



Community & Public Sector Union

Submission To the Tasmanian State Service Review

Phase 2 Consultation

26 February 2021

Background

The state service review was announced in November 2019 and an initial consultation paper provided in March 2020. The first round of consultation closed in October 2020 and the CPSU provided a submission in this first phase after consulting with members.

An interim report was then released in November 2020, followed by a list of issues highlighted in the report on which feedback was sought. As stated in our first submission, it is our objective to provide the review with real life experiences from those working in the Tasmanian State Service that would identify the aspects that are working well and those that need addressing. These staff are best placed to inform the review of the full implications of their draft recommendations and input on the key issues and we still hope the reviewer will create opportunities to spend time with our members to get their feedback directly before producing a final report.

Observations about the Recommendations in the Interim Review

Many of the recommendations in the interim report are aspirational goals that need further development before they can become clear recommendations for action. While the CPSU supports many of these goals in principle, until there is more substance at the next level, it is not possible to provide unqualified support. Some of the recommendations have significant cost implications and unless additional funding is provided, they could only be implemented at the expense of other programs or core services. The CPSU would be unlikely to support any of the recommendations being implemented at the expense of other services or functions.

Recommendation 1 – One TSS

Tasmanian State Service employees already have a single employer but that has not created the 'One TSS' envisaged in this recommendation. While the CPSU supports practical improvements such as greater collaboration, mobility and career pathways for employees we understand what is being proposed is much more than this. The 'One TSS' concept proposed is more focused on a cultural change and cultural change is hard to deliver by recommendation as this lacks ownership and agency. At this stage, too few public sector workers have been included in the discussion about what 'One TSS' would mean for them and the services they deliver. If the review is to make

recommendations about adopting a 'One TSS' model then it should also recommend a process and timeline for such a change to ensure a broadly shared understanding of the concept across all levels of the service and a process that brings -people along rather than imposes something on them.

Recommendation 2 – Whole-of-Service Priorities

The big challenges facing communities in 2021 deserve big responses and the CPSU acknowledges that a small state service needs the ability to marshal all available capacity to meet such challenges. The CPSU supports in principle the setting of 'whole-of-service' priorities in a number of key areas that cut across the traditional responsibilities of a number of Agencies. If this is to occur specific resourcing will be required.

Recommendations 3, 4 and 5 – Performance Assessment for Departmental Secretaries

In busy working lives it's natural for people to focus on the parts of their job they will be held accountable for. For the significant changes encompassed in the recommendation for 'One TSS' to be achieved it will require buy in and ownership from a high proportion of the service but most critically from its leadership. It is therefore important that the performance of the state service's leaders be assessed in part by their contribution to making this change. It is also important that the people assessing their performance and holding them accountable are those who have set them the challenge.

CPSU supports these recommendations in principle however it needs to be recognised that Agencies have both statutory and service delivery responsibilities and there is a risk that unless Agency performance against these is also measured and leaders held accountable for the outcomes then there will be less focus on these areas and more on 'whole-of-service' priorities.

Recommendation 6 – Partnership with University of Tasmania

The CPSU supports in principle the development of closer ties with the University of Tasmania. Of particular interest is the relationship between the University of Tasmania and TAFE where the roles of each could be more clearly delineated and closer co-

operation in planning and skills mapping could enable them to focus collectively on the emerging workforce needs and creating better learning pathways.

The potential for UTAS to assist in providing surge capacity should be explored although the areas where UTAS has greater capacity than the State Service are very limited.

It may also be worthwhile to involve UTAS in workforce planning and examining the possibilities of training Tasmanians in the professional areas where we currently have to recruit from interstate.

Recommendation 7 – Talent Development

The CPSU supports the establishment of talent development and management programs but we believe they should extend across all of the State Service and not limited to middle management and Senior Executive. Talent development should accompany career planning and workforce planning to enable the service to ensure it has the skills it needs in the future and to reduce its reliance on external recruitment of expertise. Areas of technical expertise where there are often key staff dependencies should be of particular concern. Improving mobility around the service would enable staff to move to where their skills can be better utilised.

Recommendation 8 – Review and Evaluation Function

The CPSU supports this recommendation in principle. In addition, review and evaluation should be built into all change management processes so that as part of the consultation on any change everyone is clear what success looks like, how it will be measured and when and how it will be reviewed. Review and evaluation of change should be reported to the same stakeholders as were consulted on the change.

