

TSS review points related to focus areas:

1. Evidence from State Service Survey highlights a lack of diversity in the State Service overall. This may limit capability to consult effectively with the Tasmanian public, especially in locations where the demographics are changing considerably. Some ideas:
  - a. Build proactive recruitment approaches that support engaging people with diverse backgrounds and experiences.
  - b. Set up an overarching group that has a customer/user experience and customer service focus as done in NSW. While NSW has the population and resources to have a Minister and administrative structure, Tasmania could provide a cross-agency group to model the strategies and directions set by NSW.
  - c. Build registry of people across the State Service who have skill sets in the full spectrum of approaches to consultation. These staff could contribute to government project or hot teams/innovation think tanks to support policy development, new service delivery options etc.
  - d. Liaise with NGOs, NFP, business and industry to add to the expertise registry for the State. This would need to include ensuring expertise in theory and practice as well as communication and cultural advice to members of the State service.
  - e. Innovation requires showing ability to take calculated risks. I attended the BiiG conference in Queensland in 2019 when on holiday. The **BiiG** Network is the **Queensland** Government's internal innovation capability network hosted by **Queensland** Treasury. The approaches they were undertaking to enhance innovation and creativity include:
    - i. implementing a State procurement policy that supports start-ups so they can get beyond the "Big 4" for work they need and engaging emerging thinkers;
    - ii. holding open forums with citizens using online think tank groups like MindHive, Bang the Table, Engagement HQ to open up the discussions;
    - iii. using co-design with key stakeholders in areas from building small business policy and encouraging small business diversity, devising policy for social outcomes, building IT capability and service, emergency services and responses, etc
    - iv. Approaching people on registers of expertise to input to developing new initiatives etc
    - v. Further supporting placed-based approaches and initiatives (including collective impact) for development in the long term, thus building an innovation base and including State Service in taking greater risks and building capability, theoretical and practice expertise
  - f. I wonder if there opportunities in Tasmania to explore the overall approach to risk. The current IT status of Tasmanian government appears to have high risks around cybersecurity and sustainability - to name just two.
2. Tasmania appears to have a range of bespoke IT systems that do not interact well with each other. Additionally, there are a number of providers of services across the three levels of government and non-government which may not be working effectively together to provide the most coherent services possible. Ideas:

- a. Work with other States and/or Commonwealth agencies who have commenced work on digital identity, data sharing and open government approaches to identify and learn from their experience and reduce the current approaches of developing our own platforms which continue the cycle of risks in maintenance and sustainability.
  - b. Seek a whole of government procurement of IT so agencies can share data and reduce risks
  - c. Taking a customer and user experience approach, coupled with co-design which could provide means for more up-to-date usable programs with integrated IT eg apps rather than sole use of websites
  - d. Institute risk assessment processes across agencies when developing new services
  - e. Research current offerings of services, programs and projects across the State and establish cross-agency and cross-sector teams to work on new initiatives. In recent responses to COVID-19 it was clear that in some areas there were a multitude of government and non-government agencies all addressing one aspect, but there was little collaboration, a degree of duplication of the services and yet still gaps in services in terms of both locations and offerings to specific cohorts.
3. Collaboration and partnerships could be enhanced by:
- a. Establishing ideas identified in 1 and 2 above, eg hot teams.
  - b. In the last ANZSOG Senior Service program run in Tasmania, one project group identified that the alumni of these programs could be the basis for establishing the structure for collaboration and partnerships across government projects. Could be possible to link to expertise register identified earlier and/or have a matrix approach where the alumni members are seen to be senior staff for the government, not attached to one agency.
  - c. Building a culture of action research/learning into projects, programmes and strategies which can support learning new approaches to risk-taking and allowing State servants to interact as equals with those outside the service
  - d. Apply the established principles of collaboration and partnership creation more effectively through whole of government skill and practice-building exercises. This doesn't necessarily mean "training" everyone, using action learning approaches can be more effective for all parties.
  - e. Establishing secondment arrangements with different sectors to allow staff across sectors to share skills and to retain their entitlements within their sector for the period of secondment.
4. The Tasmanian State Service is a small service compared to State and some local government agencies of other States and Territories. Ideas for efficiencies and economies could include:
- a. Consolidating to form one State Service HR. Agencies could retain some locally needed or relevant HR processes and matters that might be specific to the nature of their business or performance of a staff member while still being attached to the central HR division. This provides that State servants have one employee number that applies across their entire career in the service, regardless of agency or level of position assigned to at any given time.
  - b. Using SES appointments more effectively by capitalising on the capabilities used in selection of staff to SES, thus allowing them to contribute to the priorities of the State not just to one agency. While it's important to understand the nature of the work of an

