

# APS Redeployment Policy

## Introduction

The Australian Public Service (APS) employs an occupationally and geographically diverse workforce. It is a large and significant employer in Australia and recognises the importance of good workforce planning and proper handling of staffing reductions.

It is vital to our ongoing capability that we retain in employment experienced APS employees and employees with critical specialist skills. In particular it is important that the APS manage any staff reductions with a view to current and future needs including:

- preserving corporate knowledge
- maintaining core workforce skills, for now and in the future
- maintaining appropriate diversity profiles and
- supporting succession planning capability in the longer-term

Redeployment is the joint responsibility of the agency and employee.

- Excess employees need to actively pursue alternative employment opportunities to maximise the prospect of successful redeployment.
- Agency heads need to provide timely, accurate information to employees which is consistent with their obligations including under the *Public Service Act 1999* (PS Act) and subordinate legislation (particularly the Value on consultation) and enterprise agreement (eg any general consultation requirements on major change or excess staffing situations).

Set out below is the Government policy that will apply to agencies in the APS in relation to employees under the PS Act. These arrangements are to be managed in the context of agency workforce plans, applicable legislation and agency enterprise agreements.

## Part 1 - Redeployment Principles

### **1.1. Agencies with staff that are excess (or potentially excess) will need to consider staff requiring placement before undertaking the normal requirement for external advertising.**

- 1.1.1 Agencies need to give their highest priority to redeploying their staff to other higher priority areas within their agency if there needs to be a reduction in staffing levels.
- 1.1.2 Suitably qualified staff should be moved to other jobs in the agency before a vacancy is advertised.

## **1.2. Individual agencies should explore redeployment options for excess staff both internally and, if no suitable positions are available, within the wider APS through collaborative arrangements with other agencies.**

- 1.2.1 While the highest priority is focussed on excess staff, agencies should also work with potentially excess staff to minimise the number ultimately declared excess.
- 1.2.2 There is a shared responsibility for redeployment; staff are expected to make efforts to move to an ongoing job as quickly as possible, and agencies are expected to provide a high level of information and support to the affected staff.
- 1.2.3 Agencies should not use excess staffing arrangements as an alternative to dealing with underperformance.

## **1.3. Agencies recruiting employees should first consider staff seeking redeployment opportunities from other agencies.**

- 1.3.1 Agencies should collaborate with other agencies.
- 1.3.2 If found suitable, the employee can move to their new agency within 4 weeks (provided it is not a promotion). In cases of movement at level, there is no requirement for advertising or merit selection.

## **1.4. Agency downsizing processes need to be clear and transparent, with strong communication and consultation with employees and their representatives.**

- 1.4.1 Agencies will need to develop a communication strategy for staff.
- 1.4.2 Agencies are encouraged to establish a key contact point early in the process to provide information and support to staff and facilitate collaboration between agencies.
- 1.4.3 Agencies are to develop a strong consultation process with affected employees and their representatives which are in accordance with consultation processes outlined in agency enterprise agreements. Consultation should continue through every stage of the downsizing process.

## **1.5. Agencies should make every effort to continue training and skills development.**

- 1.5.1 This is essential for the long term capability of agencies and the APS as a whole.

## **1.6. Agencies should be cautious to ensure that downsizing does not unreasonably reduce the diversity of their workplaces.**

- 1.6.1 The downsizing of particular services or programs may have a disproportionate impact on some groups of employees that are clustered within that area.
- 1.6.2 Where the take-up of Voluntary Retrenchment (VR) packages amongst particular groups (such as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employees) appears disproportionately high, agencies should work to moderate this through development of redeployment options and tailored support arrangements.