Recommendation 9 – State Service Workforce Plan

The CPSU strongly supports this recommendation. The need for a workforce plan was highlighted in our first submission. Undertaking this recommendation within 12-months in a way that is inclusive will require significant, dedicated resources i.e. specific funding.

Recommendation 10 – More opportunities for young people

The CPSU strongly supports this recommendation. The State Service should be playing a key role in connecting young Tasmanians with the jobs we need filled in the future. Such programs need to be integrated into our workforce planning and recruitment systems and they need to be of sufficient scale to make a difference.

Recommendation 11 – Managing Underperformance

Performance management has had a checkered history in the TSS, largely because of its negative association with ED26 which triggered the introduction of performance management in many areas of the service. Performance management became focused on underperformance and the potential for termination. As we reported in our first submission, in most areas of the Tasmanian State Service, performance management does not seem to be done well.

Performance management should be focused on unlocking staff skills and enabling staff to reach their potential and fulfill their career aspirations rather than attempting to ensure that all staff perform to a minimum level that is perceived to be adequate.

Identifying underperformance is problematic in many areas of the State Service as performance is difficult to measure for many positions even where the Statement of Duties accurately reflects what the staff member does. The Tasmanian Audit Office report does not even attempt to establish that underperformance is a significant problem in the Tasmanian State Service. Alleged underperformance is often confused with behavioural or attitudinal issues and confounded by poor training and regular a lack of regular feedback.

CPSU survey data tells us that work overload is a very big problem in the TSS and not only does it impact staff health and family life it often results in spurious underperformance allegations. Investing effort to address work overload would almost certainly be more worthwhile than continuing to focus on perceived underperformance.

The performance management framework should be reviewed, preferably by using the areas where it is seen to be working as a model for other areas. A single performance management system should be used across all Agencies to ensure consistency, transferability and skill development.

Recommendation 12 – Principles for Working away from the Office

The CPSU support the development of these principles. A long term lens should be used in developing these principles that permanently integrate a range of options for work to be performed away from traditional workplaces.

Recommendation 13 – Regional Hubs

There would be many benefits in having regional hubs but the cost of establishing them is likely to be very high. Feasibility studies should precede the development of full business cases which will be quite costly in themselves.

Themes for Consultation

The phase 2 consultation has invited submissions according to seven themes:

1. The big picture – the TSS Tasmanians need and deserve for the future

Problems with the Current System

Our members have identified the following problems with the way the system currently works. Any future system should address these issues.

Despite the *State Service Act 2000* separating the employment of people and the assignment of duties, positions in the State Services are still filled on an establishment principle.

Each agency has a fixed number of funded positions that are supposed to be filled by a merit based selection process whenever they become vacant. The principle itself was probably always flawed but the problems staff and managers now seem to be facing are:

- Rigidity in the establishment structure means that if the work changes and needs to be done at a higher level, it is very difficult to get positions reclassified and if a position is reclassified, there is a strong likelihood that the position will have to be advertised.
- The person who has been doing the work very effectively at a higher level for a considerable time then has to openly compete for their job and is displaced if they don't get it. Consequently, many staff in the service are doing work at a higher level than they are being paid for without any acknowledgement or remuneration for the higher level work.
- People are given the opportunity to act in higher level positions, often for a long period of time and sometimes in successive positions, but then at the end they have to return to their substantive position with no recognition of the knowledge and skills they have developed in their acting roles.

- The temporary nature of their acting positions makes them financially insecure as their base position can often be a lot lower salary than their acting ones.
- Rigid rules seem to require positions to be advertised even when there is a highly competent internal staff member acting in the position who deserves to be promoted to the position.
- Positions are often advertised when there is no realistic prospect of anyone being selected apart from the person acting. There is a widespread community perception that every Government job has someone acting in it who will get the job so there is no point applying.
- Positions are often filled in a temporary capacity, even when the work is permanent, so a full selection process is not required and then the people in the temporary positions are moved into a succession of temporary positions or even to a permanent positions without going through an open selection process. As a result they are never able to be converted to permanent.
- Employees feel discouraged to utilise their skills and experience at the highest level because they are constrained within a substantive classification. There needs to be options for those who are comfortable at their level to remain there while also opening up opportunities for those who want to develop their skills and move through the classifications.
- Statements of duties (SOD) for position are onerous to develop and go out of date very rapidly so many staff do not have a relevant statement of duty.
- Generic statements of duty are becoming common place. While this reduces the workload of developing them it also reduces their value as a guide to what staff are expected to do.
- It is very difficult to assess the appropriate banding of generic SODs and identify if staff are being expected to work at a higher level. The statements of duty form the basis of the selection but are often too general or specific to enable an effective recruitment process and a barrier to reclassification.
- Merit selections often result in selection on the basis of past experience because that is the easiest basis of comparison. A result is that staff often

become type cast by their position, find it difficult to move or to progress to the next level and often reinforces existing cultural and demographic bias.

