

REPORT ON THE AGENCY SURVEY FOR THE 2007 CALENDAR YEAR

COMMISSIONER FOR PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION



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1. Background:

In recent years the Commissioner for Public Administration (Commissioner) has sought information from agencies about people management practices across the ACT Public Service (ACTPS). This has taken the form of a survey covering areas such as the values and ethics of the ACTPS, workplace equity and diversity, and performance, culture and change.

There were two major changes that were made to this year's Agency Survey:

- review and redesign of the survey instrument; and
- the collection of data on a calendar year basis for 2007 rather than a financial year basis.

These new directions for the agency survey recognise structural changes in the ACTPS in recent years including the establishment of the Shared Services Centre in February 2007.

1.1 Methodology

The Agency Survey for the 2007 Calendar Year was distributed to 13 ACTPS agencies. The Survey requested both quantitative and qualitative responses to questions on three main areas:

- values and Ethics;
- workplace Equity and Diversity; and
- workforce Planning and Human Resource Management.

The Survey included several questions that were similar to those asked in previous years. In addition, a series of new questions were included in this survey as they were identified as being of specific interest to the Commissioner. These additional questions covered, for example, the strategies that agencies have implemented to attract and retain staff.

2. ACT Public Service Values and Ethics

In this section, agencies were required to provide information about:

- the integration of values and ethics into learning and development activities and performance management systems;
- formal investigations into breaches of section 9 of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* (PSM Act); and
- systems for reporting on and addressing bullying and harassment behaviour.

As public officials holding positions of trust, ACT public servants are subject to special obligations and duties. Living up to the requirements of office and sustaining the confidence of the public requires agencies and their employees to make decisions and exercise power in an accountable manner. To do this, the conduct of public employees must conform to appropriate laws, values, principles and procedures.

The majority of ACTPS employees are employed under the PSM Act. The Act, together with the *Public Sector Management Standards 2006* (Standards), sets out Service-wide values and principles.

Agencies were asked a series of questions on the extent to which agencies have embedded ACTPS values and section 9 of the PSM Act into their culture and practices. The survey results reveal an ACTPS committed to the promotion of, and adherence to, both Service wide and agency specific values and ethics (See Table 1).

Table 1: Number of agencies undertaking specific learning and development activities on the ACTPS Values and/or section 9 of the PSM Act and/or on any Agency-specific values in 2007

Learning and Development Activity	Number of Agencies	
	ACT PS Values and/or Section 9	Agency-specific Values
Awareness-raising as part of induction / orientation	12	12
Information on the intranet/website (other than on-line training)	9	8
Use of internal promotional material (e.g. bookmarks, brochures, posters) other than that used as part of induction / orientation	4	4
Formal sessions on how the Values and section 9 should operate in practice	4	3
On-line training	1	1
Other	<i>Reminder emails about appropriate behaviour - 1</i>	<i>Corporate Management presentations at business unit meetings - 1</i>

Survey responses indicated that all agencies are providing learning and development opportunities for their staff on ACTPS Values and/or section 9 of the PSM Act and/or on any Agency-specific values. Agencies reported that they incorporated values and ethics awareness raising into their learning and development programs through the use of induction/orientation programs and intranet/web-site material that are available to all staff. Relative to previous years, fewer agencies reported that they conducted formal sessions on values and ethics in the workplace during the 2007 calendar year. This was, however, only a small variation from previous years.

Table 1 also shows that almost all of the agencies surveyed (12 out of 13) also supplement the Service-wide Code of Ethics with agency-specific values and codes of conduct.

2.1 Breaches of the Code of Ethics

During 2007, agencies reported that there were 111 formal investigations into alleged breaches of section 9 of the PSM Act¹. Of these, some 107 were commenced in 2007 (the remaining four investigations either commenced in the previous year or are due to commence in the 2008 calendar year). As shown in Table 2, the number of investigations in 2007 was similar to the 2005-06 reporting period, but substantially higher than the 2003-04 and 2004-05 reporting periods. This should not be interpreted as necessarily suggesting

¹ Individual cases may involve investigation of alleged breaches of multiple parts of section 9 of the PSM ACT

that the number of breaches reported has increased, but may reflect improved systems and awareness both within agencies and a growing responsiveness to community concerns.

