

Interim arrangements for recruitment in the Australian Public Service - Guidance for agencies

Purpose

1. The purpose of these arrangements is to help meet the Government's commitment to a reduction of 12,000 employees through natural attrition.
2. To meet this commitment and minimise redundancies, it will be necessary to control engagements very tightly. At the same time, we need to maintain viable front line services, particularly in regional locations, and preserve the skills required to meet the Government's priorities.
3. Accordingly, the Government has agreed to a set of arrangements that make the redeployment of displaced employees, within agencies and across the APS, the first priority when filling vacancies.

Outline of Key Principles

4. The key elements of the interim recruitment policy are as follows, and are effective immediately:
 - a. before considering any recruitment action, agencies should undertake careful and objective analysis of the role and whether it actually needs to be filled;
 - b. priority is to be given first to displaced (or potentially displaced^[1]) APS employees, then to other existing APS staff;
 - c. agencies will only engage non-APS staff to fill critical vacancies with the agreement of the Australian Public Service Commissioner;
 - d. staffing action which is underway should be suspended, except where an offer of employment has been made to a successful candidate (this action may be re-initiated after the redeployment register has been examined and where approval is sought from the APS Commissioner and where the Commissioner agrees that filling is essential);
 - e. where new vacancies arise, agencies will follow these steps:
 - Step 1: the vacancy is to be filled by displaced staff from within the agency, or if none are suitable, by displaced staff from across the APS;
 - Step 2: if evidence is provided to the Commission that the agency has considered the CVs of displaced employees on the APS redeployment registers without finding a suitable candidate, and filling the vacancy is considered essential, the vacancy may be advertised internally (ie. within the APS on APSJobs^[2]); and
 - Step 3: if steps 1 and 2 are unsuccessful, critical vacancies can be advertised to external candidates with the APS Commissioner's agreement. **These cases are expected to be rare and demonstrably exceptional**, with the exception of positions funded through fee for service arrangements;
 - f. **Non-ongoing employment:** consistent with the intention of these arrangements to support a significant reduction in APS employment overall, agency heads will take measures to ensure that

existing non-ongoing employment arrangements cease at the end of their current term, and refrain from entering new arrangements, other than where the agency head approves a particular requirement in order to meet a critical business demand. Agency heads should also consider cancelling non-ongoing arrangements in the case of programs that have been closed or downgraded. Agency heads are to advise the APS Commissioner in writing on a monthly basis, using [Form 1](#), providing details of when they have agreed to a new or extended non-ongoing engagement with details and reasons for the decision.

- g. agencies are to seek the APS Commissioner's prior endorsement to conduct larger scale non-ongoing recruitment activities to meet essential business requirements; in particular, for intermittent and irregular non-ongoing employees.

5. The [APS Commissioner's Directions](#) will be modified to allow promotions to continue to be available for existing APS employees where the vacancy was only advertised to APS employees. The new Directions will also require the APS Commissioner's agreement before advertising is made open to the community. These measures are intended to be temporary and are intended to help achieve the Government's objective to quickly and significantly reduce the size of the public service by natural attrition. Subject to the changed processes outlined here, the merit principle continues to apply in all other respects.

6. Agencies should ensure that positions considered as critical for filling are classified correctly against the appropriate work level standards as these will be used to assist matching against the redeployment register. Agencies should consult the SES and non-SES classification guides on the APSC's website for further information.

Processes

7. A flowchart summarising the new processes, together with the forms required to seek approval from the APS Commissioner, are at Attachment 1.

Existing recruitment processes

8. All recruitment processes underway at the time the APS Commissioner's advice to heads of departments and agencies on 31 October are to be suspended, unless an offer has been made to the successful candidate, in which case the process may be completed. In all other cases agencies will need to ensure that there are no displaced employees within the agency or on the redeployment register suitable for the vacancy before seeking the APS Commissioner's approval to reinitiating existing processes or readvertising vacancies.

Vacancies arising from disability, indigenous or graduate recruitment programs

9. The agreement of the APS Commissioner is to be sought for the recruitment to Graduate, Trainee, Cadet (including recruitment for identified APS programs for ICT) and Indigenous programs, using [Form 3](#). Further information on these programs will be provided subsequent to this advice in order to coordinate whole of APS arrangements for these programs, to ensure we do not exceed the nominal cap of 1,300 advised to Government.

10. Subject to the APS Commissioner's agreement these vacancies will remain open to all eligible members of the community.

11. Where the APS Commissioner has approved external advertising for a vacancy, the RecruitAbility Scheme and actions using the affirmative measures provision under clause 2.17 of the Directions (regarding the engagement of a person with a disability unable to participate in a competitive selection process) continue and are not affected by the changes.

Vacancies arising for temporary positions

12. All current non-ongoing contracts involving specified terms or tasks will cease at the end of their current term or contract. If a non-ongoing vacancy is subsequently required, consideration will first be given to placing suitable employees in the agency requiring redeployment, or employees on the APS or SES redeployment register. If no suitable employees are available, an Expression of Interest may be issued within the agency or the wider APS for temporary transfer or higher duties.

