

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

ADDITIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES 2013

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Australian Public Service Commission

Outcome/Program: 1/1.1.1

Topic: APS Accessibility to Cultural Diversity

Senator: Di Natale

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Type of question: Written

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Question:

What measures is the Australian Public Service Commission taking to increase the accessibility of public sector positions to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?

Answer:

The APS Values, enshrined in the *Public Service Act 1999*, require the APS to provide a reasonable opportunity to all eligible members of the community to apply for employment in the APS, with employment decisions to be based on merit and with a specific prohibition on patronage or favouritism. The APS is required to provide a workplace free from unlawful discrimination that recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves.

Under the Public Service Commissioner's Directions 1999, Agency Heads must establish workplace diversity programs to assist in giving effect to the APS Values. Workplace Diversity Programs must include specific measures directed at ensuring that equity in employment is promoted and upheld and that engagement decisions in the agency are made taking into account the diversity of the Australian community, as well as the organisational and business goals of the agency and the skills required to perform the relevant duties.

Both ongoing and non-ongoing employment vacancies in the APS are advertised centrally in the APS Employment Gazette on the APS Jobs website. The vast majority of positions advertised on APS Jobs are open to all Australian citizens. APS Agencies are also able to advertise vacancies more widely, giving consideration to cost, and the most appropriate means of attracting suitable applicants (for example, advertising regional positions in regional areas in local media, using Indigenous-specific media, or using industry-specific media).

The Australian Public Service Commission collects employment data from APS agencies for reporting purposes. This includes diversity data on employees from non-English speaking backgrounds (defined as those employees who were born overseas and arrived in Australia after five years of age and whose first language was not English). At 30 June 2012, this data indicated that the proportion of employees who identify as being from a non-English speaking background in the APS is trending upwards, rising from 4.5% in 2002 to 5.3% in 2012.

Responses to the 2012 employee census—conducted for the first time in 2012 for the *State of the Service Report*—suggest that actual representation is much higher, due to high levels of non-disclosure in agency databases. Just over 15% of respondents to the employee census indicated they are from a non-English speaking background. This more closely reflects the diversity of the Australian community: in 2010 the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that 20% of Australian adults were from a non-English speaking background¹.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, General Social Survey, Australia, 2010
<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4159.0Main+Features12010?OpenDocument>