Table 2: Formal Investigations into Breaches of the Section 9 of the PSM Act² 2003-04 to 2007

	Number of Breaches			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-2006	2007
Total	48	64	127	111
Commenced during year	42	57	120	107
Finalised during year	43	47	103	87

Individual agency responses showed that there was substantial variation in the number of investigations conducted by each agency. Three agencies conducted more than 20 investigations, two agencies conducted between 12 and 18 investigations, and 8 agencies reported that they conducted three or fewer investigations in 2007. Generally, the number of investigations conducted by agencies is proportionate to the size of the agency.

Primarily, investigations into alleged breaches of sections 9 of the PSM Act were for alleged failures to:

- (d) “treat members of the public and other public employees with courtesy and sensitivity to their rights, duties and aspirations” (35 investigations);
- (a) exercise reasonable care and skill (32 investigations);
- (h) “comply with the [PSM] Act, the management standards and all other Territory laws” (27 investigations); and
- (c) “act with probity” (20 investigations).

Agencies were asked to report on the outcomes for investigations into alleged breaches of section 9 of the PSM Act that were finalised during 2007, and these are reported in Table 3. As in previous years, the most frequent outcomes for substantiated breaches were admonition/reprimand; dismissal or resignation of the employee; formal or informal counselling; and transfer to other duties. However, relative to the 2005-06 survey, proportionally more investigations resulted in dismissal. From the responses, it is not clear why this has occurred, but it is significant to note that agencies are clearly placing greater importance and emphasis on section 9 of the PSM Act and breaches of it by their employees.

Agencies were also asked to report on the actions to ensure consistency in the processes used to investigate suspected breaches of section 9 of the PSM Act, and the sanctions imposed as a result of these investigations. As shown in Table 4, all agencies provide guidance and support for investigations from Human Resources/Employee Relations areas and it was significant to note that the majority of agencies use the Shared Services Centre (SSC) and have detailed procedures available to people conducting investigations. Relative to 2005-06, proportionally more agencies use service/client charters and proportionally fewer agencies have a central unit to conduct all investigations. This reflects the establishment of a centralised resource in SSC.

² In previous years, this question referred to ‘breaches of the Code of Ethics’.

The question on actions taken to ensure consistency in processes used in investigating section 9 breaches will be reviewed for next year's survey to ensure that there is no confusion between the terms 'central unit' and SSC.

Table 3: Outcomes of investigation into alleged breaches of section 9 of the PSM Act, 2007

Outcomes of Investigations into Alleged Breaches of section 9 of the PSM Act	Total
Admonished/Reprimanded	24
Resignation/Dismissal	22
Formal investigation discontinued – Employee formally counselled or warned	11
No Breach Found	11
Formal investigation discontinued – Employee informally counselled or warned	9
Transfer to other duties	6
Formal investigation discontinued – Employee resigned	4
Breach found, but no sanction imposed	3
Reduction in salary	2
Fine imposed	2
Reduction in employment classification	1
<i>Other: Removal from an on-call roster – 1; Final official warnings - 2</i>	

Table 4: Actions taken to ensure consistency in processes used to investigate suspected breaches of section 9 of the PSM Act, 2007

Actions Taken to Ensure Consistency (number of agencies)	Actions Taken	Being Developed
Human Resources/Employee relations provides guidance and support to people conducting investigations	13	0
Use of Shared Services Centre	10	0
Detailed procedures available to people conducting investigations	9	2
Central unit conducts all investigations	8	1
Service/Client Charters	7	0

In determining appropriate sanctions, most agencies reported that the delegation for applying sanctions is strictly limited and that central areas are consulted when deciding on the sanction. Relative to 2005-06, proportionally more agencies reported that guidelines were provided on determining an appropriate sanction.

2.2 Bullying and Harassment

Agencies were asked a series of questions on the incidence of bullying and harassment in the workplace, and the steps that agencies were taking to minimise the incidence or reported cases of bullying and harassment.

Almost all agencies (12 out of 13) had a system in place for employees to report bullying and harassment, with the remaining agency reporting that this system was in development. Agencies reported that these systems included a mix of procedural and preventative measures such as:

- awareness-raising with staff about bullying and harassment procedures and policies (13);
- procedures and policies in place to ensure appropriate confidentiality

- (12)
- the option of access to additional support from an external provider (12)
- having an identified contact person(s) for reporting matters (11)
- specialised training for contact staff (11); and
- accessible and effective reporting systems (10).

A total of six agencies surveyed had record keeping systems in place to monitor the incidence of bullying and harassment. Of those agencies that did keep records, three reported that the incidence of bullying and harassment had remained at the same rate since 2005-06; one reported that the incidence had decreased, and the remaining agency reported that the incidence had increased since 2005-06. The Commissioner will be discussing reporting and on and recording the incidence of bullying and harassment with agencies through the Human Resources Council (HR Council).