- Internal and external applicants spend many hours writing applications to address the selection criteria that are slightly different for every job. Rarely are the applications read in detail so it is a very wasteful process for the applicant and the State Service.
- For each position advertised, a selection panel has to be established, applicants interviewed, referees contacted and a report written that has to go through an extensive approval process. While it is worth spending time and effort selecting the best person for the job, current processes are very slow, inefficient and costly.
- The review process for staff selection provides limited redress for the appellant. The best that can be hoped for is that the selection process will start over again. Consequently there are very few appeals.
- There are many examples of the system being bent to enable the selection of management favourites, often reinforcing existing cultural and demographic bias. There are many examples in senior management of processes not being followed. Different agencies seem to interpret requirements in very different ways which gives the impression that there is little consistency and reliability in the processes.
- “Spill and fill” is occasionally used when a restructure occurs and all positions are considered vacant and an open selection process occurs. Often when restructures occur (due to costs savings) staff are asked to apply for positions that mirror previous roles. There is probably no greater destabilising and demoralising process. It often results in much greater staff attrition than was intended and over a longer period as it is difficult to re-establish confidence of continuing employment.

While many of these problems have existed for a long time, they seem to be causing a greater feeling of insecurity, unfairness and inefficiency now than in the past so there is an urgent need to address them. Collectively, they reduce morale and do not support a culture of skills development and capacity building.

2. Building one State Service

Several members expressed the opinion that they felt they were employees of their particular Agency rather than being part of a single State Service. They noted that most of the communication they received was from their Agency, even if the HoA was passing on a message from the Head of the State Service. Some older members felt there was more of a single service feeling back in the 1980's and this resulted in more sharing and supporting between employees in different Agencies.

Many members expressed a frustration that they had skills, knowledge and experience that was not being utilised in their current role but they had very limited opportunities to be assigned duties that would better reflect their capacity. Several noted this wasn't just about higher pay, but they could see colleagues struggling when they had skills to assist them but couldn't because they were in a different Division or Agency. There was a strong feeling there should be more opportunities to network with colleagues in other Agencies doing similar work.

Leading by example

Several members raised the issue of our state service leaders not leading by example. Many Agencies have value statements that are not clearly and consistently upheld by Agency senior managers. The State Service is required to comply with a set of principles but some members felt Agency managers regularly breached these. A common complaint raised was how politicised the State Service has become with senior Agency staff regularly transferring from State Service Offices to political offices and back again.

Annual Recruitment to the Service

The state service should centrally induct a cohort of new recruits each year based on anticipated turnover. Rather than recruit for a specific job when a vacancy arises, we could recruit a cohort of bright, young, enthusiastic people each year for a career in the public service. They would be selected based on general aptitude and expected to be able to fill a wide range of roles over time.

In addition, when a base grade vacancy becomes available an Agency would notify the central authority who would refer the next person on the central merit list to determine suitability for employment to that vacancy.

External selection where appropriate

Agencies could decide vacancy by vacancy whether a position should be externally advertised, internally advertised or directly selected (to be limited to conversions to permanency & reclassification situations where person is already doing the job).

Decisions should be made by a senior management committee so no single person was responsible and SSMO should be represented on this body.

Guidelines should be established on whether a position should be advertised based on getting a balance between providing a career path with promotion opportunities for internal staff and trying to get the best people possible for each job. A job should only be advertised if there is a realistic expectation that an external applicant could be successful. Wherever possible, the selection process should require applicants to demonstrate ability rather than just attend an interview.

Simple application process for Expressions of Interest (EOI)

An EOI process should be tailored to suit the situation. It should first assess whether those applying are suitable for the role and only then consider ranking them. In many cases it may be better to do the suitability assessment first and only then, if there are multiple applicants suitable, ask applicants to provide further information for ranking purposes. It should take little extra effort to apply for a number of similar jobs. If jobs are being advertised, processes should encourage applications from anyone who may be suitable.

3. Supporting the current and future workforce

Create Permanent Jobs

There need to be more permanent jobs, fewer casual jobs, labour hire, outsourcing and continuous rolling contracts. The pandemic has highlighted the inadequacy of a system where a large proportion of the workforce has insecure work. The focus needs to be on the creation of long-term jobs that provide both job and income security for the employees and the system as a whole. Where jobs are seasonal, arrangements

need to be set up that enable staff to perform different functions with the seasons rather than employ a different cohort for each season.

