

The role of the
Public Service Commissioner's representative
in Senior Executive Service selection exercises



Australian Government

Australian Public Service Commission

This brochure briefly outlines the role of the Public Service Commissioner's representative in selection exercises for Senior Executive Service (SES) duties.



The Management Advisory Committee's objectives for the SES

The Australian Government's Management Advisory Committee (MAC) is a forum of Secretaries and agency heads established under the *Public Service Act 1999* to advise on matters relating to the Australian Public Service (APS). MAC expects all senior executives to exhibit common capabilities, share common values, common ethical standards and a common commitment to development and collaboration. Among their many responsibilities as part of each agency's senior leadership team, members of the SES are expected to make themselves available to serve on selection committees, including in other agencies and as the Commissioner's representative.

All members of selection committees should be familiar with the MAC statement *One APS—One SES* which can be located at www.apsc.gov.au/mac/oneaps.htm. While the SES leadership framework sets out the criteria for selection to the SES, this statement describes functions which are common to all SES duties. The role of the Commissioner's representative is to help the committee assess candidates against the SES selection criteria for the duties specific to the agency, as well as those broader expectations set out in the MAC statement.

Why is there a Commissioner's representative?

The Public Service Commissioner's Directions 1999 set minimum legal requirements that agency heads must satisfy in relation to employment decisions they make. One of the requirements of the Directions is that all SES selection processes include a representative of the Public Service Commissioner ('the Commissioner'). The representative must certify that the process was conducted appropriately and the certification must be endorsed by the Commissioner before any promotion or engagement can occur.

This external oversight of SES selection processes serves to ensure that the APS Values (included in this brochure) and the legislative framework have been satisfied, and provides reassurance to applicants that their claims have been fully and fairly considered.

The role of the Commissioner's representative

The Commissioner's representative will be an experienced public servant from outside the portfolio in which the employment opportunity exists and at a substantively higher classification than the SES position being filled. Any exception to these requirements must be agreed to by the Commissioner.

It is the responsibility of the agency to identify a suitable person who will be the Commissioner's representative. Agencies should ensure that they finalise the membership of each SES selection committee as early as possible in the process and seek the agreement of the Commissioner to the proposed Commissioner's representative.

It is important to remember that, in addition to their responsibility to report to the Commissioner at the end of the process, the representative is in all respects a full member of the selection committee who needs to be involved in all aspects of the selection exercise. The involvement of the Commissioner's representative in shortlisting is a very important part of the process.

While the Commissioner does not require information about committees' reasons for shortlisting or not shortlisting candidates, representatives are not to be excluded from shortlisting or other aspects of the process including where executive search firms are used.

The representative brings to a selection committee an external perspective to assist the committee in considering the broader range of management and leadership capacities required at SES level and avoid a narrower focus only on the particular requirements of the position concerned. This helps to ensure individuals selected for promotion or engagement to SES duties will possess the full range of skills required to operate at the SES level in the APS.

The Commissioner's representative undertakes a high level of responsibility in SES selection processes at a time when they are also busy meeting the heavy demands placed on them by their own agencies, and this willingness to contribute further to the development of the SES is greatly appreciated.

The representative has a key role in assisting the selection committee in upholding the merit value and in ensuring that engagement and promotion decisions are consistent with other relevant APS Values and the legislative framework. In particular, the representative is asked to certify that in their opinion:

- the selection committee was appropriately formed
- applicants were assessed fully and fairly at the different stages of the process
- referee comments were properly recorded.

In addition, to assist the Commissioner in maintaining an awareness of the quality of applicants attracted to SES employment opportunities, the representative is asked to rate the field accordingly.

In a situation where the representative cannot provide the required certification due to concerns about the selection process, they should advise the Commissioner as soon as possible.

The APS Values (from section 10 of the *Public Service Act 1999*)

The Australian Public Service:

- is apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner
- is a public service in which employment decisions are based on merit
- provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves
- has the highest ethical standards
- is openly accountable for its actions, within the framework of Ministerial responsibility to the Government, the Parliament and the Australian public
- is responsive to the Government in providing frank, honest, comprehensive, accurate and timely advice and in implementing the Government's policies and programs
- delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public
- has leadership of the highest quality
- establishes workplace relations that value communication, consultation, co-operation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace
- provides a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace
- focuses on achieving results and managing performance
- promotes equity in employment
- provides a reasonable opportunity to all eligible members of the community to apply for APS employment
- is a career-based service to enhance the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia's democratic system of government
- provides a fair system of review of decisions taken in respect of employees.

Further information

For additional information on SES selection exercise requirements, please refer to the Australian Public Service Commission's booklet *The Senior Executive Service*, which is located at <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications01/ses.htm>.

Merit selection processes can at times be complex. If there are any issues or concerns arising which you are unable to resolve within the committee, the SES policy area in the Australian Public Service Commission is always available to offer advice and assistance (telephone: 02 6202 3815).