



**Proud to be Public**

**Proud to be Union**

**Submission**  
to the Independent  
Review of the Tasmanian  
State Service

ON BEHALF OF  
CPSU (SPSFT) INC.  
OCTOBER 2020

THIRZA WHITE  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY



**1 ABOUT THE CPSU**

**2 OUR PROCESS**

**3 PRIVATISATION & OUTSOURCING**

**4 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

**5 WORKFORCE PLANNING**

**6 DECENTRALISATION**

**7 IT PLATFORMS & SYSTEMS**

**8 OTHER ISSUES**

# Who we are

The Community & Public Sector Union is a trade union that represents public sector workers in Commonwealth and State jurisdictions. In Tasmania we have been representing public sector workers since 1897.

Our members care for us when we are sick, they educate us, they protect our environment and support our industries, they deliver justice and safety, and they plan for our future.

We believe that public services are the foundation of a just and fair society and a strong public sector improves the lives of all Tasmanians.

Thirza White  
Assistant Secretary

*T. White*



# Our Process

**Given the breadth and generality of the Key Focus Areas for this review we have found it very difficult to engage with our members in a way that is meaningful and detailed. This has been exacerbated by the extremely tight time frame for consultation, just 4 weeks.**

As we indicated to Dr. Watt back in December 2019, our aim in engaging with this review was to provide opportunities for him to hear directly from public sector workers about their real life experiences working in the Tasmanian State Service thereby identifying the aspects that are working well and those that need addressing. Even taking into consideration the disruption of COVID-19 it reflects poor project design that a report is only weeks away yet there has been no engagement with those working in the system.

As a member-led union our submission comes from our members. We would have liked to have held meetings around the state, reviewed issues papers and explored solutions with groups of members with more direct knowledge and experience. Instead, because of the enforced time frame, we provided an opportunity online and via email for members to share their stories and experiences around five key themes:

- 1. Privatisation and outsourcing;**
- 2. Performance management;**
- 3. Workforce Planning;**
- 4. Decentralisation;**
- 5. The suitability of IT platforms and systems**
- 6. Career Progression**

This submission is based on the feedback from members on these five key themes and brief discussions with our elected Branch Council and our Regional Reference groups.

Unlike other unions, the CPSU covers a very wide range of occupations and professions. Our members work in every government Agency. They work in the Corporate Services areas, management, through to operational roles. This is exactly the knowledge and experience the Review should have been capturing and represents a missed opportunity.





# Privatisation & Outsourcing

**Members provided many examples of privatisation and outsourcing across the Tasmanian State Service. While the large-scale privatisation of public assets that has occurred in other state is limited in Tasmania the creeping privatisation through the outsourcing of key services is widespread.**

**Examples include:**

- The transfer of public housing properties and titles to not-for-profit providers;
- Responding to demand pressures in family violence counselling by funding external providers instead of increasing internal capacity;
- Blending State Service employees and not-for-profit employees in the Child Safety workforce in Advice and Referral;
- The provision of out of home care services;
- Responding to demand pressures on driver assessors by licensing private operators instead of employing more assessors;
- Opening property valuation services to competitive tendering;

