

JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

IQ24-000007

Department/Agency: Australian Public Service Commission

Inquiry: Inquiry into probity and ethics in the Australian Public Sector

Date of Hearing: 12 March 2024

Topic: Integrity culture

Committee Member: Julian Hill

Type of question: Proof Committee Hansard, Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit, Inquiry into probity and ethics. Page 9.

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Number of pages: 1

Question:

CHAIR: Thank you. The thing I'll just leave you with to reflect on is that we're really still trying to figure out that question of measurement—how we actually measure culture. I appreciate the evidence given. Dr Bacon has pointed us towards the integrity measures. From those examples, it sounds like some of those measures go towards culture and some are more proxy indicators or checks on things that should be in place. But, if you could just reflect on that core point, we'll distil from this transcript some of the work that's underway. I'd expect we'd seek some reports back on some of that over the next six to 12 months, given the work is underway. But we would like anything further that you could give us within the next couple of weeks on that core question of how you measure culture—the culture of probity and integrity—because, from all of the evidence we've collected through this inquiry in talking to quite a number of agencies, it seems that that gap between the stated intention and the worthy, noble frameworks that everyone points to when asked the question and the results where they actually land—that bit in the middle—is culture: the organisational culture and how leaders behave. So any further evidence about that that you want to give us on reflection would be very helpful.

Answer:

The APS Employee Census and APS Agency Survey, managed by the Commission, are the two key data collections capturing integrity-related data on the APS workforce.

The APS Employee Census is critical in understanding employees' perceptions of behaviours that do not comply with the Code of Conduct; specifically, discrimination, harassment, bullying and corruption.

The APS Agency Survey captures a broader range of information with a consistent approach to asking about the number of investigations conducted into employee behaviour, the elements of the Code of Conduct investigated for breaches, how incidents were reported, the outcomes of investigations and any sanctions applied. The survey also captures the number of complaints received from employees regarding discrimination, harassment and bullying.

The results of these two annual survey activities are reported broadly. Key APS Employee Census and Agency Survey results for the APS as a whole inform the work of the Commission and are reported publicly through mechanisms such as the State of the Service Report. APS Employee Census results for individual agencies are reported to each agency to enable greater strategic management of their workforces. This reporting promotes the APS Values, Employment Principles, and Code of Conduct, and serves as means to assess the environment within agencies and how they are implementing the APS Values, Employment Principles, and Code of Conduct.

In addition to the annual APS Employee Census and APS Agency Survey, the Commission holds data relating to its ethics advisory service enquiries; consultation on SES Code of Conduct matters and proposed sanctions; agency head and statutory office holder complaints and investigations; and agency gifts and benefits registers. While there are clear legislative restrictions around sharing data on individual cases, the Commission draws on this data to observe patterns or areas of concern for agencies, engage with agencies to offer support, and identify where additional guidance material may be required.