13. It is important that agencies continue to support mobility across the service, including temporary transfers between agencies. Decisions to decline an interagency temporary transfer may still be appropriate but under these arrangements should not be made below the Deputy Secretary (SES Band 3) or the nearest equivalent level within the employee's current agency.

14. New non-ongoing engagements or extensions to existing contracts may be made where these are considered critical to meeting business demand. However, where they will be in place for more than 12 months, the vacancy will need to be notified in APSJobs and therefore will require the APS Commissioner's approval. Agency heads are to advise the APS Commissioner in writing using [Form 1](#) when they have agreed to a new or extended non-ongoing engagement with details and reasons for the decision.

15. **Intermittent and casual vacancies:** There may be unique circumstances in which agencies require large-scale recruitment of non-ongoing employees in order to maintain their business capability or to deliver Government priorities. In such cases, where an agency has a requirement, existing or foreseen, for a workforce component that includes numbers of intermittent or irregular non-ongoing employees, and the redeployment register is not the appropriate source of staff for that element of the workforce, the agency head should write to the APS Commissioner for endorsement. The agency head should provide a description of the predicted hiring activity (including details of numbers, classifications and roles, location, business need, new or existing) over the coming 6 months. [Form 1](#) would then be used to report monthly on the numbers employed.

Vacancies arising for ongoing positions

16. If a decision is made that the vacancy is ongoing, agencies should first seek to fill the vacancy with suitable employees in the agency requiring redeployment. Consideration is then to be given to employees on the APS or SES redeployment register.

17. If no suitable employees are available for redeployment, and the agency considers the role is essential, the APS Commissioner's agreement is required prior to filling from an existing order of merit or advertising to APS employees. Orders of merit are dealt with separately below.

18. If, once a search for suitable displaced candidates is exhausted, the position is considered essential, the agency head may request approval for APS-only advertising from the APS

Commissioner by the relevant agency head using [Form 2](#). Supporting evidence must be provided to demonstrate:

- that there are no suitable displaced employees within the agency;
- that there are no suitable employees within the APS that can be identified from the APS Redeployment Register; and
- the essential nature of the position role, including the risks to the agency if it is not filled.

19. If APS-only recruitment is unsuccessful, and no suitable displaced employees remain, agencies should carefully reconsider whether the position needs to be filled. Where the vacancy is of a critical nature to the operations of the agency and brings considerable risk if left unfilled, the agency head may seek approval from the APS Commissioner to re-advertise the position to include external applicants using [Form 3](#). **As noted above, it is expected that such cases will be rare and demonstrably exceptional.**

20. In very rare circumstances, the APS Commissioner may consider a request from an agency head to advertise a vacancy as open to both internal and external applicants without first requiring an APS-only advertisement. The agency would need to demonstrate that the position is of such a specialist nature that the skills required are highly unlikely to be found from within the APS.

Orders of merit

21. Where no suitable employees have been found from the redeployment register for a vacancy, and the agency wants to use an existing order of merit to fill that vacancy, the agency head should write to the APS Commissioner for endorsement, providing a description of the business need for the vacancy.

22. If the next ranked candidate on the order of merit for a particular vacancy is not an ongoing APS employee, then that order of merit cannot be used to fill the vacancy.

23. A grouped order of merit may continue to apply for similar, but not identical positions where, because of differences in the duties, the most suitable candidate is an ongoing APS employee.

Interagency transfers

24. In keeping with the principle of placing displaced employees as a priority, agencies should first consult the redeployment registers before considering other staffing options, including an interagency transfer.

Higher duties

25. The use of higher duties arrangements to fill short term vacancies remains at the discretion of agencies.

Labour hire

26. These arrangements do not apply to contractors / labour hire, which will be regulated by budget considerations. Consistent with the principles of these arrangements, agencies should seek to meet their requirements from within existing APS employees.

Agency websites and recruitment documentation

27. Agencies are asked to ensure that material on their websites or attached to vacancy notices is amended to make it clear that an advertised vacancy is only open to APS employees, in the case of those vacancies advertised with the APS Commissioner's approval in line with paragraph 18 above.

Reporting – The Australian Public Service Employment Database (APSED)

28. The APS Commissioner will provide regular reports to the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service, and the Secretaries Board, on the adoption of these arrangements and their impact on the APS workforce. This information will also be used by the Secretaries Board to monitor and support workforce planning, both during these interim arrangements and for the longer term, to ensure the APS's capabilities and diversity are sustained.

Advice and assistance

29. Requests for advice and assistance on the policies to be followed should be addressed to staffingpolicy@apsc.gov.au (for non-SES roles) or SESstaffing@apsc.gov.au (for SES roles).

30. Forms along with frequently asked questions will be available on the APSC website.

31. Forms should be submitted to recruitmentsolutions@apsc.gov.au.