

Chapter 4

Graduate recruitment in the APS

Recruitment trends

4.1 The number of graduates available for employment choosing to enter the APS during the past decade declined from 9.2 per cent in 1991 to 5.4 per cent in 2001.¹ By comparison, the number of graduates entering State government, local government and other governmental instrumentalities that are not part of the APS grew over the last decade, while the number entering the private sector in the last five years remained more or less static.²

4.2 The proportion of graduates entering the APS had fallen from less than five per cent in 1996 to less than four per cent in 2001, and the actual number of graduates recruited was 500 lower than the total number of graduate recruits in 1996. However, the proportion of new graduates entering the APS needs to be considered in light of the fact that the total number of new graduates each year has increased by over 50 per cent in the last decade. The GCCA told the Committee:

It is possibly contrary to popular perception that, leaving Defence aside, less than 5 per cent of new graduates are recruited by the APS. It is necessary to view older statistics to find the proportion of graduates entering the APS above 5 per cent.³

4.3 Regarding the reduction in graduates entering the APS both in real and percentage terms, the GCCA explained that it could not precisely determine the significance of these figures within and amongst APS agencies. On the basis of available data, it could not advise whether the lower number of APS graduate recruits was a consequence of a lowering of demand or due to different choices or changed career options amongst graduates.⁴

4.4 The GCCA was also unable to comment on whether APS agencies were experiencing a shortfall in graduates. It noted, however, the reduction in APS positions, overall, that would formerly have been available to graduates.⁵

4.5 The sharp decline in graduate trainees in 2001-02 compared with the previous year (down from 906 to 372) reflects fluctuations in line with major recruitment

1 Mr R Bartley, GCCA, *Committee Hansard*, 15 August 2002, p.147

2 GCCA, Submission no. 8, p.1

3 *ibid*

4 Mr R Bartley, GCCA, *Committee Hansard*, 15 August 2002, p.147

5 GCCA, Submission no. 8. p.148

campaigns of large agencies. For example, the ATO recruited approximately 870 graduates over two years or nearly 50 per cent of the 2000 and 30.4 per cent of the 2001 graduate intake. This contrasted with ATO's recruitment of only 19 graduates between 1992 and 1994.⁶

Retention trends

4.6 Information provided to the Committee by the APS Commission stated that graduate retention rates had been declining since the 1989-90 cohort but that the rate of retention varied considerably between agencies. It noted that of the graduates recruited in 1996, 61.4 per cent remained in the APS at June 2001 with 46.1 per cent employed in their original agency. Further, retention rates for graduates who remained in the APS for more than five years were similar to those of the mid 1980s.⁷

4.7 AFFA advised that, of the 110 graduates (excluding ABARE graduate trainees) recruited since 1997, 71 (65 per cent) remained, with the majority of the separations (20 female and 19 male) occurring in the first two years of employment. It attributed this to graduates returning to their home state or moving to other APS agencies and State Government bodies.⁸ Moreover, AFFA did not consider such an apparently high turnover of graduates to be a problem. Mr Bill Pahl, Chief Operating Officer, AFFA told the Committee:

I think that retaining two-thirds of our recruits over a five-year period is a pretty good effort. When we go through graduate recruitment campaigns, we find that a number of people have a very different view of what Canberra will be like compared with what it is really like when they arrive. For many, it is the first time they have left home.⁹

4.8 The Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) advised that its graduate retention rate was about 48 per cent over an 8 year period from 1994-2001. DEH noted that this relatively low figure reflected the substantial decline in retention rates that had occurred in only the last two years and that retention rates had previously been much higher. However, DEH told the Committee that it had concluded from its study of graduate retention in December 2001 that, while a higher retention rate would be preferable, 'graduates were not leaving because there [wa]s something wrong with the work environment or culture' [emphasis added]. Mr Keith Fairbrother, Assistant Secretary for EA's People Management Branch said that:

...virtually no-one had left because they were unhappy with the department as a place to work or with the nature of the work. The majority had left because of their assessment of promotional opportunities. They were

6 APSC, Submission no. 15, p.24

7 *APS Statistical Bulletin 2001-02*, p.14

8 AFFA, Submission no. 19, p.3

9 Mr B Pahl, AFFA, *Committee Hansard*, 15 August 2002, p.98

assessing that there were better promotional opportunities in other government agencies. Only about 15 had left the Australian Public Service, so the effect of our graduate program—which is good for the service but not so good for us—is that we are a good recruiter to the Australian Public Service.¹⁰

4.9 In contrast, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Training's (DFAT) graduate retention rate was typically very high with only one recruit leaving the agency in the last two years. DFAT suggested that its focus on career development, ongoing training and development and the interesting and varied nature of work in that agency appeared to be the main reasons for its strong retention rate.