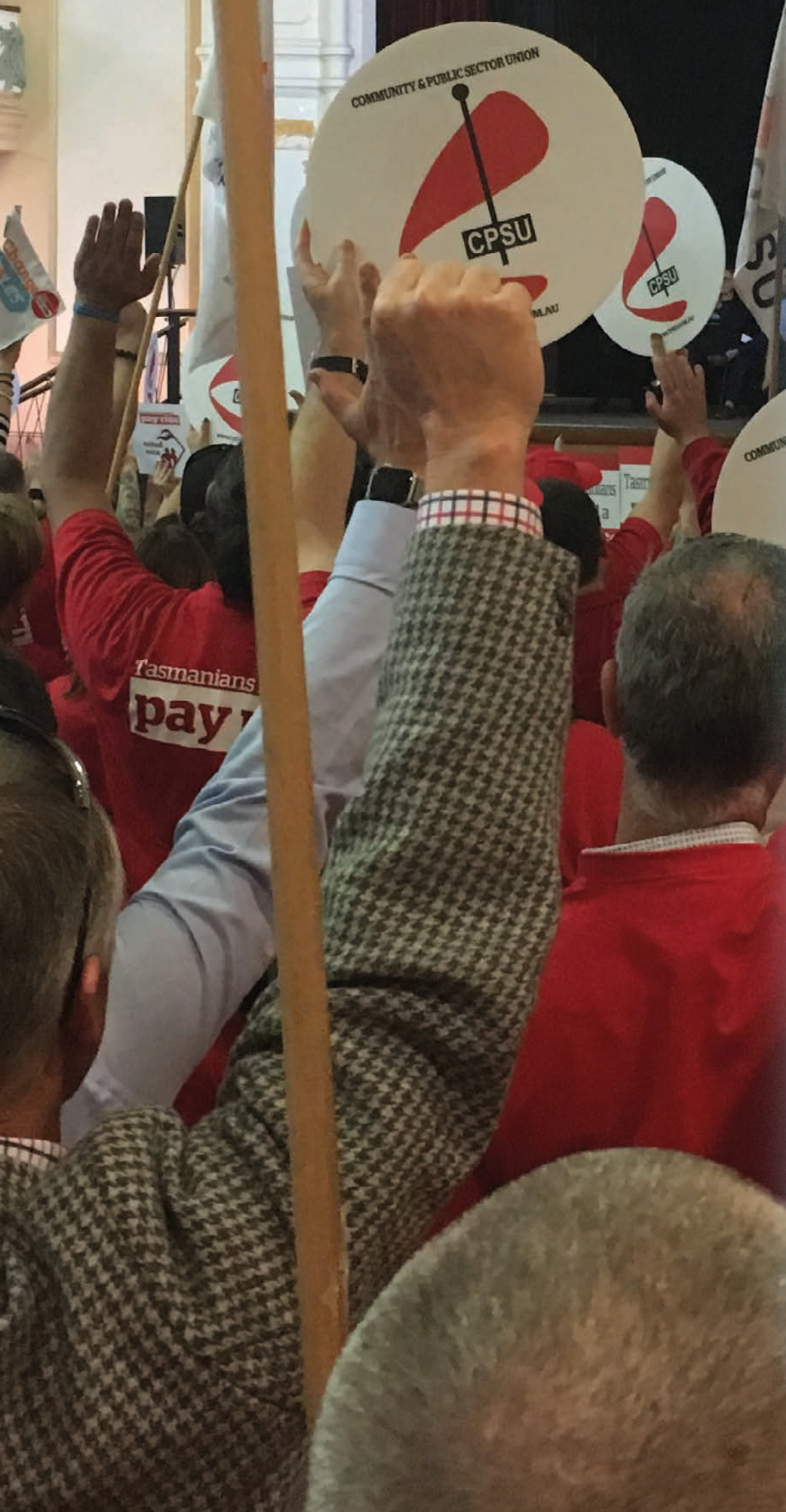
Members provided feedback on all the examples listed that showed in every case it had either resulted in poorer services to the community or higher costs for similar service or both.

**Common themes identified by members included:**

- Outsourcing part of a service usually means the external provider becomes responsible for the high volume, simple cases while the public service remains responsible for the complex cases. Funding is often based on volume and

not complexity so a significant proportion of the funding is outsourced leaving the public service underfunded to deal with the most complex work. When these services inevitably fail it is used as an excuse to further privatise;

- The reason for the outsourcing is often neither economic nor better services but an effort for government's to shed accountability. This often occurs in politically sensitive areas like Human Services where a Minister is held directly accountable for services provided by the public sector but can hide by putting outsourced providers, often religious based not-for-profits, between themselves and the provision of services;
- Situations where public service capacity is run down following outsourcing to the stage where the community becomes beholden to the outsourced provider and therefore the cost of the service increases rapidly. In some instances, such as road construction, there is no internal capacity to assess the quality of work performed so big construction companies are contracted to assess each other's work.
- External providers having clear conflicts of interest regarding the services they provide. Private driver assessors sell driver training packages and then the learner drivers who purchase those packages are assessed by other people in the same organisation.
- Private providers putting profits before services. Through COVID-19 there have been a number of service providers who walked away from services when it became clear they could not provide them at a profit.





### What members said:

“NGOs can choose which children they provide placements for. Government is responsible for placing all children needing OoHC, but because the government ‘carer pool’ has diminished in the wake of NGO growth there is now a limited number of Departmental foster carers, and finding foster care placements for some children has become more difficult.”

“I am employed in an inspectoral statutory role in regulation so for this to be privatised may lead to corruption by stealth and certainly would not provide confidence in the general public as they would not be bound by the State Service Principles or Act.”

