

APS WORKPLACE RELATIONS STATEMENT

Better public services: More secure jobs

Eight long years of cuts and outsourcing by the Coalition has undermined the capacity and capability of the Australian Public Service (APS).

APS employees have had their wages, conditions and job security attacked by a government that doesn't value or respect the role that the APS and its employees play in delivering public services to the Australian people.

At the same time the Coalition has wasted precious public money on contractors, consultants and labour hire firms for work that could have been done more effectively and cost-efficiently by public servants.

The Coalition's approach to the APS has significantly weakened the service as an institution and as a deliverer of services to the public. Without a change in government these failed policies will continue and will have long lasting impacts for everyday Australians.

Labor's approach to the APS

Labor believes the APS has a crucial role to play in serving our community and helping to shape the future of our nation.

Labor recognises the unique and essential role of the APS in designing and delivering services for the public good and in developing policy solutions to the challenges the nation faces both now and into the future.

Labor is committed to building a stronger public service that delivers better outcomes for the community, delivers frank and fearless advice to Government, acts as a model employer, and contributes to building a fairer and more inclusive Australia.

Labor recognises that the APS should show active leadership in addressing systemic inequality and will take steps to increase the proportions of First Nations peoples in the APS and to address the gender pay gap.

Labor will work constructively with the public service and unions to re-build an effective public sector with fair and equitable conditions of employment and job security, where the Commonwealth acts as a model employer, and restores the ability of workers to genuinely bargain, consistent with Labor's Plan for Secure Australian Jobs.

Labor's policies will improve efficiency in the APS, end the years of wasteful spending and boost jobs in service delivery to ensure Australians are able to access high quality services when and where they need them.

Bargaining and industrial relations

Our approach to fair and productive workplace relations is underpinned by Labor's commitment to the rights of workers to union representation and the right to organise and bargain collectively. Labor supports the important role that union delegates play in representing employees at a local level.

Current Government policies such as the no enhancements rule, along with the inflexible wage cap and pegging policies deny APS workers their right to seek improvements for improved performance and outcomes. In fact, these policies risk APS employees going backwards.

Labor will take a different approach. Labor believes in real wage increases underpinned by productivity growth and delivered through fair and genuine negotiations between employees, their representatives, and employers.

Labor will work to reduce the fragmentation of APS pay and conditions and address, over time, the inequalities resulting from the failed industrial policies of the past eight years. Labor understands the benefits that would result from genuine service wide negotiations on pay and common conditions with agency specific conditions negotiated at the agency level.

Labor will engage in fair and genuine negotiations with APS employees and their representatives including on the capacity to negotiate back pay arrangements or date of effect pay rises consistent with other industries and public sector organisations.

Job Security

Labor will also target the growing scourge of insecure work in the APS by identifying where work can be done more efficiently and effectively by public servants in direct, permanent jobs.

Labor will stop the excessive reliance and waste of public funds on contractors, consultants and labour hire companies for work that can be done more effectively by public servants. This will increase the number of direct permanent jobs in the APS.

Labor will abolish the arbitrary average staffing level (ASL) cap which has caused so much damage to specific agencies across the APS.

Labor will conduct an audit of employment within the APS, and as a model employer, take steps to create more secure employment where temporary forms of work are being used inappropriately. This will include converting labour hire, casual or contract roles into ongoing APS jobs.

Further announcements about Labor's policies to rebuild the capacity and capability of the APS, including where the additional permanent jobs will be made in the lead up to the Federal Election.