Most agencies reported that they had taken specific action to address the incidence of reported bullying and harassment behaviour. Table 5 summarises the extent to which different agencies took particular types of action to address bullying and harassment behaviour.

Table 5: Action taken to address bullying and harassment behaviour, 2007

Action taken to Address Bullying and Harassment Behaviour	Number of Agencies
Inclusion of information on bullying and harassment in induction program	11
Training for contact officers	10
Training and awareness raising for all staff	9
Inclusion of information on bullying and harassment in staff survey with appropriate follow up	4
<i>Other: Establishment of an Integrity Unit – 1; Information on the intranet – 1; Letters and public statements from the CEO; Use of a culture survey to identify specific areas that require additional support to develop effective workplace behaviours – 1</i>	

3. Workplace Equity and Diversity

In the Workplace Equity and Diversity section, agencies were asked to report on:

- equity and diversity plans;
- employment of Indigenous staff; and
- employment of staff with a disability

3.1 Equity and Diversity Plans

Nine agencies reported that they had an equity and diversity plan in place and four agencies reported that the equity and diversity plan had been evaluated (two of these agencies reported that the plan was currently under review).

All of the nine agencies that reported that they had an equity and diversity plan stated that the plan included the following groups:

- Aboriginal people, being people who are descended from, identify as, or are accepted by an Aboriginal community as, Aboriginal people;
- Torres Strait Islanders, being people who are descendants of an indigenous inhabitant of the Torres Strait Islands;

- people who have migrated to Australia and whose first language is a language other than English, and the children of such people; and
- people who identify as having a disability.

Two agencies also commented that their equity and diversity plans included women as a specific group and one agency commented that, while the agency did not have a current equity and diversity plan, the agency currently promotes the principles that address workplace diversity and equity in selection and employment through the overarching ACTPS Equity and Diversity Framework.

3.2 Employment of Indigenous Staff

Tables 6 and 7 present information about agencies' use of strategies to recruit and retain Indigenous Australians. The most common strategies that agencies used to recruit Indigenous Australians was involvement in the Whole of Government Indigenous traineeship pilot program managed by the Department of Disability Housing and Community Services (DHCS); adopting appropriate measures to limit employment opportunities to Indigenous applicants such as identification of some positions as requiring specific Indigenous knowledge, understanding and ability. Two agencies reported that they had a formal Indigenous Employment Strategy; used Agency-based Indigenous traineeships or cadetships; or provided opportunities for Indigenous people under an Agency-based Indigenous employment scheme. Relative to 2005-06, proportionally fewer agencies reported using advertisement of employment opportunities in Indigenous media and agency-based Indigenous traineeships/cadetships.

Table 6: Strategies used to recruit Indigenous Australians, 2007

Strategies to Recruit Indigenous Australians	Number of Agencies		
	Used	Being Developed	Not Used
Use of a Whole of Government based Indigenous Traineeship Program	7		6
Identification of some positions as requiring knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture and issues and ability to communicate sensitively and effectively with these issues	5	1	7
Employment measures that effectively limited certain employment opportunities only to Indigenous applicants	5		8
Advertisement of employment opportunities in Indigenous media	4	1	8
A formal Indigenous Employment Strategy	2		11
Use of Agency-based Indigenous traineeships / cadetships	2		11
Provision of opportunities for Indigenous people to gain skills and experience under an Agency-based Indigenous employment scheme		1	12
<i>Other: One agency reported that they had offered to participate in the 2007 ACTPS Indigenous Traineeship Program but that information regarding the program was received at the agency after the close of period of nomination.</i>			

Reflecting an effort to retain Indigenous Australians, almost all agencies had special leave conditions (such as ceremonial leave) in place and five agencies provided Indigenous cultural awareness programs to all staff. Relative to 2005-06, proportionally more agencies reported using special leave provisions and providing cultural awareness programs to all staff.

