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From: Henry Maxwell <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, 9 October 2020 4:01 PM
To: State Service Review
Subject: TSS Review

Please find below some comments re my experience in the Tasmanian State Service

Identifying opportunities to improve the delivery of government services, programs, projects and other initiatives more efficiently or effectively, including information technology platforms;

Improve online access to government services including increasing opportunities for online applications and payments. Develop customer centric dashboards that allow the public to access all their interactions with different government agencies in one location, like a virtual Service Tasmania. Adopt electronic messaging and Notices to improve reach of messaging and reduce costs related to mail and advertising.

A new register of licences and permits issued under the Water Management Act 1999 is long overdue and an interface to capture and report on water use would provide greater confidence in water availability for licensees but also greater transparency for the public and could stimulate the development of an efficient water market in Tasmania.

A broader rollout of mobile technology (laptops and mobile phones) would make it easier for staff to work from home or other locations as well as access government services for the public while in the field

Examining the appropriateness of the current location of government services, and the desirability of any change;

The current forced relocation of positions to the north of the State while well intentioned has, in my opinion been counter-productive. There are teams that have to date been based in the South (for whatever reason) that now have one or two team members based in the north. While this may seem like a good idea, unless these are customer facing positions there is very little benefit. Having one planning officer based in the north while the rest of the team is in the south isolates that officer and complicates communications and interactions for that team. This seems to have been a thought bubble with little consideration of the implementation and implications of the decision.

With telephones, email and now videoconferencing, particularly in light of COVID, face to face interactions are less essential so work can effectively be done from anywhere. Accordingly, what best suits the workgroup and how it can be most effective and efficient should be an important consideration when determining where a position should be located.

Facilitating areas of cultural change within the TSS (e.g. promoting risk-based decision making, increasing diversity, promoting innovation, improving accountability and identifying ways to enhance performance);

I don't know how to do this. The Public Service has become increasingly risk averse and politically sensitive and reactive. Maybe making Departmental Secretaries tenured positions

rather than contracted ones would give heads of agencies greater confidence to speak truth to government. Too often I believe advice and decisions have been made trying to second guess what Ministers want to hear. Being prepared to get things wrong, acknowledge mistakes, and learn from them should not be discouraged.

COVID has been a massive disruptor forcing the Service into changing the way it has done things for years and lo and behold the wheels of government and the Public Service rolled on. These changes should be embraced and further opportunities to modernise the workforce and workplace investigated.

Identifying ways to help develop the long-term capability and agility of the TSS;

Increased movement of staff between agencies should create a more flexible workforce with an understanding of the responsibilities and functions of the different agencies. The COVID experience has enabled us to work remotely and in my case perform my duties from just about any location with internet access. The interoperability arrangements are a good example of where with a little bit of training staff from a range of agencies can be deployed in to intense and critical roles and perform exceptionally. The Public Service is an extremely skilled workforce and these skills and their knowledge, experience and in many cases enthusiasm and passion should be harnessed more often.

Implementing enhanced workforce management processes across the employee life cycle, including opportunities to implement improvements to how the TSS recognises, develops and manages employee performance; and

The concept of performance management and the annual reviews and periodic conversations is all well and good but too often, as with many initiatives, it is merely a box ticking exercise to be able to say that it has been done with no assessment of it's effectiveness. Too many Performance Management Reviews are just a matter of changing the dates on the forms and having them signed again. Effective performance management requires commitment and investment of time and energy which in the current environment is extremely precious with little available to be spent on such "non-productive" activities. Maybe PMRs should be managed by a dedicated unit? Or periodically reviewed by HR branches to see whether they have been implemented/followed. The current self reporting rarely generates much interest or excitement, rather it's just another piece form to fill out, send off and never hear of again until the following year. Making it easier for staff to move within and between agencies for six or twelve month secondments to provide them with opportunities to experience different workplaces and to share their own experiences in new workplaces would be beneficial to both the individual as well as the Service.

In the past recognition of performance was often achieved through training opportunities or attendance at conferences but this has become less common and can be disheartening for those that don't get to go.

While acknowledging and rewarding exceptional performance is important, so is managing poor or under performance. This is something that the Service seems to struggle with and can end up affecting the performance of whole teams. Too often, in my experience, the agency has waited for an underperforming or troublesome staff member to leave of their own free will rather than taking steps to address any underlying behavioural issues. Or worse, the staff member is moved on to be someone else's problem. There should be easier ways for the Service to get rid of underperforming or disruptive staff albeit with appropriate checks and balances.

Attracting, developing and retaining a skilled public sector workforce with the capacity to meet emerging economic, social, environmental and technological opportunities and challenges.

The public Service is still an attractive place to work with, at least in the area I work, job security, workplace flexibility, and an acknowledgement of the importance of a work life balance. These benefits should be promoted to help attract younger staff to the Service. The cadet program seems to be an effective way to expose skilled younger people to the opportunities the Service has to offer and should maybe be expanded. Similarly, there may be benefits to increasing the ethnic diversity of the Service so to reflect Tasmania's changing demographic.

Thanks for this opportunity

Regard

Henry Maxwell