## **1.7. While VR packages may be offered, agencies should ensure this is done strategically, including seeking to retain highly valued employees.**

- 1.7.1 VR packages can exacerbate budget shortfalls. While agencies may need to shed staff, natural attrition may be sufficient to achieve savings requirements, particularly if early action is taken.
- 1.7.2 Where necessary, a broad expression of interest in the VR process may be used. Agencies need to make it clear that this EOI process does not represent any commitment or obligation to offer a VR to those who express interest and that it will not prevent other staff from being identified as excess.
- 1.7.3 While there needs to be a fair process, this does not preclude agency heads ensuring that high performing employees are retained.
- 1.7.4 VR processes will need to be consistent with agencies' enterprise agreements.

## **1.8. Compulsory retrenchments should be avoided.**

- 1.8.1 While agencies must retain the capacity to terminate an excess employee without agreement, this is very much a last resort power.
- 1.8.2 Agencies should give consideration to retention periods in their enterprise agreement, to seek to maximise opportunities for redeployment.

## **Part 2 - Process to Support APS Redeployment Arrangements and the Redeployment Principles**

In relation to excess staffing situations, agency heads need to comply with the Public Service Act and subordinate legislation as well as requirements in enterprise agreements.

The following arrangements will operate across the APS to give effect to the Redeployment Principles. In giving effect to the Principles and the processes below, Agency Heads need to ensure compliance with their legislative obligations and their enterprise agreement.

The processes below apply in relation to an APS employee who has been declared as excess by an agency head. Any involvement of the APSC will be on a cost recovery basis.

### **2.1. Redeployment – at APS-wide level**

- 2.1.1 With the agreement of affected employees, agencies with employees who have been declared excess, or who have been formally notified that they may be declared excess, will register those employees' interest in redeployment. This could be done via submission of their résumé to a central electronic database maintained by the APSC.
- 2.1.2 As a matter of course, agencies with vacancies will consult the register (via a log-in password) prior to advertising to assess whether an excess employee may be suitable for a vacancy.
- 2.1.3 While an agency can advertise a vacancy, before the vacancy closes, they need to complete an assessment of any excess employee at that level in the agency as well as other APS excess employees identified by consulting the register. Agencies are required to document this assessment in their selection process.
- 2.1.4 The APSC will develop guidelines on assessing excess employees registered for redeployment to facilitate an efficient and timely process.
- 2.1.5 Where the employee is assessed as suitable (or suitable after a reasonable period of adjustment) the person can be transferred (at level) by the agency without assessing other candidates. The agency heads may agree to the option of a temporary placement, as this would allow sufficient time to assess job performance and, notwithstanding the short term disruption, is likely to encourage a greater take-up and more redeployments over time.

### **2.2. Job exchanges and information sharing**

- 2.2.1 An agency head, with the agreement of another agency head and an employee, can move the employee to their agency as part of an arrangement to address job reductions. This would be managed by the agencies and does not require APSC involvement.
- 2.2.2 The APSC will provide a clearing-house facility for employees to register their interest in job exchange opportunities, subject to it being supported by their agency head.
- 2.2.3 A job exchange may be agreed to by agency heads where another APS employee at the appropriate classification level is willing to accept a VR package. Either agency head can decline a job exchange having regard to:

- (a) the skills, attributes or performance of the employees involved and alignment to their workforce plan;
- (b) whether it is affordable.

## **2.3. Individual support for excess staff**

2.3.1 Support may be provided by agencies or facilitated by the APSC. This may include:

- (a) Provision of training in ‘getting that job’ (job applications, interviews, etc).
- (b) Career counselling could be facilitated by existing employee assistance arrangements to help excess employees to assess their prospects of redeployment and to give guidance on career choices.

2.3.2 These provisions would be subject to:

- (a) there being a benefit to the employee and agency and that it would enhance the prospects of redeployment and
- (b) the costs being reasonable.

2.3.3 Where the gaining agency head is satisfied that an excess employee could effectively perform a vacant job following a short re-training period, the losing agency head may approve reasonable funding to the gaining agency for the adjustment period.

2.3.4 Other existing employment arrangements should also be discussed with an excess employee such as:

- (a) the option of reducing an employee’s classification as an alternative to involuntary retrenchment;
- (b) transfers within an agency where employees have suitable skills for other positions in the organisation.

*21 April 2011*