Table 7: Strategies used to retain Indigenous Australians, 2007

Strategies to Retain Indigenous Australians	Number of Agencies		
	Used	Being Developed	Not Used
Special leave provisions (e.g. ceremonial leave)	11	0	2
Culturally-specific training programs <i>Including: Regular Indigenous culture specific training at monthly meetings; Formal Cultural Awareness Programs for supervisors/managers of Indigenous Employees; Support for staff attendance at external programs; and In-service training provided by Aboriginal Liaison Unit</i>	5	0	8
Indigenous cultural awareness programs to all employees	4	0	9
Indigenous study awards	2	0	11
Agency-based Indigenous employees' network	1	1	11
<i>Other: Sponsorship of Whole-of-Government Indigenous network</i>			

3.3 Employment of Staff with a Disability

The ACTPS has initiated a Service-wide strategy to recruit and retain people with a disability through the implementation of the *Framework for the Employment of People with a Disability in the ACTPS* (the Framework). The aim of the Framework is for people with a disability to be able to access secure and sustainable employment opportunities with the ACTPS, commensurate with their skills, capabilities, interests and potential. These aims are to be achieved by establishing and promoting inclusive workplace policies and practices, and underpinned by a Memorandum of Agreement between the Territory and a number of Disability Employment Network organisations (DEN's)³.

This arrangement has proven moderately successful. However, in 2006 a number of Federal Government policy and funding decisions began to adversely impact upon the implementation of the ACTPS Framework. In particular, DEN's reported a significant decline in the number of people with a disability seeking employment support as a consequence of changes to Disability Support Pension (DSP) provisions.

Recent changes at the Federal level separating 'pre-employment referrals' from access to DSP entitlements should help address this decline.

The Federal Government in February 2008 also announced that it was developing a National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy. The ACT Government has provided input into the Strategy's development with a focus on removing other barriers to increased employment participation in the ACT and improving incentives and support arrangements for people with a disability or mental illness.

During 2007, five agencies reported that they worked with a DEN to place people identifying with a disability in employment in their agency. One agency employed 11 staff identifying with a disability through a Disability

³ Disability Employment Networks are organisations that specialise in placing people with a disability in employment

Employment Network and the remaining three agencies placed three or fewer staff identifying with a disability (one agency reported that this number was unknown).

The Disability Employment Networks agencies reported that they used in 2007 included:

- Advanced Personnel Job Solve CRS
- Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services (CRS)
- Disability Works Australia
- Community Programs Association

Agencies were also asked to report on the number of people identifying with a disability that they employed in 2007 through standard recruitment processes (i.e. through processes other than those involving in a Disability Employment Network). Three agencies reported that they were unable to respond to this question as they did not collect this information from applicants, and two agencies did not respond to this question. Of the remaining agencies, one agency reported that they employed 12 individuals identifying with a disability, one agency employed 9 individuals, two agencies employed one individual and four agencies reported that no individuals identifying with a disability were employed.

Finally, agencies were asked to respond to a series of questions about the implementation of specific strategies to support people with a disability. These questions were derived from the Framework for the Employment of People with a Disability in the ACTPS. Table 8 reports on agencies' responses to these questions. The majority of agencies have the capacity to modify operational policies and procedures on a case-by-case basis to assist people with a disability, but no agencies currently have a formal mentoring framework in place to support people with a disability in the workplace.

Table 8: Implementation of specific Disability Employment Framework Strategies, 2007

Questions	Number of Agencies		
	Yes	Being Developed	No
Does your Agency have operational policies and procedures that can be modified on a case-by-case basis to assist people with a disability who may have specific requirements to sustain their employment?	10	1	2
Has your Agency reviewed operational policies and procedures to ensure that they support inclusive work practices for people with a disability?	7	1	5
Does your Agency conduct a biennial review of the workplace to assess the level of accessibility for people with a disability in accordance with the Access to Government Strategy?	7	2	4
Do you have a workplace orientation and induction strategy that includes supporting people with a disability in the workplace?	5	3	5
Does your Agency have a formal mentoring framework to support people with a disability in the workplace?		2	11

Further work can be done to support the employment of people with a disability. This issue has been discussed with agencies through the HR Council.

4. Workforce Planning and Human Resource Management

A number of additional questions in this year's survey were included as a result of the review of the survey instrument. This section asked agencies to report on:

- performance management
- grievances
- workforce challenges and barriers to workforce planning
- Special Employment Arrangements
- attraction and retention
- learning and development

4.1 Performance Management

The Agency survey asked agencies to report on links between performance management plans and agency business plans, on underperformance actions and on strategies used to identify high performing individuals.

Nine agencies reported that individuals' performance management/development plans are currently linked to agencies' business plans, with a further three agencies reporting that these links are currently being developed.