- agency, there are likely to be many other staff who have this knowledge and business expertise to support the overall strategic approach being asked of SES.
- c. Look to consolidate other corporate services or functions across a range of agencies. Reviewing some of the main strategic priorities of the State for the next 10 years could support decision-making about which services to consolidate across which agencies. Example could be combining security arrangements and facilities services for DoE, Libraries Tasmania and Services Tasmania as these agencies co-locate in some locations and support similar cohorts of the public in their services delivery. Similarly, facilities, procurement processes and staff emotional support services in Ambulance Tasmania and DPFEM could be possible combinations for future.
  - d. Recruitment services contracted to seek suitable staff for the State service. Savings can be made by agencies in having reductions in staff time devoted to recruitment, especially for those agencies which experience high staff turnover and/or who have significant part-time staff numbers.
5. Decentralisation of the State Service may involve addressing cultural change as much as it involves structural and technical changes. Other, significantly larger States have decentralised and found that having more senior staff, including SES staff, based in regional areas has provided
- a. greater involvement and opportunities to build trust with public;
  - b. for less capital city infrastructure costs
  - c. more investment in regional areas,
  - d. for less travel costs for developing and supporting regionally-based initiatives,
  - e. adding more options for regionally-based learning and development and/or communities of practice opportunities for staff, and
  - f. better support to the staff of those agencies who have more Statewide presence such as Department of Communities, Service Tasmania.
6. Some of the ideas in other focus areas above have relevance here. Additionally, cultural change may be needed to:
- a. Broaden the understanding that diversity does not only mean First Nations and disabled community members. Having targeted recruitment campaigns for staff to work in agencies that provide face-to-face and phone services to the public can result in much enhanced service provision especially to migrants.
  - b. Cultural change to build understanding about how to effectively retain staff who perform well and those who are from diverse backgrounds is needed, eg providing spaces and rosters for staff that allow them to meet religious requirements. Would also involve working with current staff about understanding cultural differences and how culture influences working with citizens.
  - c. Ensuring risk assessments are part of business as usual. I have worked in four State agencies and generally been one of the minority who has undertaken risk assessments that have also included stakeholders for proposed activities and actions on a regular basis. This provides means to help State servants to make better recommendations, provide balanced and evidenced advice and puts all risks into a more objective perspective.

7. Long term capability and agility ideas might include some of the points above about taking a citizen/customer experience perspective of our work and roles; staff recruitment practices with “one state service”; retention of staff; diversity of staff; decentralisation and so on. Additional ideas:
  - a. Standardised Statements of Duties and consistent band levels for positions across the State service, eg customer service consultants/officers, project officers, coordinators and so on could assist in ensuring easier movement between agencies and setting up working groups/project teams/hot team etc.
  - b. Building a learning and development culture in the service. Seems that traditional models of “training” have been applied agency by agency across the State service. I wonder how much duplication and to some degree inconsistent learning across the State Service has resulted from having this siloed approach. This approach can be costly and sometimes does not address developing with staff the generic skills needed to have an effective and efficient public service, ie skills in collaborating at all levels, skills in co-design, project management etc. In my experience, staff are not generally encouraged to pursue their own learning opportunities, but wait for these to be provided by the TCC or their agency. This fosters the concept that providing training is the responsibility of the employer only. It does not address well the concept that learning is the responsibility of the employee and there are many learning opportunities that not related to “training”. I think an approach to cultural change that highlights to employees they have some responsibility to keep their credentials and skills current would support a learning culture in the service. This type of culture more readily supports having an agile, flexible, skilled and experienced State Service where staff could move between agencies and maximise the skills of the entire Service.
8. TSS workforce management is an area where overall review would be beneficial. In my experience in other States and Territories, I have found workforce performance management has often taken a more strengths-based, skills enhancing and development perspective than I noted in Tasmania. Some ideas for change could be:
  - a. Take a State Service Values approach for performance management which is not State Service focussed, but focussed on the Tasmanian public/citizens as per point 1b above. Each agency seems to develop their own values statements but not necessarily all tie to their role in serving the citizens of the State. Articulating how the values connect to State Service Principles and Code of Conduct may support all agencies to see workforce performance in a more holistic way.
  - b. The Performance Management programs also differ across agencies and some may take a developmental approach, while others may take a more deficit approach or an approach that specifies minimum standards of performance for tasks. While valuable, the deficit models may not encourage challenging employees to be learners, to explore learning options nor to see their value potential as focus is on where not doing so well and doesn’t often provide feedback about the values they demonstrate..
  - c. As above, if the performance management approaches also use the values focus, then this allows staff to see how their behaviours are important, not just the tasks they perform. This can provide for addressing staff excellence as well as where improvements are needed.

