

***United Workers Union Submission to the Review
of the Tasmanian State Service – Interim Report***

26 February 2021



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Dr Ian Watt AC
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Tasmanian Government
GPO Box 123
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By email only: StateServiceReview@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Dr Watt,

Review of the Tasmanian State Service – Interim Report

UWU represents a wide range of Public Sector workers across Australia, with our coverage varying across states. We represent Teacher Aides, Paramedics, Cleaners, and Health Care Technicians.

In Tasmania, we represent Education Facility Attendants and Correctional Officers.

UWU previously made submissions to the Tasmanian Government's Review of the Tasmanian State Service (TSS) in November 2019 and October 2020 (**attached**). We rely on our previous submissions but make the following comments on the interim report on behalf of our members.

Partnerships with the Private Sector

Reference is made within chapter 4 of the interim report to the TSS needing to “*partner more efficiently with the private sector.*”

The interim report also states that how the TSS can partner better with other sectors will be a key focus in the second phase of the review. UWU continues to have concerns that the review will be used as a vehicle for privatisation and outsourcing. We have concerns that the term “*partnerships with the private sector*” is code for privatisation and will be a mechanism for contracting out services that should be undertaken by Tasmanian Public Sector workers.

UWU opposes the privatisation, outsourcing and contracting out of public services. In our initial submission, we set out why privatisation is bad for workers, the community and democracy. We continue to rely on those submissions and urge the Tasmanian Government to keep Public Sector services in public hands, so that Public Sector workers can continue to provide high quality services to all Tasmanians.

Workforce planning

Recommendation 9 of the interim report is that a centrally prepared, whole-of-Tasmanian State Service Workforce Plan should be developed in the next 12 months.

UWU has concerns that a whole-of-TSS workforce plan will be too removed from the needs of specific departments, and that such a top-down approach will be targeted to limit—rather than grow—Public Sector jobs. Workforce planning should be responsive to what the Tasmanian public

needs from its Public Sector. Workforce planning should also consider issues raised by workers and unions, such as workforce shortages in corrections, discussed below.

The interim report acknowledges that shortages of Correctional Officers may emerge because of Tasmania's planned new prison. However, workforce shortages in the Tasmanian Prison Service (TPS) already exist. TPS's long-term staff shortages put pressure on existing staff to cover shortages by working longer hours and additional shifts.¹ Excessive overtime and an inability to take proper breaks from the workplace can contribute to mental distress among Correctional Officers, as well as high rates of PTSD.

Whilst it is important to hire new staff to address workforce shortages, this is not enough. Even the recent hire of additional Correctional Officers has not resolved workforce shortages in the TPS.

Unreasonably high rates of injury mean staff are still working excessive overtime to cover the shifts of injured workers. A key part of addressing shortages across the Public Sector is improving the quality of jobs—in the case of Correctional jobs, that means making jobs *safe*, by improving training to manage the risks associated with Correctional work, and by providing effective and timely support for mental health.

UWU calls on the Tasmanian Government to make improving the quality of Public Sector jobs a key part of workforce planning, and to ensure jobs in the TPS are safe jobs. Investment in improved WHS and treatment services for Correctional officers will lead to better staffing overall and should be a priority.

TSS employment framework

The interim report states that the TSS employment framework will be a major focus of the second phase and identifies that separation, or termination of employment, was raised as a concern.

Procedural fairness, a component of the TSS employment framework, is critical to ensuring fair outcomes for employees.

Under the current employment framework, management already can performance manage employees, take action on breaches of the code conduct and terminate employment following due process.

UWU strongly opposes any moves to water down protections for employees in the TSS employment framework, or to make termination of employment easier. Investing in ensuring that the current process is followed accurately and in a timely manner will ensure fairness, accountability and efficacy.

Centralised employment of Education Facility Attendants

The review should address structural problems within the Department of Education. UWU raised this in our submission dated October 2020.

Now, each school employs their own Education Facility Attendant (EFA). EFAs are managed by the School Principal and School Business Managers and industrial issues relating to EFAs are dealt with by Regional Learning Services staff.

Previously, these issues were dealt with by Workplace Relations within the Department of Education.

Learning Services Staff and School Business Managers are not able to effectively deal with workplace issues for EFAs. EFAs are also finding it hard to have old equipment replaced under the current system because it requires Business Managers to prioritise these funds from the school budget.

UWU has concerns that rates of injuries among EFAs are too high because of the lack of support under the current structure.


UWU recommends that all aspects of employment and industrial entitlements are EFAs are centrally managed by the Department of Education. The Department of Education would be better placed than individual schools to effectively manage and support EFAs.

UWU reiterates our position that the Public Sector exists to serve the community.

We continue to urge the Government to reject all forms of privatisation. UWU members, such as Education Facility Attendants and Corrections Officers, who consistently work hard to keep the community safe, deserve secure, well-paid jobs.

For more information on this submission, please contact Public Sector Coordinator Paul Blackmore at Paul.Blackmore@unitedworkers.org.au

Regards,



Sharron Caddie
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United Workers Union

¹ Tasmanian Audit Office, Report of the Auditor-General, No. 3 of 2019-20, *Tasmania Prison Service: use of resources*, November 2019, pg. 23, available at <https://www.audit.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/Full-Report-Tasmania-Prison-Service-use-of-resources.pdf>