

Opening Statement, Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to make an opening statement to the Committee.

I released the Centralised Code of Conduct Inquiry Taskforce Final Report into the Robodebt Scheme on 13 September. My statement makes it clear that the APS acknowledges its role and takes responsibility for its actions. I apologised as Public Service Commissioner to those affected by the Scheme and to the Australian public for the part played by public servants in this failure. The Independent Reviewers, supported by the Code of Conduct Inquiry Taskforce, fulfilled their responsibilities, conducting independent, thorough, and fair inquiries.

There are other matters that I investigate or advise on, including in my capacity as Parliamentary Service Commissioner. Given the National Anti-Corruption Commission is investigating particular administrative activities in the Parliament, questions on this should be directed to the NACC.

Integrity remains a focus for the Parliament, and not just this Committee but also the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, including its Report 502: The never-ending quest for the golden thread, probity and ethics in the Australian Public Sector.

That report has three recommendations about the Australian Public Service Commission which go to guidance, metrics and assurance of probity in organisational culture across the public sector. These recommendations align with those made by the Auditor General in the ANAO Integrity Performance Audit of the Commission. The Commission welcomes those recommendations.

The APS is working hard to strengthen capability and integrity, to best serve the Government, Parliament and Australian public.

Leaders are essential in creating cultures and systems of tangible and ethical delivery for Government and the community. The public service has made significant changes to performance leadership and management, professional development, recruitment, and systems management to strengthen leadership.

Guidance on the new APS Value of Stewardship was released last week. The new value commences on 11 December 2024.

This month the APSC will release the Trust in Australian Public Services and the State of the Service Report. These surveys provide vital insights into public satisfaction and trust in government services across Australia. This is the third consecutive year the report has been publicly released. Levels of trust have remained stable, with 58 per cent of people saying they trust federal public services.

The State of the Service Report highlights that engagement levels are at a record high, with 91% of respondents to the APS Employee Census willing to go the extra mile at work and 87% actively suggesting improvements to our processes. That augurs well for productivity and the APS doing its job well.

Finally, First Nations representation in the Senior Executive has increased with 85 leaders in places as of 30 June 2024, up from 54 leaders a year earlier.

Thank you.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer
Australian Public Service Commissioner
4 November 2024