



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

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**Submission by the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church
in Australia, to the inquiry into the *Public Service Amendment Bill
2023*
14 July 2023**

The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church in Australia, welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the *Public Service Amendment Bill 2023*.

In 2016, the meeting of the hundreds of representatives of Uniting Church congregations and bodies across Victoria and Tasmania adopted the following resolution that outlined their vision for the role of governments:

The Synod resolved by consensus:

(a) To express its concern to the Federal Government that due to a lack of resources, Australian Governments are increasingly unable to fulfil their core functions of assisting all people to reach their full potential and to protect the vulnerable in our community;

(b) Noting that:

- the National Assembly (resolution 88.22.11/13) called for tax to be used for the redistribution of wealth;*
 - the Synod (resolution 97.6.6.7) called for taxation to be progressive and just;*
 - Commonwealth Government revenue as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product has been on a downward trend over the last decade; and*
 - Australian Governments collect significantly less revenue as a proportion of GDP compared to the significant majority of OECD countries,*
to call on the Federal Government to increase, by progressive means, targeting tax expenditures that disproportionately benefit the wealthy, the level of revenue it collects to be able to provide the support people need to reach their full potential and to protect all people from abuse and exploitation; and
- (c) to write to the Prime Minister, the Treasurer, the Leader of the Opposition, the Shadow Treasurer and the Leader of the Greens to inform them of this resolution.*

Consistent with the above role of government, there is a need for a well-resourced and well-managed public service if the Commonwealth Government is to fulfil the functions of assisting people to reach their full potential and to protect the vulnerable in our community.

The Synod, therefore, supports *Public Service Amendment Bill 2023* as taking important steps towards enhancing the capacity of the Australian Public Service. We ask that the Committee recommend that the Parliament pass the Bill.

The Synod particularly welcomes Section 19A in the Bill to allow decisions to be made by APS employees at the lowest appropriate classification to reduce bottlenecks in the APS and



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SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

empower staff and foster professional development.

The Synod supports the amendment to Section 19 so that Ministers cannot direct Agency Heads on employment matters, to strengthen the apolitical goal of the APS.

The Synod supports the addition of 'Stewardship' as a value of the APS, meaning "the APS builds capability and institutional knowledge, and supports the public interest now and into the future by understanding the long-term impacts of what it does."

While the Synod supports the inclusion of capability reviews and action plans for the APS, we are concerned that under a future government hostile to the APS, capability reviews could be used to justify cuts to the resources of the APS. However, given that such a government could make cuts to the resources of the APS without a capability review, the risk that the capability review would further increase the size of the cuts made is probably low.

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