Permanent jobs are particularly important in regional centres where there are very limited alternative sources of employment for those who lose their job.

Provide Secure Pay as Well as Secure Jobs

In the Tasmanian public education system, approximately 1,300 Teachers Aides (TA) are currently working permanent part time hours, with a significant number of them employed on only 10 permanent hours per fortnight. Many get regular and consistent “top up” hours at their standard pay rates. Additional hours are commonly used for relief that would incur an additional allowance if a non-permanent staff member was engaged to do the same work.

The Department usually gets the employees to sign an “Agreement to Vary Hours” usually on an annual basis but sometimes on a term by term basis. The contract has a clause that allows for the Department at any time to reduce the hours with two week’s notice. No reason needs to be given.

Because most of their pay is in the top up hours, the TAs do not have income security. The precariousness of their position became very apparent when the Premier advised that public servant jobs would not be cut during the COVID-19 crisis. For the TAs this meant that they would retain their 10 permanent hours but their top up hours were not guaranteed. The Government has subsequently agreed to review cases where top up hours were reduced on a case by case basis, provided the top up hours had been consistently in place for an extended period of time.

Top up hours are also used for Library staff in a similar way. The arrangements are very unsatisfactory for staff members who feel bound to work the additional hours at their standard pay rate and need the work. Yet they have almost no income security as they can have their hours cut back to the base number at the whim of the Department.

Nicola's Story¹

I began my TA journey in 2017. I needed a family friendly job and was lucky enough to be one of the few people accepted into the TAFE intake in my year, and I completed my study online while working 3 jobs and raising my kids. When I started my placement, I knew I had landed in the right place. I worked harder than I ever had before, but I couldn't get enough.

I had to go through an interview and selection process to get my 10 permanent hours, but have consistently worked a 50 hour fortnight since 2018. Knowing that I had secure hours every year would be a big weight off my shoulders, as well as recognition of the work that we TAs put in for our school communities.

I am reasonably confident my extra hours will continue as we have a good Business Manager who I get along well with. I am aware that the situation is more tenuous for others who depend on their "top up" hours.

I'm not alone. Many of us are mothers, but even with our commitments at home we are constantly taking additional study through TAFE and working extra hours to support Tassie's kids. We take our work home with us, because sometimes we are the only kind face that some of our most vulnerable students see in their day. We care.

Our days may finish at 2:30pm, but we don't clock off until much later, having spent the afternoon thinking about our students and how we can make a difference educationally and emotionally to them tomorrow, next week, and throughout their school year.

Even so, I don't want to be anything other than a TA. I feel like I make a real difference, every day. But it isn't sustainable. TA's need job security and income security that reflects and values the hard work we put in supporting Tasmania's kids. That shouldn't be too much to ask for.

¹ Name changed to protect privacy.

Leanne's story²

I have had a 10 hour per fortnight permanent position for almost 3 years and almost immediately after I started working, I began working an additional 40.66 “top up” hours at my normal rate. I never know until the beginning of the school year whether I am going to get additional hours this year. The overall number of TAs needed in the system is unlikely to fall much over the foreseeable future so I should feel comfortable that my top up hours will continue. However, some other temporary TAs have recently been granted permanent positions and it is possible that there might not be enough work for everyone this year. The permanent staff will get preference so my top up hours might be the ones that get cut.

The insecurity of my work situation makes it extremely hard to manage a household. It is impossible to budget and I can't apply for a loan or enter into any sort of financial agreement. I can't rely on having a future income beyond 10 hours.

The job insecurity is bad for the students as well. TAs deal with high needs students who do not cope with change well. Knowing that the same TA they had last year would be there to help them this year would be a great comfort to them. We can't give them that assurance.

Enhancing the Recruitment Experience

Coordination through a central employment body would make it much easier to provide more appealing and informative recruitment experiences by developing:

- A broader range of selections methods
- Mechanisms to support consistency in selection processes
- Enhanced induction to promote desired workforce culture as well as preparing employee for the particular job
- Resources to support stronger candidate care

² Name changed to protect privacy.

Performance Management

There was a strong theme from members that they wanted regular performance feedback and recognise the role of performance management in delivering excellence but the overwhelming feeling was that most current performance management processes are meaningless and achieve nothing.

