



APS HIERARCHY AND CLASSIFICATION REVIEW

Post-Release Listening Report

December 2022

This report captures key themes from staff engagement since the APS Hierarchy and Classification Review was released. Thank you to everyone who provided input.

Feedback

To coincide with the release of the independent APS Hierarchy and Classification Review, and consistent with the APSC's undertaking to consult with staff and agencies, the APSC opened a **feedback form** on our website from 26 August to 31 October 2022. This form enabled people to register for future consultation opportunities and tell us what they thought about the issues raised by the Review.

A total of **273** responses were received, of which 254 (93%) were current APS staff. Some 252 people (92% of respondents) said they were interested in future consultation opportunities, with surveys (33%) and workshops (22%) being the preferred approaches.

Themes

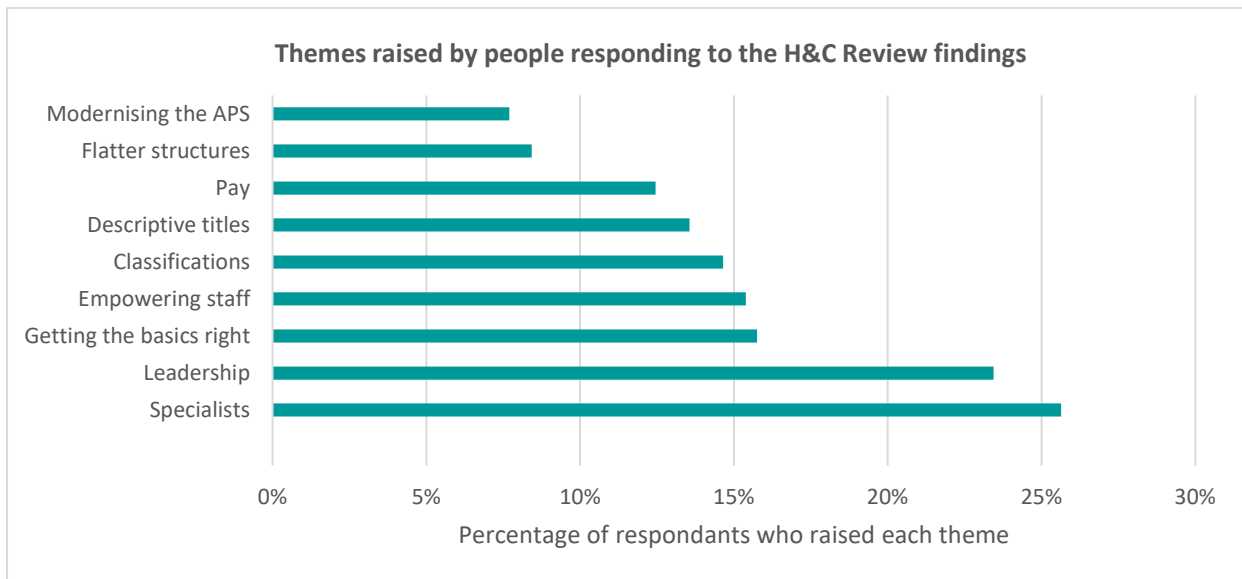
Reactions to the Review were **largely positive**, although some respondents questioned specific recommendations or how change could work in practice.

The issue of **specialist arrangements** was the strongest specific theme to emerge, with 26% of respondents indicating this was an area of interest, followed by **leadership** (23%). After this, there was a similar interest in the issues of **empowerment, classifications, titles, pay** and **getting the basics right** (which covered desire for more consistency around the level work is performed at, how performance is managed, merit-based promotion and how people are valued).

Feedback on specialist arrangements came from those in a broad range of occupations, with some also noting that cultural knowledge could be considered a specialist skillset. The Review's recommendation on establishing career pathways that allow specialists to progress without necessarily becoming managers was well received.

Respondents welcomed the idea of **modernising** the way the APS operates. The idea of **flatter structures** was generally well received, but there were notes of caution around clarity of responsibilities. There was some support for a new **classification framework**, although it was not always clear how supportive respondents were of the specific classification changes proposed by the Review.

Some respondents believed the Review's recommendations do not go far enough to bring the APS in-line with private sector organisations, while others cautioned against applying industry models to the APS. There were also comments echoing the Review's findings of a risk averse culture and the problems of pulling decision making higher up the chain than is necessary.



Workshops

A series of **workshops** on culture, ways of working and the future APS were conducted with APS staff in November 2022. These included people from a range of locations, levels, job families and APS agencies. Staff opted in through an expression of interest form sent to feedback form respondents.

Workshops were held virtually, with participants developing practical solutions to three questions:

- How might we empower staff to take initiative and try new things?
- How might we reduce the clearance process and support staff to make decisions about their work?
- How might we bring the right people together to solve problems, regardless of their level?

The participants worked together to identify obstacles and devise practical solutions to becoming a better APS. These ideas, along with the online feedback, have enabled the APSC to gain a stronger understanding of what working in better ways could look like for APS staff, and how it can become normal practice in the APS. This will feed into advice to agencies in mid-2023.

What next?

In **early 2023** input will be sought from APS staff and agencies on **specialist arrangements**. This will inform work by the Future of Work Sub-Committee of Secretaries Board on how the APS can attract and retain the skills it needs now and into the future.

In **mid-2023** Secretaries will consider updated guidance on **optimal management structures, ways of working and specialist arrangements** and discuss implementation.

The APS Academy will be piloting a new approach in 2023 to developing **manager capability**. The focus will be on two segments of the EL2 cohort - new to role EL2s (starting-out) and EL2s transitioning to SES Band 1 (stepping-up).

You can keep track of progress via the [APSC website](#).