

APSbargaining

Focus group consultation findings

# Focus group consultation

A core element of the Australian Government’s election platform was ensuring the Australian Public Service (APS) continues to be a **model employer** by providing working conditions that keep pace with the broader economy and provide fair and equitable condition and job security.

The Government has also stated in its plan for Secure Australian Jobs that a key objective in considering its approach to workplace relations was to restore the ability of workers to genuinely bargain for better pay and conditions.

As a means to achieving these objectives in the APS, the Government has asked the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) to develop and implement a comprehensive workplace relations policy with view to undertaking genuine service wide bargaining in 2023.

Service-wide bargaining for common terms and condition is expected to commence in 2023. The comprehensive policy is also expected to facilitate initial steps towards addressing pay fragmentation across the APS.

The Workplace Relations Bargaining Taskforce within the APSC undertook focus group consultations with all APS agencies in November and December 2022. Representatives from every APS agency of all job family types and size by number of employees, were invited to participate in the consultation process.

Separate consultation with APS employees will be undertaken in January 2023, as facilitated by an APS-wide survey of staff to obtain their views and priorities for service‑wide bargaining.

The APSC’s consultation with APS agencies sought views around the matters agencies considered appropriate for negotiation as common terms in APS enterprise agreements, and which matters should appropriately continue to be bargained at agency-level.

Views from agencies were also sought about how the service-wide bargaining process should be conducted. This included views about the most efficient manner to communicate bargaining progress to both agencies and their employees in a timely manner. Agencies were also asked specific questions including who they thought were their biggest competitors for employees in the context of the current complex labour market for skills and experience.

The feedback and comments received from APS agencies has been collated into common themes as represented in the graphs shown below.

**Findings**

### Figure 1: Conditions that agencies representatives considered should be standardised across the APS

**Figure 1** shows the top recommended common term areas identified by agency representatives.

For example, 28% of participating agency representatives indicated that leave as a broad category is a matter that could be made common across APS enterprise agreements.

### Figure 2: Conditions that agencies representatives considered should continue to be variable between agencies

**Figure 2** shows the top rated agency-specific terms and conditions raised agency representatives.

For example, 17% of agency representatives indicated that ‘Agency specific allowances’ are a matter that is best to remain negotiated at agency-level.

### Figure 3: Your competitors for APS employees

**Figure 3** shows the biggest competitors for APS staff identified by agency representatives.

For example, 24% of agency representatives indicated that state governments are their biggest competitor for employees.

### Figure 4: Private sector competitors for employees

**Figure 4** indicates which non-APS or private sector organisations are the largest competitors for APS employees.

For example agency representatives indicated Cyber, IT/Data analysts are the top job family areas in which APS agencies compete for staff.

### Figure 5: Entitlements the APS should replicate from the private sector

**Figure 5** indicates the most recommended entitlements the APS should replicate from the private sector to remain competitive.

For example, agency representatives identify higher pay as the most recommended entitlement required across the APS to remain competitive, followed by flexible work.

### Figure 6: Conditions most valued by employees

**Figure 6** shows the top terms and conditions agency representatives believe are the most important to their staff.

For example, agency representatives indicate pay/salary as the most important condition to their staff, closely followed by flexible work.

### Figure 7: Support from the Australian Public Service Commission

**Figure 7** indicates the areas of support agencies will need from the APSC.

For example, agency representatives indicated templates, talking points and FAQs were most important areas of support required from the APSC.

### 

### Figure 8: Practical suggestions to manage the APS bargaining process

**Figure 8** identifies the top recommendations around managing APS bargaining at scale.

For example, the general use technology and ensuring small agencies are heard throughout the process were the top rated areas of focus by agency representatives.