues were also highlighted in the 2005 report, providing confirmation of the need to continue pursuing improvements in these areas. Other potential priorities identified by either the gap analysis or the key driver analysis included better managing performance, encouraging employee consultation and input, strengthening the perception of merit in recruitment and promotion decisions, improving confidence in leadership, creating greater recognition of diversity and enhancing the perception of the State Service being apolitical, impartial and ethical.

The main decreases compared to the 2005 Survey were:

- A smaller percentage felt that employees in their workplace are committed to helping to achieve in the workplace's goals.
- Fewer employees felt comfortable approaching their manager/supervisor to discuss a workplace grievance or dispute. Similarly, fewer employees also felt that their manager or supervisor was skilled enough to effectively resolve grievances and disputes that arise in the workplace.
- A slightly smaller percentage of employees felt that their workplace was free of bullying and/or harassment.
- There were fewer employees who felt that their workload was at the right level.

NEXT STEPS

- The first priority is to make the Survey results available to Agency Heads, senior managers, employees, unions and other stakeholders.
- The Commissioner has met with individual Agency Heads to talk over the survey results generally.
- Agencies will be asked to involve senior managers in developing action plans to address specific issues.
- Another State Service employee survey will be conducted in approximately two years time and benchmarked against the results of the 2007 Survey.

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TASMANIAN STATE SERVICE EMPLOYEE SURVEY REPORT 2007



CONDUCTED BY:
**THE TASMANIAN STATE
SERVICE COMMISSIONER**



COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

In releasing this summary of findings for my second *Tasmanian State Service Employee Survey 2007* (the Survey), I would like to pass on my thanks to employees for their participation, together with all Agency Heads, Agency Coordinators and Unions for their assistance with the Survey.

The Survey has again given all State Service employees the opportunity to express their views about whether work culture and practices within their workplace reflect the requirements of the State Service Principles.

As Commissioner, I regard this as one facet of my statutory obligation to evaluate Agency management practices, procedures, standards and systems in relation to management of, and employment in the State Service. It gives me an understanding, from an employee perspective, of their experience of the practical application of the State Service Principles in the workplace. I consider an evaluation of this type to be good modern management practice.

I would encourage all State Service employees to look at the summary of findings contained in this brochure.

Paper copies of the full Survey report can be viewed at Agency Human Resource Branches or at the Office of the State Service Commissioner, Level 2/144 Macquarie Street, Hobart TAS 7000. An electronic copy of the full report is also available on my website at: www.ossctas.gov.au

Robert J. Watling
STATE SERVICE COMMISSIONER

BACKGROUND

The *State Service Act 2000* incorporates Principles and a Code of Conduct, designed to ensure the effective management of workplaces, and that opportunities provided for employees were based on equity and fairness. Their inclusion was also intended to ensure that the delivery of services are of a high standard to both Government and the community.

The inaugural 2005 Employee Survey provided the first set of employee perspective data on how well the State Service Principles are being upheld across the State Service. This data will be a valuable means of assessing the performance of the State Service as a whole alongside the Principles and act as a benchmark against which past and future employee surveys can be measured.

Employee views obtained through the Survey will assist Agencies in determining how well their policies; procedures, standards and systems have been communicated to employees and offer an insight into their effectiveness.

The results of the 2007 Employee Survey have been measured against the results of the 2005 Survey in order to highlight any changes in employee perspectives that have occurred over the past two years. It is pleasing to note in this report that in 2007 employees have a greater awareness of the State Service Principles, Code of Conduct and internal grievance resolution processes. However, there are a number of other areas identified in the report that need to be addressed. Together with information provided through the annual Agency Survey, the Survey results have provided me with a more complete understanding of the actual workplace culture within the State Service.

As was the case with the 2005 Employee Survey, the 2007 Survey report represents employee views across all Agencies and Authorities in the Tasmanian State Service.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In discussing some of the results in the report, an effort has been made to compare the results from the 2005 and 2007 Surveys with results from other organisations. Overall, the results in the 2007 Survey report are similar to, and in some areas better than, results from large-scale surveys of other public and private sector organisations.

Some caution is needed however in interpreting the results of the 2007 Survey. The primary score that is used to report employees' confidence in the application of the Principles is the percentage of the employees who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements regarding the Principles.

It must be emphasised that the results obtained through this Survey are the perceptions of employees and not necessarily findings of fact.

KEY POSITIVE FINDINGS FOR THE STATE SERVICE

The Survey identified a number of strengths of the State Service, including:

- The highest scoring statements in the Survey were those associated with Application for Employment Open To All. Specifically, employees showed strong agreement that job vacancies within their workplaces are advertised publicly and there was also strong belief that people outside of the State Service have a reasonable opportunity to apply for advertised jobs.
- Employees showed extensive agreement that confidentiality is taken seriously in their workplace, and that their workplace strives to meet customer service needs. There was also strong belief that employees are committed to providing excellent customer service, behave ethically, professionally and fairly, and do not abuse their authority or position.
- There was strong support for the level of commitment to safety within the State Service. Employees believe that their managers and supervisors encourage employees to report health and safety risks and take action to ensure employees' health and safety. There was also a high level of agreement that employees display good occupational health and safety awareness.
- A large majority of employees believed that cultural background, gender, sexual orientation and age are not barriers to success in their workplaces. Similarly, most employees believed their workplaces are free of sexual harassment, and there was strong agreement that employees are expected to treat each other respectfully.
- Finally, employees reported good understanding of the priorities of their organisation and understand what their workplace needs to achieve.

These results are similar to the findings from the 2005 Survey. This is not unusual for a survey of a workforce of this size. Marked differences are more likely to emerge for individual agencies, departments and workplaces rather than across the entire State Service. Accordingly a comparison was made between the 2007 and 2005 Surveys to determine where there had been increases or decreases from the 2005 Survey. A comparison for all items and Principles was not possible as the 2007 Survey included some items that were not included in the 2005 Survey. In accordance with best practice for employee surveys, direct comparisons are only made where the item or category content is identical.

The main improvements compared to the 2005 Survey were:

- A greater percentage of employees reported an awareness of State Service principles and the State Service Code of Conduct.
- Employees indicated a greater awareness of formal processes or procedures for resolving grievances and disputes in their workplace.
- There was stronger belief that academic qualifications and achievements are valued in the workplace.
- There was also a stronger belief in the view that effort is invested in matching services to customer needs.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE STATE SERVICE

The 2007 Survey results suggest there are opportunities for improvement in the following areas:

- As was found in the 2005 Survey, approximately half of the workforce showed uncertainty or disagreement that employment decisions were based primarily on merit, and a similar number did not agree that recruitment and promotion decisions were fair. Related concerns were a lack of confidence in the people who serve on selection panels, and being unsure that people with the right knowledge, skills and abilities are chosen for vacancies. As was highlighted in the 2005 report, employee surveys such as the State Service Employee Survey will never demonstrate universal support for recruitment and promotion processes because of the limited number of promotion opportunities within organisations (for example, those employees who have