



## Ways of Working: Decision Making

# Guidance for agency executives

*Supporting decisions to be made at the lowest appropriate level, with the right people, applying the right judgement to make the best use of our capability at all levels of the APS*

### Background

Recent changes to the Public Service Act 1999 support decision making at the lowest appropriate level. The amendments require agency heads to implement measures to create a work environment that enables decisions to be made by APS employees at the lowest appropriate classification. This change seeks to ensure decision making is not raised to a higher level than necessary, improving decision making processes to reduce duplication of work, empower staff, and foster professional development.

Decision making has also been raised in successive reviews including the Independent Review of the APS and the APS Hierarchy and Classification Review. With a goal of being a model employer, the APS must make best use of the capability that exists at all levels. Our people want opportunities to use their skills and knowledge more directly and visibly – it's time we tap into that.

This resource is aimed at providing suggestions that heads of agencies and broader agency executive can adopt to support decision at the lowest appropriate level and make the most of the skills and experience of staff at different levels within the organisation.

### What agency executives should be doing to improve decision-making in their organisation

- Set the agenda
  - Drive and role model the change, in line with the Charter of Leadership Behaviours. Enable, coach and remove blockers for your staff. Be open to change and encourage new ways of working
  - Share what you want leaders and staff to do differently
  - Consider what settings may need to change to support decision-making at lower levels.
- Set the tone
  - Redefine success for your leaders – reward people who grow capability and devolve decisions
  - Encourage 'failing fast' and testing new ideas.
- Use your governance levers
  - Adopt flatter structures, in line with guidance on Optimal Management Structures
  - Lower financial and HR delegations where appropriate and in line with your agency's risk appetite

## **Ways of Working: Decision Making – Guidance for agency executives**

- Review governance arrangements and find opportunities to devolve responsibility
- Lower clearance levels for recurring work types (e.g. parliamentary, media). Reconsider whether work needs to flow through every set of hands in a reporting line
- Consider Work Level Standards when determining the lowest appropriate level for different types of decision.
- Build capability
  - Communicate the changes to decision settings and delegations and offer training as appropriate
  - Agree your agency's tolerance for risk across different functions and be clear on how you want staff to apply it
  - Share the context to build judgment to support decision making
  - Directly engage with staff about purpose, priorities, expectations and how you make decisions
  - Determine any guardrails needed while capability is being built.

### **Further information**

Additional materials, including guidance for managers and teams, and further information on the Public Service Act amendments and reviews referred to in this document are available on the APSC website at

[www.apsc.gov.au](http://www.apsc.gov.au).