“I have worked for an IT firm that provided services to government agencies across various states and the national government. They were quite aware, and open with the fact that they needed to charge about the same for people and other resources as government would if doing the work internally, and then add another 20% to make a business profit. This does not represent good value for money for the community.”

“Have seen and had experience of multiple outsourced consultancies when the often expensive consultants only documented knowledge and sometimes even words from internal Tasmanian state service staff.”

# 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;

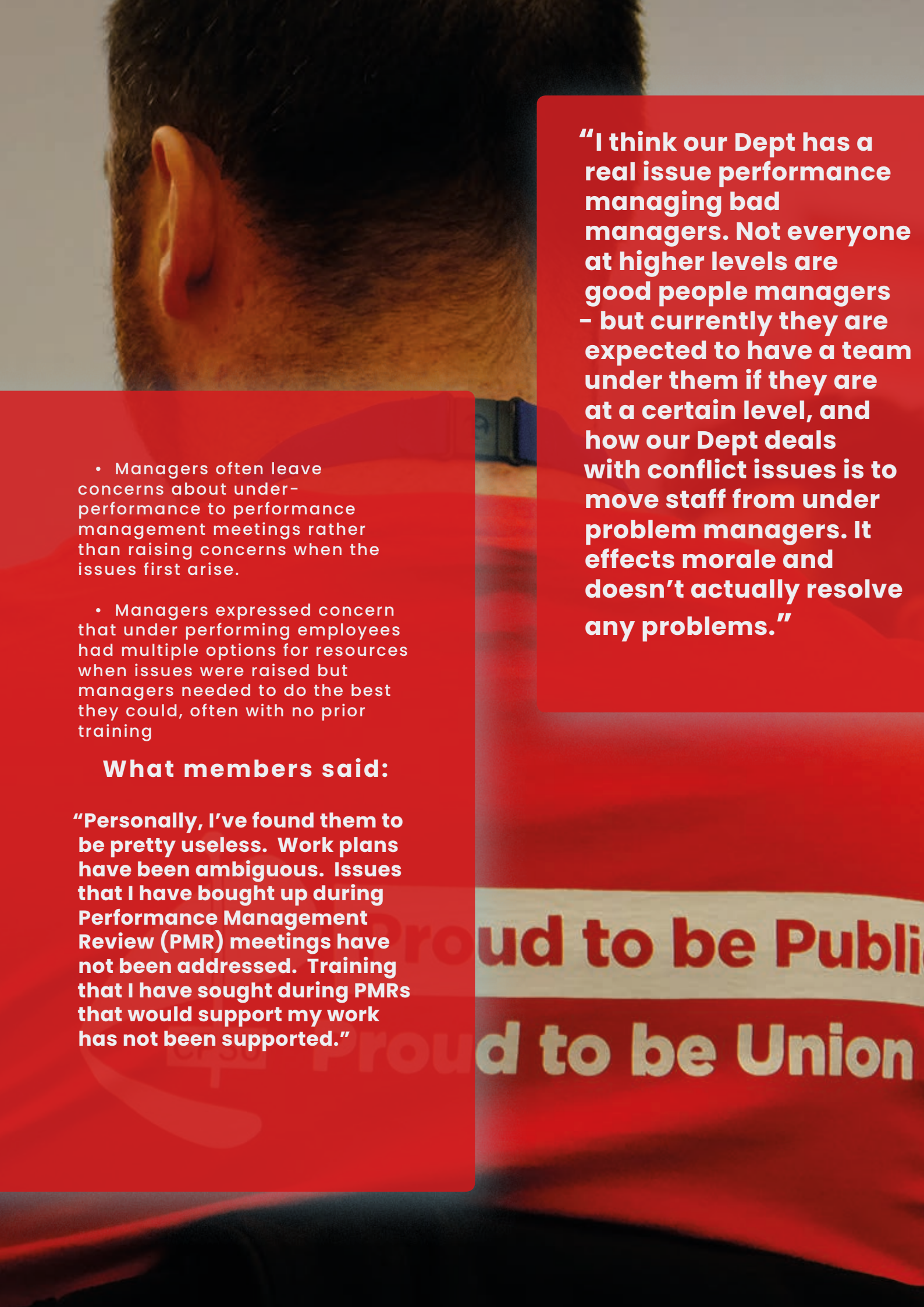
- That some performance management processes require the development of KPIs or KRAs but often these measure functions that are not critical to the employee's role so the employee is left either achieving their targets by undertaking functions not central to their role or they

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 development of career 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;



- Managers often leave concerns about under-performance to performance management meetings rather than raising concerns when the issues first arise.