Common themes identified by members included:

- That managers are required to report that employee performance reviews had been undertaken and the relevant paperwork completed so their focus is on ticking and flicking rather than engaging in a genuine process;
- That some performance management processes require the development of KPIs or KRAs but often these measure functions that are not critical to the employee's role so the employee is left either achieving their targets by undertaking functions not central to their role or they perform their role and don't achieve their targets;
- Managers have neither the time, training or support needed to properly conduct performance management processes;
- Performance management processes don't link the work of the individual to the work plan of the Division and the strategic plan of the Agency. Discussions are often more operational than strategic;
- ; • Most performance management discussions don't include consideration of career development or progression.

Where training needs are identified they can't be approved through the performance management process but are subject to later approval. Members often cited the same training needs being identified year after year but never provided.

Improve Diversity in the State Service

The state service does not represent the diversity in the community well and more needs to be done to improve the balance. Gender equity needs to be improved in many areas and more women are needed in leadership roles. More effective programs are needed to increase the number of employees from the LGBTI community, people with disability, people from low socio-economic backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Job applications should always have identifying information such as name, age, residential location and gender removed for the initial short-listing.

Specifically targeted or created positions are needed for staff with disabilities. The service used to have a number of low skilled job that were suitable for staff with intellectual disabilities, but these have now mostly been outsourced. It should be possible to recreate suitable positions within the service.

Measures that improve women's participation in the workplace need to be improved – such as a consistent approach to workplace flexibility to assist with caring responsibilities. Managers need guidance about what are and are not reasonable grounds for “operational reasons” to deny applications to work flexibly/modified hours. Understanding and supporting the importance of accommodating caring needs should be modelled from the top down. In particular, men in the public service should be encouraged to adjust their work arrangements to undertake more family care responsibilities as this is key to women's workforce participation.

Inclusivity in the policy making side of the Public Service

Senior leadership do not grasp the diversity of the public service. Recruiting practices are not checked for bias. Little attention is paid to developing non-traditional employees in the workforce instead looking to recruit outside the service for “the best”. This is often likely with unconscious bias applied, given that unconscious bias is not addressed in recruiting practices. The public service could do a great service to the population of Tasmania by training and developing a proportion of cadets, graduates and trainees from disadvantaged backgrounds, equivalent to the proportion in the Tasmanian population. Along with a culturally diverse percentage of the workforce to reflect the population.

Crisis Response Capability

What were once-in-a-generation challenges seem to be occurring almost annually and on numerous fronts – fruit fly infestation, floods, fire, interstate fires and a pandemic. The last of these has demonstrated that Tasmania needs its own 'surge workforce'. This workforce needs to be well-trained, equipped and ready for action (at all times) so that it can be quickly engaged in response to a crisis. There is a need for interoperability arrangements, that allow staff to move rapidly to different work areas and agencies as the crisis demands. The workforce needs a wide range of skills including planning, logistics and communications.

It needs to be accepted that there is cost in having such a workforce. Appropriate allowances and training time for the staff involved will be necessary even when there is no crisis with adequate back fill when the staff are absent. There needs to also be an investment in appropriate technology and systems to support the workforce. A consistent computer environment is needed across the service for managing crises because staff will be coming from all different agencies.

The State needs to have a dedicated State Control Centre facility that would enable open communication between different management functions while also having breakout areas for specific conversations. It needs to be able to handle all different types of crisis.

It is also important that the surge workforce has the right match of skills. Staff who offer to be part of the team need to be profiled before there is a crisis, so staff are assigned to roles within their capabilities when there is a crisis.

It is often hard at the start of a crisis to predict how big it is going to be and what is going to be needed. Planners need to be engaged early so they can decide early what should be in place, but then the system must have the adaptability to rapidly scale up or down the operation as new information is received.

There should be trained staff on roster during periods of high risk. We already have this in place for fires during the fire season, but it needs to be formalised and involve more agencies to cover a greater range of scenarios.

After every significant incident there should be full debriefing to examine what worked and what did not so the response team can keep on learning.

Improve Education and Training

This is a great opportunity to rebuild the TAFE system which has been in decline for many years. (ref <https://cca.edu.au/australian-vet-participation-at-high-risk-of-major-decline-says-mitchell-institute/>).

Schools need investment in Allied Health Professionals including Social Workers, Speech & Language Pathologists and Occupational therapists.

Tasmania does not have training programs for many AHP occupations and has difficulty recruiting staff. Possibilities therefore exist to work with the University of Tasmania to develop and if necessary fast track the introduction of AHP degrees being offered by UTAS.