During 2007, a total of seven underperformance actions for non-executive staff were commenced and 11 actions were finalised (including those commenced prior to 2007). This represents a decrease in the number of underperformance actions commenced and finalised compared with 2004-05 and 2005-06 (Table 9). It should be noted, however, that the survey for the 2007 calendar year asked about underperformance actions for non-executive staff only, while the 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06 surveys asked about underperformance actions in general.

Table 9: Number of underperformance actions: 2003-04 to 2007

Underperformance Actions	Total			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-2006	2007
Commenced during year	7	15	27	7
Finalised during year	3	9	19	11

Table 10 summarises the outcomes that applied to finalised underperformance actions. It is notable that four actions resulted in assignment to other duties, compared with no actions resulting in this outcome in 2005-06 reporting period.

Table 10: Outcomes of finalised underperformance actions: 2007

Outcome	Total
Development program instituted	4
Assignment to other duties	4
Satisfactory performance standard attained	3
Underperformance action not finalised due to underperforming staff member resignation	2
No action taken	0
Deferral of increment	0
Reduction in classification	0
Termination of employment	0

In this year's survey, agencies were asked to provide information about strategies used to identify high performing individuals for further development. Five agencies reported that the Agency currently had specific strategies in place to identify high performing individuals, with a further five agencies reporting that these links are being developed.

Table 11 summarises the primary strategies that agencies reported were used to identify high performing individuals (Note: two agencies reported that these strategies were still being developed but reported as if the strategies had been finalised).

Table 11: Strategies used to identify high performing staff, 2007

Strategies used to Identify High Performing Staff	Number of Agencies
Individuals self identified	6
Manager/Supervisor identification	6
Participation in development opportunities	6
Performance management system	6
Agency Head identification	5
Leadership development programs	3
Career development assessment centres	0

4.2 Grievances

As the Commissioner is currently reviewing the internal investigation and complaint handling procedures within the ACTPS, the survey included a number of new questions seeking information from agencies about procedures currently in place for managing grievances and investigations.

Almost all (12 out of 13) agencies reported that they had a system in place for undertaking grievance investigations. In 2007, there were a total of 22 grievance investigations.

Table 12 summarises the features that applied to grievance investigations finalised in 2007. It is notable that no investigations were referred to the Commissioner for Public Administration, the Human Rights Commission or to the ACT Ombudsman. However, this nil response only represents actions taken by agencies – not action taken by individuals to refer matters on. This question is likely to be modified in future years to ask agencies to report on the

number of grievance matters that have escalated to involve other entities such as the Commissioner, the ACT Ombudsman’s Office and/or the Human Rights Commission.

Table 12: Features of grievance investigations, 2007

Features of grievance investigations	Total
Investigation was undertaken internally by the Agency	12
Investigation was undertaken by independent reviewers	6
Investigation was undertaken by the Shared Services Centre	3
Investigation was referred to the Commissioner for Public Administration	0
Investigation was referred to the Human Rights Commission	0
Investigation was referred to the ACT Ombudsman	0
<i>Other: External Investigator was used (not through Independent Reviewers list) - 1</i>	

Finally, agencies were asked to provide comments on the investigation and resolution of grievances within the agency. One agency commented that SSC was used for various procedural arrangements, while another agency reported that officers are not required to report on grievances resolved through an informal process. No other agencies provided comments to this question.

Subject to the capacity of agencies to readily gather information on this topic, they may be requested to report on this matter in the future.

4.3 Workforce challenges and barriers to workforce planning

Agencies were asked to report on the extent to which they faced a series of workforce challenges in 2007. As shown in Table 13, the primary challenge that faced agencies was difficulty recruiting people with the required skills, with 10 agencies listing this as a major challenge. Almost all agencies reported that ensuring that employees’ skills and/or knowledge meet the agency’s requirements was a major or a minor challenge.

Table 14 summarises the extent to which agencies reported having difficulty undertaking particular workforce planning activities. As shown, the majority of agencies reported no difficulty obtaining adequate information on demographics and characteristics, but at least six agencies experienced difficulties addressing each of the other workforce planning activities listed in the table.

