

REVITALISE AUSTRALIA'S PUBLIC SERVICE

Essential public services need to serve the public, not profits

Successive governments have outsourced our essential public services.

When we outsource services, they become more expensive, lower quality, and harder to oversee. When we outsource jobs, people get paid less, and they're often employed with fewer conditions.

The Greens will turn the tide and reverse reliance on privatisation. We will create secure, well paid jobs in the public service providing the services we all need, and make the Australian Public Service (APS) a diverse, inclusive employer of choice.

We want a thriving, innovative public sector with capacity to take on the challenges of our time and build the future. Our policies will ensure we have higher quality services delivering a better deal for the public and for public sector workers.

THE GREENS WILL:

- ▲ **Restore the number of jobs in the Australian Public Service to match 2012 levels** so the public service can meet the needs of this country
- ▲ **Lift APS level staff wages by 4% p/a over the next four years** and pull wages up across the private sectors
- ▲ **Limit outsourcing to labour hire firms and the Big Four to 7.5% of an agency's budget**
- ▲ **Reform appointment processes to reduce politicisation**
- ▲ **Ensure public servants can participate in public debate and run for election**
- ▲ **Protect public sector whistleblowers**
- ▲ **Require public sector agencies to report on, and address, their gender pay gap**
- ▲ **Champion diverse and inclusive employment** through targeted APS workforce strategies, including a quota for disabled employee representation

PAYING FOR OUR PLAN

By making billionaires and big corporations pay their fair share of tax and winding back handouts to big polluters, we can build a better life for all of us.

1 in 3 big corporations pays no tax and many big corporations and billionaires send their profits offshore tax free.

The Greens will tax billionaires with a new ‘billionaires tax’, require big corporations making excessive profits to pay a ‘corporate super-profits tax’ and axe billions of dollars in handouts to the coal, oil and gas giants that are driving the climate crisis.

These measures have all been costed by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office.

When big corporations and billionaires pay their fair share, everyone can have the services they need for a better life.

A public service providing the services we all need

For a decade the Coalition has dogmatically ignored the fact that paying private consultants, contractors and labour-hire to do the same work that public servants used to do is more expensive and less efficient.

These private providers tell Ministers exactly what they want to hear, and they’ve donated a staggering \$5.4 million back to the major parties in the past decade¹. The Coalition all but admitted that years of cuts, privatisation and dodgy outsourcing deals didn’t work when they recently relaxed their chokehold on public service staffing levels².

The Coalition’s budget cash splash to increase some agencies’ staffing levels is not enough to undo a decade of ideologically driven cuts and outsourcing. Australia needs its public sector to always be ready to deliver essential services to the community, and to help drive the transition to a clean economy and sustainable future.

The Greens will restore staffing levels for the Australian Public Service to 2012 levels³. Over a four-year period, employment in the public service will increase to over 153,000 people. This will mean more people in the public sector to help meet the education, housing, health, social security, environmental protection and infrastructure needs of the country.

This initiative complements policies to increase funding to public science, health and research organisations, invest in public energy,

¹ Australian Electoral Commission
<https://transparency.aec.gov.au/AnnualDonor#>

² Agency Resourcing, *Budget Paper No. 4 2021–22*

³ Defined as those employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*

manufacturing and housing, and establish Green Australia.⁴

After restoring staffing levels, the Greens will then increase the size of the public service at the same rate as the population. Expecting the same number of public servants to serve more people and higher demands is not feasible or fair on those workers.

The Greens will end the average staffing level cap and so-called 'efficiency dividends' for government departments. These arbitrary, ideologically motivated measures distort what should be a fundamental principle of government: funding for the public service should match the level required to ensure the delivery of public services.

Lift public sector wages

Before COVID-19, wage growth in Australia had already slowed to its worst sustained period since the Great Depression, growing at an annual average rate of under 2% since 2013⁵. The pandemic has only worsened this wages crisis; in real terms, wages went backwards in 2021⁶.

One of the simplest and most effective things that the government can do to prompt wage rises is pay public servants more⁷. Reserve Bank Governor, Philip Lowe, has warned that public sector pay caps are keeping wages low⁸.

⁴ See <https://greens.org.au/platform>

⁵ Andrew Stewart, Jim Stanford, and Tess Hardy. Australia, We Have a Problem, The Wages Crisis in Australia Nov 2018.

⁶ ABS, Wage Price Index - December quarter, February 2022

⁷ Andrew Stewart, Jim Stanford, and Tess Hardy, Open letter on the benefits of promoting faster wage growth, 19 March 2019.

⁸ David Marin-Guzman. "Lowe calls for 3pc pay rises for public sector." AFR, 9 Aug 2019.

The Greens will increase wages for APS level workers by 4% per annum over the next 4 years. This sends a strong message that workers in the public sector are valued and respected, while also encouraging wage increases across into the private sector.