- Managers expressed concern that under performing employees had multiple options for resources when issues were raised but managers needed to do the best they could, often with no prior training

### **What members said:**

**“Personally, I’ve found them to be pretty useless. Work plans have been ambiguous. Issues that I have brought up during Performance Management Review (PMR) meetings have not been addressed. Training that I have sought during PMRs that would support my work has not been supported.”**

**“I think our Dept has a real issue performance managing bad managers. Not everyone at higher levels are good people managers – but currently they are expected to have a team under them if they are at a certain level, and how our Dept deals with conflict issues is to move staff from under problem managers. It effects morale and doesn’t actually resolve any problems.”**

**“My experience is that my PMRs are useful and positive, as I have a respectful and honest relationship with my current supervisor.”**

**“From my experiences, the annual P.M. process is time consuming and does not achieve much. I have observed employees/managers spending at least a week per person/per PMR and I think of how much \$ that employee/managers salary is and whether the whole PMR exercise is value for taxpayer’s money. Are the results/document really worth the effort?”**

**“I think best to have a less formal discussion (say, every 6 months) would be a better alternative to the formal annual PMR process. Only elevate the matters raised to a more formal level/documentation if the need really arises, and have people doing what they are paid to do – to act as ‘servants of the public’ and not fill-out documentation.”**

**“Its good when you have a supervisor who supports you. But its damaging for staff who have a supervisor who uses**

**this process as a bullying tool. From experience, a supervisor I had in 2012-13 used his power to shelve all of my projects, and used my PMR to make me appear incompetent to other managers (who are often on interview panels). He also filled my PMR with subjective and unproven innuendo and even admitted to his assessment being based on hearsay.”**

**“All I can say about these ‘performance reviews’ is that I still have serious trauma from the way they are conducted. These reviews were used to bully and belittle staff, NOT to encourage and help. I saw many grown men cry after theirs. Training identified is almost never given I’ve been waiting 9 years and still haven’t done most of the basic training coursed identified in the PMR.”**

**“In my experience the current system of Workplace Performance fails, a good manager doesn’t need it as they undertake this day to day through discussion and understanding the weaknesses and strengths of the employee, the organisation and themselves. The current process just provides a personalised chat and a tick the box to present to management above.”**

**“I’ve only had one Manager who followed the guidelines in terms of regularly updating our performance development plans and addressing issues. This manager did address my role, my performance, and how she could support me with training and development needs. It took a lot of time which we both found frustrating.**

**This manager also tried to use the process to deal with other staff who constantly underperformed – unsuccessfully.”**

**“The PMR process as used in my Division is very valuable, it aims to provide a couple of meetings a year to discuss important matters such as work priorities, WHS, work-life balance, two-way feedback and any other issues arising. It does involve filling out forms, but these are reasonably straightforward and concise. The most significant issue I can see in relation to performance management is the difficulty in addressing poor performance.”**

**“I have worked in my current Dept for 3.5 years. I get told to write my own performance plan**

**and then we ‘discuss’. This has been the same experience in every department and position I have held since I joined the TAS State Service in 2008. I have worked between Band 6-8 in this period. Why have a strategic plan, if our performance priorities aren’t aligned to it, by our managers, who are meant to be leading us?”**

**“Performance management occurs Annually as part of the ‘PDP’ process in our Dept. Its generally a laborious task where we try and align our ambitions, interests and things that would assist with our roles, with the strategic needs of the business.**

**Often training opportunities will be included in the PDP, but subject to change depending on budget and priorities.”**

**“We have performance reviews that happen every year but they’re a meaningless exercise. Nothing ever comes of them. No training, no opportunities at acting up, they just go into the ether. It’s a waste of time for the us and the Team Leader.”**

**“Workforce planning is just a title and due to reductions of staff in my workplace there is a reliance on individuals with the knowledge and skillset to continue the work, others have their own role and are flat out as well so do not have the time to learn from those with greater knowledge. There is nobody being trained to take over my role even though this was suggested to senior management and repeated for the last 15 years.”**

# Workforce Planning

Members are acutely aware of the aging workforce and frustrated by the lack of action around workforce planning. They note the tools used in the past to develop the workforce needed including apprenticeships, traineeships and cadetships have been abandoned. Cuts over the past 10 years mean many areas have senior, experienced staff approaching retirement and no lower level staff gaining knowledge and experience to step into the roles that will become vacant. There is a total reliance on advertising positions that become vacant instead of developing existing employees to fill the roles needed and recruiting young workers at the base or through graduate programs.