Table 13: Workforce challenges faced by agencies in 2007

Workforce challenges	Number of Agencies		
	Not faced	Minor challenge	Major challenge
Difficulty recruiting people (other than for a formal graduate program) with required skills	1	2	10
Ensuring that employees' skills and/or knowledge meet the Agency's requirements	1	8	4
Difficulty in recruiting sufficiently strong leadership skills and/or potential within the Executive feeder group	4	4	5
Loss of mature-aged employees*	3	6	4
Higher than acceptable** employee turnover	5	4	4
Difficulty in recruiting sufficiently strong leadership skills at the Executive levels	5	5	3
Loss of employees recruited as part of a formal graduate programme	8	4	1
Loss of Indigenous employees	9	4	0
Difficulty recruiting graduates with required skills as part of a formal graduate program	9	4	0
Loss of employees with a disability	11	2	0
Lower than acceptable** employee turnover	13	0	0
<i>Other: Attraction and retention – 1; Staff being promoted over their levels – 1; Difficulty in recruiting suitable applicants for several management positions that were widely advertised – 1</i>			

Notes:

*Mature aged employees' means employees over the age of 55.

** 'Acceptable' means acceptable to the agency.

Table 14: Difficulties experienced undertaking workforce planning activities in 2007

Workforce Planning Activity	Number of Agencies			
	Not Attempted	No Difficulty	Minor Difficulty	Major Difficulty
Obtaining adequate information to enable your Agency to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and development	1	4	5	3
Planning for changes that are likely to impact on your Agency's business (e.g. technological change)	3	3	5	2
Identifying the capabilities required to deliver future workforce needs	4	2	6	1
Obtaining adequate information on your Agency's workforce skill sets (e.g. qualifications)	4	3	5	1
Obtaining adequate information on your Agency's demographics and characteristics	0	9	4	0

Agencies were also asked to report on the measures that they had in place to deal with workforce challenges. As shown in Table 15, almost all agencies had recruitment strategies aligned with identified workforce requirements and measures to attract and retain people with critical skills. Some agencies currently had performance management and succession management strategies linked with future workforce needs.

Table 15: Measures in place to deal with workforce challenges, 2007

Measures to deal with Workforce Challenges	Number of Agencies		
	In Place	Being Developed	Not in Place
Recruitment strategies aligned with identified workforce requirements	12	1	0
Measures to attract and retain people with critical skills (e.g. enhanced and/or more flexible pay and conditions, development opportunities)	11	2	0
Learning and development strategies aligned with identified workforce requirements	6	7	0
Performance management strategies specifically aligned with identified workforce requirements	4	7	2
Succession management strategy linked to future workforce needs	3	8	2
<i>Other: Job sharing – 1; Development and implementation of recommendations in an agency Mitigating Recruitment and Retention Risk Strategy (including Employee Value Proposition Statement, People Capability Framework and Mercer Employee Benefits Framework) – 1</i>			

Those agencies that reported that they had measures in place to attract and retain people with critical skills were also asked to report on the specific measures used. (Note: agencies that reported that these measures were in development also responded to this question).

As shown in Table 16, commencement above base salary and special employment arrangements (SEAs) were the most common measures used to attract and retain staff with critical skills.

Table 16: Measures used to attract and retain staff with critical skills, 2007

Measures used to Attract and Retain Staff with Critical Skills	Number of Agencies
Commencement above base salary	13
Special Employment Arrangements (SEAs)	12
Development opportunities (e.g. study awards, fellowships, secondments)	8
Work placements/rotation	6
<i>Other: Flexible work hours – 1</i>	

4.4 Special Employment Arrangements

Table 17 summarises the information that agencies reported about the use of Special Employment Arrangements (SEAs). In total, Agencies reported that there were 205 SEAs in place at 31 December 2007; and of these, only one had a variation to employment conditions other than enhanced salary rates.

While enhancing salary is clearly an effective mechanism to retain staff, there is an opportunity for agencies to investigate whether providing other non-salary benefits might also be effective in some circumstances. The inclusion of non-salary benefits in SEAs will be discussed with agencies.

Table 17: The use of Special Employment Arrangements, 2007

Question	Total
During 2007, how many SEAs did your Agency enter into with new starters?	31
During 2007, how many SEAs did your Agency enter into with existing staff?	87
At 31 December 2007, what was the total number of SEAs within your Agency?	205
At 31 December 2007, what was the total number of SEAs within your Agency that contained a variation to employment conditions other than enhanced salary rates?	1

Note: The information reported in the table is based on agencies' reports of the total number of SEAs in place in their agency.

4.5 Attraction and Retention

During 2007, Chief Executives consistently identified attraction and retention of appropriately skilled staff as a key workforce issue for the ACTPS. One of the challenges identified is the need for better information on agency activities that are focused on retaining key segments of the workforce.

In 2007 funding was provided in the budget and also for the subsequent three financial years to strengthen public service capacity. A whole of government Attraction and Retention Framework is being formulated as part of this initiative on the basis of a range of evidence. The agency survey serves as one part of this process.