The Greens will work towards ending performance-based pay. This is a failed experiment that has not improved performance. It has eroded a sense of teamwork and it is inconsistent with the role and culture of the public service.⁹

The Greens will also reform the Remuneration Tribunal by appointing a worker representative to the Tribunal and determining wages without reference to the private sector.

Limit outsourcing to labour hire firms and the Big Four

The flip side of governments slashing public sector employment is that the public money spent on outsourcing public sector work to contractors and consultants is out of control.

In 2021 alone the Government spent over \$850 million on contracts with the Big Four of Deloitte, EY, KPMG and PwC, and well over \$1 billion in contracts outsourcing what should have been public sector work¹⁰. That money could have employed 12,000 APS staff.¹¹

When Australia's economy experienced its worst recession since the Great Depression in

⁹ Allen Hawke, "What's the most effective way to motivate staff?" 26 September 2019.

¹⁰ Doug Dingwall 'Government agencies to spend \$850m on new contracts with big four consultancies' 1 Mar 2021.

¹¹ The Australia Institute, *Talk isn't Cheap: Making consultants' reports publicly available via Senate order*, September 2021.

the 1930s, each of the Big Four maintained or grew their revenues in 2019 thanks to the Coalition's lucrative government contracts¹².

These consulting firms have become one of the largest sources of political donations in Australia¹³, collectively donating more than \$5.6 million over the past decade. It's hardly surprising to see that generosity rewarded with more contracts.

The increasing use of consultants has not only cost the public billions, it has also contributed to a 'hollowing out' of public service capability and strategic policy-making. This vicious circle further encourages an unhealthy reliance on outsourced policy advice, which experts have warned leads to increased risk of corruption and less accountability¹⁴.

The Greens will put an end to the gravy train for private consultants and contractors and put an end to the 'brain drain' from the public service to private companies.

We will limit consultancy and other contracts to 7.5% of an agency's departmental appropriation. This will save at least \$13 billion over the decade that can be reinvested back into the public service. Our plan also prohibits the use of labour-hire companies, except in exceptional circumstances, and unless approved by the Minister and reported to Parliament.

¹² Edmund Tadros and Hannah Wootton 'Big four consulting firm data tracker' 23 April 2021.

¹³ Australian Electoral Commission
<https://transparency.aec.gov.au/AnnualDonor#>

¹⁴ Bernard Keane 'Corruption threat from surge in consultants, hollowing out of public service', 10 May 2021

Fairer Appointment Processes

Australia needs a diverse, expert, and fiercely apolitical public service. However, the culture of 'frank and fearless advice' has been undermined by political appointments to key roles within Departments and statutory offices.

To ensure the independence of appointees, the Greens will :

- ▲ Require consultation with the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit prior to the appointment of the Australian Public Service Commissioner;
- ▲ Establish an advisory panel to make recommendations on the appointment of departmental secretaries and other statutory heads. The panel will include the APS Commissioner, Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, and a worker representative from the relevant department or agency.

The panel's recommendations must be unanimous and reported to parliament. The government must justify any appointment decision that is contrary to the panel's recommendations.

The Greens will also clarify the roles and responsibilities the APS Commissioner and the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, in line with the Thodey Review¹⁵.

¹⁵ APS Review: Priorities for change, 19 March 2019.

Closing the gender pay gap

To improve data collection and action on gender equality in the APS, the Greens will extend workplace gender reporting obligations to the public sector.¹⁶

Annual reports from all agencies will set out the gender pay gap for the agency and actions taken to close the gap.

A more diverse public service

The APS should reflect the community that it serves, and implement a range of strategies to attract, recruit and nurture a culturally diverse workforce. The Greens will:

- ▲ Implement the *APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026* and encourage agencies to achieve and exceed the minimum standards for gender equality;
- ▲ Implement the *Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020-2024*;
- ▲ Working with the disability community, create a National Jobs Plan that includes a 20 per cent quota for full employment representation of disabled employees in the Australian Public Service by 2030¹⁷;
- ▲ Implement strategies to increase employment and representation of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

¹⁶ See [Economic Security for Women policy](#)

¹⁷ See [Accessible Australia policy](#)

Protecting Whistleblowers

The Greens recognise that public servants can face considerable risks for revealing corruption or maladministration within their Departments.

The Moss Review highlighted the need to strengthen the Public Interest Disclosure Act and improve protections for whistleblowers. The government has so far failed to act on the Moss recommendations. The Greens will continue to demand reform.

The Greens' Bill to establish a National Integrity Commission, which passed the Senate more than two years ago, includes a Whistleblower Protection Commissioner that will ensure appropriate support, advice, representation, and protection for people disclosing misconduct.

Protecting Freedom of Political Expression

Public servants have a right to freedom of political expression. Dismissals and court cases have highlighted the inadequacy of existing protections in the digital age.

The Greens will legislate to protect the right of public servants in their private capacity to engage in political advocacy and activism, run for public office, participate in their union, and represent or be elected to activist organisations.

Public servants need to be confident that they can participate in public debate without risking their job.

The Greens will also support Constitutional reform to allow public servants to run for Federal parliament.