

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
2017-2018 BUDGET ESTIMATES

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Australian Public Service Commission

Outcome/Program: 1.1

Topic: Support an efficient and high-performing public sector

Senator: Roberts

Question reference number: 253

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 7 July 2017

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Given that the public sector doesn't face the economic incentives to be efficient and effective, is it the case that serious reforms are needed such as:

- A) reducing the size and influence of the federal bureaucracy; and
- B) removing permanent tenure – ie the number one disincentive?

Answer:

As at 31 December 2016 the number of employees in the Australian Public Service (APS) has reduced by around 14,000 from a high of over 167,000 in 2012. Measures to control staffing levels in the APS include a cap on the average staffing level for each APS agency and a cap on the number of Senior Executive Service employees in each APS agency.

Between 5 November 2013 and 1 July 2015 the Government applied interim recruitment arrangements to limit growth in APS employee numbers and achieve a reduction in staffing levels by natural attrition. The arrangements limited eligibility for vacancies in the APS to current ongoing APS employees unless the Commissioner was satisfied that there were special circumstances justifying opening the vacancy to the wider community. As a result of these measures, the number of APS employees reduced by over 10,000 from 31 December 2013 to 31 December 2015.

No APS employee has permanent tenure. Ongoing APS employees may have their employment terminated at any time under section 29 of the *Public Service Act 1999*. This section provides grounds for the termination of employment, including that the employee is in excess to the requirements of the agency, unsatisfactory performance of duties and breaches of the APS Code of Conduct.