It is also proposed that an employee engagement survey be conducted. The results of the agency survey will be used to inform the development of the work on employee engagement.

A number of specific questions on attraction and retention were asked in this year's agency survey to identify strategies and specific interventions agencies are planning (or have implemented) to address the shortage of skills and the small applicant pools for vacant positions.

Table 18 describes the groups that were targeted by attraction and retention practices by the surveyed agencies. The most common group to be targeted by attraction practices was entry-level employees, while the most common group to be targeted by retention practices were part-time employees. It should be noted, however, that five of the surveyed agencies reported that they did not have any specific attraction or retention practices that targeted any of these groups. These results when taken together with the learning and development responses may indicate areas for further investigation.

Table 18: Groups targeted by specific attraction/retention practices, 2007

Groups Targeted by Attraction/Retention Practices	Number of Agencies	
	Attraction	Retention
Entry level employees	7	3
Part-time employees	5	4
Young employees *	3	2
Women	2	3
Mature employees **	1	3
People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	1	2

Men	0	1
Other	<i>Clinical specialties; Professional classifications; University students; Clinical staff; Nursing staff</i>	<i>Clinical staff; Nursing staff</i>

Note:

*Young employees' means employees under the age of 35.

** 'Mature aged employees' means employees over the age of 55.

Agencies that indicated that they did have an attraction or retention practice for a specific group were asked to provide further information on the key features of these practices. The responses are summarised in Table 19 on the following page.

Table 19: Key features of attraction and retention practices for targeted groups, 2007

Targeted Groups	Key Features of Attraction Practices	Key Features of Retention Practices
Entry level employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better co-ordination and HR support case manager for trainees & apprentices Traineeships, graduate programs and apprenticeships offered across the Department 	Not applicable
Part-time employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint applications accepted for job sharing Advertisement of fractional load positions Flexible workplace arrangements to accommodate staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint applications accepted for job sharing
Young employees *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active Social Club with regular social events
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertisement of fractional load positions Specific wording in job advertisements to attract target group "Family friendly" conditions contained in Certified Agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible working arrangements Active support of home based work "Family friendly" conditions contained in Certified Agreements
Mature employees **	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific wording in job advertisements to attract target group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about Transition to Retirement Pension (TRAP) to encourage employees to remain with Department More flexible use of long service leave entitlements prior to retirement
People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific wording in job advertisements to attract target group 	Not applicable
<i>Other: Clinical specialties; Professional classifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted recruitment marketing 	Not applicable
<i>Other: Clinical staff and nursing staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing training and opportunity for re-training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing training and opportunity for re-training
<i>Other: University students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make use of university websites to advertise vacant positions Target university students for part-time and casual positions 	Not applicable
All targeted groups		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of studies assistance and learning and development opportunities Health and Wellbeing program and Staff Awards program

Table 20 reports on the specific retention strategies that were used by agencies to reduce the turnover of key staff. The primary strategy used for the retention of key staff was support for further study. Agencies also reported that they utilised exit interviews in an endeavour to reduce the number of future separations.

Table 20: Specific retention strategies to reduce the turnover of key staff, 2007

Specific Retention Strategies to Reduce the Turnover of Key Staff	Number of Agencies		
	Yes	Being Developed	No
Support for further study (e.g. Study leave)	12	0	0
Conducting exit interviews with separating staff with the aim of reducing further separations	11	2	0
Tailored employment conditions and benefits	8	1	2
Prioritised learning and development	8	3	0
Enhanced career development opportunities	8	2	0
Enhanced induction programmes	6	4	1
Networks for specific groups (e.g. Indigenous peoples)	4	2	4

4.6 *Learning and Development*

The final area that agencies were asked to comment on in the Workforce Planning and Human Resource Management section was learning and development. Agencies were asked to rank the top five learning and development priorities for their agency in 2007 by classification level. Agencies did this by ranking the highest priority as 1 and so on to 5.

Table 21 (see over page) summarises the mean (average) rank for each priority area by classification level. On average, agencies tended to place more priority on leadership and people management learning and development at the SOG A, B & C and Executive levels, compared with the ASO 1-6 levels. In contrast, learning and development in technical and service delivery areas was considered more important at ASO1-6 levels than at the higher levels.