## **Common themes identified by members included:**

- There seems to be little or no focus on developing the workforce that will be needed to provide services to the Tasmanian community in 5,10 or 20 years time. There is blind faith that we

can attract employees with suitable skills whenever roles become vacant just by advertising;

- It often takes months to fill vacancies after someone resigns or retires so there is little opportunity for handover or knowledge transfer;
- Concerns were raised about the limited range of professionals who can be trained within Tasmania and that with UTAS focusing more on associate degrees this is likely to narrow further. This means filling positions becomes reliant on convincing professionals to move to Tasmania to take jobs;
- Concerns that youth recruitment pathways have become limited as lower level positions have been cut. Jobs that are advertised usually need to be filled with someone who can come up to speed quickly so younger workers who would require time invested in their development are overlooked for older applicants who can hit the



ground running. There is no recognition of the time and effort required to mentor a new worker. General feeling there needs to be specific, funded youth recruitment pathways into the State Service;

- The lack of work force plans and aggressive austerity measures is creating extensive single person dependencies. These staff are often overloaded with work and unable to take regular leave breaks because there is no one else to provide backup or relief. When budgets are cut these experts are often offered redundancies and decades of knowledge and experience walks out the door without any systematic handover.

### **What members said:**

**“There is no career planning or development. People who have been in the role longer tend to be promoted or back fill Team Leader absences. There is no career path to become a Team Leader and no training opportunities exist to learn new skills. In areas of high turnover Team Leaders often have little experience and are offered no management training. They will not explore having senior staff who can assist with training new and inexperienced staff.”**

**“Over the last 5 years as staff leave or take secondments there has been little or no attempt to fill the vacant positions. The structure of the division has changed over time, with a trend that the junior positions become vacant as people move on. These positions have been left vacant, removed or filled with fixed term appointment. The effect of these actions by management mean that there are very few younger people working in the organisation as there are no positions available and what positions are advertised are fixed term so they move on. This has led to an inability to provide any sort of career path or certainty for younger people to enter the division resulting in an aging workforce.”**

**“There seems to be no coordinated plan to assist people who are facing major life transitions - entering or leaving the workforce. PDA process is disconnected from workforce strategic planning (emphasis on performance management not succession/transition). People who are approaching retirement need to be actively advised of flexible work options and opportunities to mentor/train people to move into roles when they are vacated. People approaching retirement should be actively encouraged to plan their transition to retirement (encourage them to wind down and create opportunities for younger workers to fill their roles.”**



# 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.**

**Common themes identified by members included:**

- 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.**

**I think best to have a less formal discussion (say, every 6 months) would be a better alternative to the formal annual PMR process. Only elevate the matters raised to a more formal level/documentation if the need really arises, and have people doing what they are paid to do – to act as ‘servants of the public’ and not fill-out documentation.”**

**“It is not without problems particularly in maintaining a consistent approach between northern and southern people. Otherwise decentralisation is probably a good thing provided organisations are not destroyed such as when Barnaby Joyce in the Commonwealth shifted the APVMA from Canberra to Armadale / Tamworth NSW.”**



# IT Platforms & Systems

**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 O365;
- 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.”**



# Other Issues Raised by Members

In addition to the feedback provided on the five key themes there were several other issues raised by members that we consider should be included in our submission.

## **1. 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.

## **2. Unlocking Public Sector Skills**

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.

## **3. 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.

HOBART WATERFRONT



MURRAY ST  
5 Min SULLIVANS COVE

119



**THANK YOU:  
PUBLIC  
SECTOR  
WORKERS  
SAVED LIVES**

**THANK YOU:  
PUBLIC  
SECTOR  
WORKERS  
SAVED LIVES**

**THANK YOU:  
PUBLIC  
SECTOR  
WORKERS  
SAVED LIVES**

**Proud to be Public  
Proud to be Union**

**Proud to be Public  
Proud to be Union**

**Proud to be Public  
Proud to be Union**