- d. Overall, the processes for managing poor performance seem to require informal approaches over a period of time which require extensive record-keeping, many conversations and misunderstandings by staff and unions about the processes. When the processes move to more formal management steps, the workload for those managing the performance is increased and support from the formal channels can decrease, advice on effective management can be inconsistent, and the decisions at senior levels or formal structures may not support the ability to make changes with staff about their the performance. As a result, in my experience, there is a loss of confidence that addressing poor staff performance will result in positive change. There appears to be a pattern of moving staff across agencies where possible to address the issue of poor staff performance than using the formal processes. Having siloed approaches by agencies also may encourage less than upfront references for those staff who one agency is seeking to move on being provided to another agency.
  - e. Staff who have exemplary performance are not often recognised across the State Service because of the siloed approaches. While the agency may provide positive feedback, it does not enable a State servant to build their reputation across the whole of the Service. For those who are new the service or who are not Tasmanian and therefore well networked, this could be demotivating for them when seeking to be more agile and move across agencies to learn more or make contributions more widely.
9. Attracting, developing and retaining a skilled public sector is challenge in a small State. Some of the ideas noted previously may help:
- a. 1a and b – highlighting that the State Service is about the Tasmanian public not the agency and what it does could support attracting persons with value base needed as well as the more diversified life experiences and backgrounds for a future public sector.
  - b. Under response 5 - decentralising the State Service may well contribute. Those with aspirations for career advancement who live outside of Hobart may find their options limited unless they move themselves and their families. This in turn limits the local recruitment pool.
  - c. As well, ideas in response point 6 above could apply here.
  - d. Developing recruitment processes which have greater consistency across levels may support being able to attract new employees, while not losing aspects of merit selection. For example, for some senior positions a 1 or 2 page “pitch” is sought in the application process, while for a Band 1 position it’s required that people address all selection criteria.
  - e. As well, having some clear guidelines for how to address selection criteria (like *Cracking the Code* that is provided for APS, or using *STAR* approach as they did in Queensland) may be useful. This is helpful for candidates from non-English speaking backgrounds who may find the criteria difficult to work through. Plain English or, better still plain Language, Statements of duties would be useful for ensuring attracting diversity.
  - f. Having consideration to providing weighted criteria – this would allow providing more scope to appoint people with the value-base needed. This is harder to work on when developing staff to retain them than is learning specific technical or process skills.
  - g. I wonder if it is worth reconsidering that State Service positons have an essential or desirable criterion statement seeking or highly regarding post-secondary educational

qualifications, even if there are not specific areas of study being sought. While, qualifications are not the fullness of what might be sought for employees, they can indicate that an applicant has some theoretical understandings and has demonstrated some willingness to be a learner which could be applied to the roles they may undertake.

- h. Retaining State servants might be enhanced through ideas like having hot teams, project teams, etc cross-agency which provides for staff to share ideas and build networks. For some staff this helps them feel valued.

**Sue Howard**

Deputy Director, Service Operations Service Tasmania.