Table 21: Mean rankings of learning and development areas – ASO1-6, SOG A, B & C and Executives, 2007

Learning and Development Areas	Mean Ranking ^a		
	ASO 1-6 (or equivalent)	SOG A, B & C (or equivalent)	Executives (or equivalent)
Leadership (such as general leadership development, whole of government approaches, achieving results, shaping strategic thinking)	5.8	2.5	1.4
People management (such as Building effective teams, giving feedback)	4.6	2.7	3.4
Interpersonal skills (such as Communication, conflict resolution, negotiation)	4.4	5.2	5.1
Self-management (such as Time management, learning and personal development, team participation, ethical behaviour)	4.7	5.5	5.5
Delivering services to the public (such as Client consultation, dealing with difficult clients)	3.9	5.8	5.9
Public programme design and/or management (such as Designing public programmes, ensuring governance requirements are met, achieving outcomes)	6.0	5.4	5.2
Policy skills (such as Policy development, review, evaluation)	5.5	5.2	5.2
Regulatory development and/or implementation (such as Developing regulations, exercising regulatory authority)	5.5	5.8	5.6
Other public administration (such as Supporting and working with ministers, responsibilities in caretaker periods)	5.8	6.0	5.7
Corporate (such as Understanding the organisational setting, Agency structure, priorities, key clients, service orientation, APS and/or Agency values, diversity)	5.4	5.1	4.9
Business (such as Planning, finance, project management, record keeping)	4.2	4.0	4.2
Technical, relevant to specific jobs (such as Knowledge of specialist areas, legislation)	3.3	4.5	5.5
IT (such as Training in Agency specific IT systems)	5.2	5.8	6.0
<i>Other - Communication</i>	<i>Ranked '1' by one agency</i>	<i>Ranked '1' by one agency</i>	–

Agencies ranked the top five learning and development priorities (by classification level) for their agency in 2007, highest being 1. The two top mean rankings in each classification group are highlighted in red.

^(a)Note: To compute the mean ranking, areas that were not included in the top five priority areas for an agency were given a ranking of '6' for that agency.)

5. Concluding Remarks:

The Agency Survey for the 2007 Calendar Year provided a broad range of information in respect of the management of the ACTPS, in particular Human Resources management.

Survey responses indicated that, on the whole, ACTPS agencies are:

- committed to providing training and development both on ACT PS values and section 9 of the PSM Act and on Agency-specific values;
- ensuring that processes for investigating and applying sanctions for breaches of section 9 of the PSM Act are applied in a consistent manner;
- raising awareness with staff about bullying and harassment procedures and policies; and
- aligning recruitment strategies with workforce requirements and with implementing measures to attract and retain people with critical skills.

In this year's survey, agencies were asked whether they had a mechanism for reporting the incidence of bullying and harassment. Some agencies reported that they did not have any formal methods for recording incident reports. This will be discussed with agencies at HR Council.

A relatively small proportion of agencies reported that they had a formal Indigenous Employment Strategy; used Agency-based Indigenous traineeships or cadetships; or provided opportunities for Indigenous people under an Agency-based Indigenous employment scheme. It is anticipated that the introduction of the pilot Whole of Government Indigenous traineeship program in late 2007 managed by DHCS and the prospect of continuing traineeship programs will be a positive step towards increasing the level of Indigenous recruitment in the ACTPS.

Subject to changes at the Federal level, it is considered that more can be done in relation to employment of people with a disability. As part of the development of the National Strategy for the employment of people with a disability or mental illness the ACT Government will continue to seek the removal of impediments to accessing employment support and the introduction of appropriate incentives. This issue will also be discussed with agencies through the HR Council.

During 2007, attraction and retention of appropriately skilled staff was identified as the key workforce issue by ACTPS Chief Executives.

The survey responses provided useful background information to assist with the future direction and focus of the whole of government attraction and retention strategies. In particular, the responses provided an insight into the strategies agencies have adopted to retain key segments of the workforce.

To ensure retention strategies are effective, it is essential that attention is given to the effect of non-salary benefits and the professional development opportunities that influence employee satisfaction and engagement. To this end a series of employee engagement focus groups which will be conducted in the second half of 2008. These focus groups will be examining the level of

employee engagement and testing various elements of the attraction and retention strategies to improve employee satisfaction and retention. The qualitative data collected in these focus groups will provide another insight, and help shape future policy directions.

In terms of the administration of the survey itself, the number of agencies that returned the survey on time was higher than in previous years.

Some agencies, however, found completing elements of the survey problematic as the information that was requested was not necessarily readily available to report. Similarly, some agencies had difficulties interpreting the questions. These concerns will be addressed in future surveys.