A youth employment program could be developed to employ young people on traineeships as allied health assistants placed in aged and disability services with a pathway to undertaking future Allied Health and other Health qualifications. Over the longer term this would create a pipeline of health professionals. Over the shorter term it would employ young people who have been severely affected by the drop in employment and create much needed support for aged and disability services.

A closer relationship between UTAS and TAFE is needed to make transfer between them easier. This relationship should be built on collaboration , not on competition. The difficulties in getting course work from one credited by the other is a big disincentive for some people to complete their qualifications.

Schools also need attendance/retention support officers and first aid officers with roles that include medication support to students. These services to support children outside the classroom, are needed so they can learn better in the classroom.

Education and training are good areas for government investments, that are highly labour intensive and provide short-term benefits that flow on to the whole community.

Develop Youth Employment Pathways

Training can be linked to job creation by creating training pathways linked to youth recruitment and traineeships in the state service. This applies to all departments, e.g. Parks & Wildlife (especially for Aboriginal youth), as Teachers aides, administrative and IT roles across the whole of government. Many of these jobs would be in rural and regional areas and would address the problems of an aging workforce, as well as the lack of job opportunities for youth in these areas.

The public service should have a recruitment program that brings in young people who reflect the diversity of the Tasmanian population. In particular children from socio-economically disadvantaged areas should be recruited and given access to on the job training and development. Every citizen in Tasmania should know at least one person who works “for the government” to feel like the public service reflects and acts in the interests of the entire population.

The economic impact of COVID-19 on young school leavers, trainees and graduates is likely to be particularly severe and will probably justify the creation of public sector jobs specifically targeting opportunities to give them work experience with the expectation that most will find other work once they have been given a start. There have been many small-scale schemes in the past but what is now needed is on a much larger scale.

Opportunities should also exist in some sectors to create “all the year round” jobs for a lot of the workers in seasonal occupations. We should be providing jobs and appropriate training and support so that workers can be productively engaged all year round, i.e. providing secure jobs for employees and a reliable workforce for employers.

Agricultural employment practices need to be investigated to find out why it is difficult to employ local people in the jobs. There needs to be a clear social license for the employment practices. If unacceptably long hours and below award wage piece work pay is expected, there needs to be an intervention into the sector to create modern and acceptable practices. Food security is vital and the sector may need restructure if it is currently only viable through employment practices that are not in line with acceptable modern standards.

TAFE and Apprenticeships

The biggest problem with TAFE is that it is very hard to attract good tradespeople to become teachers at TAFE. The best way to resolve it would be to support “Teacher in Training” positions where new teachers are supervised by an experience teacher. However, the current funding models do not support this process therefore creating the major timetable and scheduling issues we are now experiencing in the trade areas. Funding must be added on an as needs basis to support the teaching areas experiencing a shortage.

For apprenticeships, the situation is more complex. There are three components to a successful apprenticeship:

- Good training,
- Good employment,
- Good apprenticeship.

A contract of training requires signatures from all three participants and all three components have to work to ensure successful completion.

Employers are not taking on enough apprentices. For example, there is the “Tasmanian Building and Construction Training policy” which “requires that contractors are required to use apprentices for a minimum of 20% of the labour required for work undertaken on government-funded building and construction contracts”.

However, there is no penalty for non-compliance and neither Skills Tasmania nor the contracting government department enforce it. The issue was raised in the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment but then there were fears that the project would be delayed if they enforced the requirement so they eased off.

There needs to be a clear directive that companies should not tender for Government work if they were not prepared to comply with the policy. Skills Tasmania needs to monitor employers and Job Search Agencies to ensure apprenticeship policies are complied with.

There are problems with the apprentices as well as they often do not have the background in maths, science and literacy that are needed for the trades. Colleges focus on preparing students for University. The ones that go to TAFE are often not

prepared for the classroom rigours modern apprenticeships demand. There needs to be increased student support and clearly defined pathways into the TAFE system.

The Government could do a lot more to develop youth trainees and cadets.

A large number were previously employed by the state Government which no longer happens. As functions like public housing maintenance and construction moved to the private sector, the responsibility for training did not go with it. Some Government departments have Certificate III trainees in Administration but there needs to be a centrally coordinated approach to selecting and managing trainees and apprentices across all agencies.

There was a program about 35 years ago that took 40 young trades workers and paid their salaries for 2 years and trained them at the Tasmanian College of Advance Education (TCAE) to be metal, automotive and woodworking teachers. It was a very successful program and a much better way to develop these teachers than taking general teachers and getting them to be metal and woodwork teachers, or worse still Certificate II Construction teachers. A scheme like this could be worth considering again.

Workforce Planning and Management

A Central Employment body could also provide a strategic oversight over the whole public service workforce. It could assist the public service in gaining the maximum benefit from the biggest competitive advantages it has over the private sectors – permanency and fairness.

It could provide or assist agencies to provide:

- Career pathways that accept the need for reward and recognition and could involve transitions between agencies
- Education for new managers
- Guidelines for public servants as citizens
- Review of all Statement of Duties and Instruments of Appointment with clear and appropriate role definition
- Performance Management Processes and Practices
- Permanent employment for staff who do a series of short term jobs by the nature of their work e.g. project officers
- Strategies based on workforce trends

- Planning for anticipated resignations and retirements
- Employment market research which feeds in to Organisational Planning

A set of centrally managed guidelines and recommended procedures with some scope for variation in special circumstances gives employees confidence that there is fairness and consistency in employment processes, makes them easier to administer and has the potential to make huge administrative savings.

Work with the Commonwealth and Other States

The Commonwealth and other states are developing their own plans to recover from the pandemic. It is essential that the State Government initiatives complement Commonwealth ones and that all Governments work co-operatively. All states are likely to go into debt, but the Commonwealth has much better borrowing and repayment capabilities than the states, it would be much better if the Commonwealth took on more of the borrowing and provided assistance to states. The worst possible outcome would be for the Commonwealth to be providing initiatives to stimulate the economy, while the states had to restrain activity and dampen the economy because of the fear of debt.

Lock in the Positive Changes from Lockdown

Establishing working from home arrangements was a challenge to the pandemic response. The ability to work away from traditional workplaces is mutually beneficial for employer and employee. It can help staff with parenting and caring responsibilities, mental health, workers with disabilities and enables the flexibility of delivery of services to enable dealing with fires, floods, pandemics etc.

The ability to work from home enables a variety of work arrangements that can be implemented to achieve different goals. For example, staggered start times could be used to alleviate traffic congestion.

Decentralisation

Members felt strongly that state service employees should be based in locations that support them in providing services to the community in the most efficient and effective manner possible. A view was expressed that in the past there were more state service employees located in regional communities and that allowed them to have closer links with and understanding of the communities they served.

Many members, particularly those in the North and North West, expressed concerns that too few promotional opportunities are advertised based outside Hobart. There was a strong feeling that the COVID-19 response had shown that work could be performed from a range of locations. There was significant feedback that the location of work should be determined by Agencies and not be politicised as has occurred in recent years.

Several members used the example of the relocation of Mineral Resources Tasmania from Rosny Park to Burnie following the 2014 state election to highlight a failed decentralisation. The relocation was a political decision, announced during the campaign to bring more jobs into a marginal electorate. Following the election and sober assessment of the functions actually performed by MRT it was clear the relocation wouldn't work. The core laboratory based at Mornington held around 715km of rock cores and had only recently been upgraded. MRT had close relationships and shared facilities with the University of Tasmania School of Earth Sciences and CODES, all based in Hobart. While the government seemed to think MRT staff spent most of their time down mines on the west coast this wasn't correct. The government said it was an election promise so pushed ahead.

There were 42 MRT staff at the time, mostly permanent and full-time. Ultimately a face saving solution was found whereby a MRT Head Office was established in Burnie that included the Royalty and Finance section and Tenement Administration (renamed "Industry Services") section, together with two geologists, two inspectors and two drafting persons. Only 1 of the existing 42 staff relocated to Burnie the other 11 positions were recruited. The Hobart based staff whose functions were moved to Burnie were redeployed to other state service roles. There remains 33

MRT staff in Hobart. The dollar cost of this political idea is significant – in the millions. It has resulted in no net benefit to the people of Tasmania and the money could have been spent better in other areas.

Members noted the reduction in District offices that supported regional communities for many decades. Many of these have been closed and roles centralised in hub cities like Launceston, Devonport and Burnie. This means that communications with the public is by phone or email rather than face to face. There is a feeling that we should be talking to the people we serve and asking them how they want to engage with public services instead of making decisions based on cost.

The DPIPWE Northern Recruitment Policy elicited many comments. This is a government policy that requires all jobs in DPIPWE to be advertised in the North/North-West of the state unless there is a business case to exempt it. While members in the North/ North-West of the state appreciate the opportunity this provides them to apply for more jobs it has significantly impacted other staff. Employees whose jobs have been reclassified have seen their jobs move North. This has led to families living apart operating two households. Questions have also been raised about why the new Secretary was exempt from the policy when his predecessor showed the Secretary role could be performed from Launceston.

Members indicated confusion on why the government had refused to support a claim lodged by the CPSU to have all jobs in the state service advertised with an open work location unless the job needed to be performed from a specific location.

What Members Said:

“Generally, there has been a reluctance to advertise higher band roles in regional areas in IT Services. Often positions are advertised externally as South, but once questioned internal applicants can apply and will be considered regionally. For example, I was fortunate to be successful for a B6 position in a regional area but we rarely see B7 and over based anywhere other than Hobart head office.”

“Being in the north, I’m pleased that more jobs have been available in the north – but the reality is, unless a position is location-based e.g. PWS, schools, hospitals, libraries etc. they should all be advertised state-wide. Even if the rest of the team is down south – surely COVID showed that people can be managed effectively remotely.”

“We once had district offices all over the state that supported regions and communities well. Staff lived in the area and were well known by locals who felt that they understood local issues and could be easily approached. Decentralising to major regional centres (Launceston and Devonport) is not the same and does not achieve the desired results.”

“Technology should be there to support decentralisation – it is made so much better when face to face conferencing abilities are ready to use. Travel isn’t a big deal in Tasmania – if there is a good reason to meet in person, then it should still be a possibility.”

Support for New Infrastructure Development

The public sector needs to have the staff to support the planning and development phases, so that we have the highest standards of compliance, get best value for money, and use the best design principles. Tasmania needs more contract managers, architects, heritage consultants, business support officers and permanent project staff, that can move from project to project. More staff in these areas will enable streamlining of these processes, so they will be faster and less bureaucratic.

The state government should provide the support required to finalise the implementation of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, including the individual Local Provision Schedules. Legislation should be delivered to support the implementation of the Planning and Building Portal. A review of the staffing levels and practices of the Tasmanian Planning Commission should be undertaken to ensure planning amendments and appeals are dealt with expediently.

IT Systems and Platforms

It is generally accepted that the IT systems and platforms on which the Tasmanian State Service operates are outdated and do not support the provision of efficient, modern services. Numerous examples were given of important systems that are held together by the skill of a few internal IT staff, systems no longer supported by the software providers.

Numerous examples were given of data being stored on multiple platforms that are unable to talk to each other and staff developing time consuming and complex processes for accessing and reporting on data. Numerous examples were given of employees in different Agencies being unable to access relevant data from other Agencies resulting in customers/clients/patients being required to provide the same information on multiple occasions. Examples were provided of Agencies operating different iterations of the same software and systems being personalized in a manner that means data can't be readily transferred between Agencies.

Common themes identified by members included:

- Opportunities to improve operational efficiency and data sharing have been lost because of IT systems that are not modern or compatible;
- That limited resources are being wasted because Agencies don't cooperate in tendering or purchasing processes or made decisions that only take into consideration the needs of one agency instead of the whole Service;
- Lack of whole-of-service approach to IT services. This has worsened in recent time with whole-of-service email reverting to individual Agency services through the transition to Office 365;
- The cost of bringing IT systems up to required standards is always highlighted but the cost of not addressing IT failings is often ignored;
- The value of having internal IT staff who understand systems and can provide support and training is high. Examples were provided of outsourced providers where every request came at a significant cost to the stage where employees were discouraged from seeking assistance;

- No training so even where systems could bring efficiency staff are not trained to be able to utilize the new functionality;
- There is an increasing expectation from clients and customers that they can engage with the State Service digitally, preferably using apps on their phones and tablets.

What members said:

“There is too much emphasis on the cost of doing something (investing), as opposed to the cost of doing nothing. Over the long-term, a lack of robust, fit-for-purpose information systems costs more in operational hours than it would in initial investment. It also makes us look a bit silly to our mainland and overseas partners.”

“I would like to see more staff in the IT area to support us when there are IT problems. The few staff available seem to be very stretched in trying to do their jobs and provide assistance. There is often a delay to us receiving the assistance we need.”

“Lots of training for new technology and platforms is online alone and at your own pace, it is difficult to find time when we are chronically understaffed and when you do find the time you don’t have anyone on hand to ask questions and get support. This means that often we have technology that might bring functionality and efficiency, but no one knows how to use it.”



HOBART WATERFRONT

MURRAY ST

5 Min SULLIVANS COVE

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