While we recruit people who already come with very significant professional skills, we also offer a career path that serves to develop them throughout their career over many years. So the return for the individual is very significant. That involves overseas experience as well as experience here in Canberra or at one of our state and territory offices. Because the department also deals with such a wide range of issues across the international agenda, people have very stimulating careers in which they can find themselves working on a very diverse range of topics throughout their career.¹¹

4.10 Geoscience Australia stated that it was pleased with its retention rate which was a result of 'strategic, high level coordination of the Graduate Program itself'. The program involved university information sessions conducted by SES officers and graduates from the previous year's intake, a careful selection process involving psychometric testing, and use of buddies and mentors.¹²

4.11 The CPSU expressed concern that, according to its survey of graduates, 68 per cent intended to remain in the APS for no more than five years. It considered that this indicated that graduates' career aspirations lay elsewhere. It noted that 'a significant number of respondents to a survey of graduates (36 per cent) reported that their level of work was inconsistent with their skills'. The CPSU submitted that such attitudes could be, in part, the result of poor targeting of graduate recruitment, advertising or promotional strategies.¹³

4.12 Further, the CPSU emphasised the considerable investment of public money in the APS Graduate Program and considered it imperative that the return from such expenditure was maximised and not lost through early departure of graduates. The

10 Mr K Fairbrother, DEH, *Committee Hansard*, 15 August 2002, p.138

11 Ms J Ryan, DFAT, *Committee Hansard*, 14 August 2002, pp.80-81

12 GA, Submission no. 12, p.2

13 CPSU, Submission no. 42, p.16

CPSU recommended that the Committee consider APS Commission strategies to improve the retention of graduates.¹⁴

4.13 Referring to its observation of declining retention rates for graduates, the APS Commission suggested that possible reasons for this included poor initial career choice, more attractive career options outside the APS or changing career patterns and expectations amongst young people.¹⁵

4.14 The MAC report investigated the career patterns of recent graduate entrants and mature age workers. It concluded that the apparent 'structural shift downwards' in graduate retention rates in the APS did indeed reflect 'different career attitudes of more recent generations of new entrants to the labour force'. In its view, a shift was underway from a 'predominantly career service to a labour market increasingly interested in employment in the APS of five to ten years within a broader career'.¹⁶

4.15 On the bright side, however, the report found that there was scope for maintenance or even improvement in graduate retention rates if agencies concentrated on workplace factors graduates considered important. So, while pressure on retention was unlikely to diminish in an increasingly competitive market, a focus on factors such as employment conditions, job security, interesting work and learning and development opportunities would assist agencies to attract and retain graduates.¹⁷

Graduate recruitment strategies

4.16 In light of the pressures being faced by the APS and the factors impacting on its corporate knowledge and skills base, recruitment of graduates into the APS assumes great importance.

4.17 As already noted, fewer employment opportunities at lower levels and in supporting roles, the need for an increasingly skilled and flexible staff and the fact the agencies appear to be recruiting above the base, are a consequence of the new demands and changed role of the APS. The Graduate Program is one of the key strategies that could build skills and capacity in the APS over the long term to cope with its present and future challenges.¹⁸

4.18 The need for the APS to market itself as an employer of choice to graduates is clear. The composition and qualifications of the bulk of the Senior Executive Service highlights the importance of graduates as potential leaders within the APS. Mr Gourley and Dr West observed that:

14 *ibid*

15 APSC, Submission no. 15, p.46

16 *Organisational Renewal*, Management Advisory Committee 3, March 2003, p.6

17 *ibid*

18 CPSU, Submission no. 42, p.16

almost all of the staff of the Senior Executive Service are degree qualified and very many have been recruited through base grade graduate entry as generalists.¹⁹

4.19 The trend to recruitment of new entrants into higher APS classification levels reflects the impact of a more competitive labour market and the higher skills required of entrants. As the work of agencies becomes more complex leading to changes in agencies' classification profiles, graduate recruitment becomes the main entry point. For example, the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) submitted that, because of the nature of its 'work, skills requirements, and classification profile, the Department has focused, for at least the past decade, on the Graduate (APS) level as its major entry level recruitment programme'.²⁰

4.20 As the report has already noted, the most common point of entry in 2000-01 was at APS level 4, with only 4.1 per cent of engagements at APS level 1 (down from 70 per cent in the equivalent base grade classifications in 1985-86).

4.21 Under these circumstances, the relative importance of each of the two traditional graduate recruitment schemes is also changing. These are, the 'general' APS wide recruitment campaigns and agencies' own employment campaigns, (for example, campaigns managed separately by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Treasury and the Australian Bureau of Statistics), designed to tap into particular skills areas or to attract graduates who would not normally apply for generally advertised vacancies.

4.22 The APS Commission advised the Committee that, previously, agencies used 'the general or shared employment campaigns to recruit their future core professional skills base'. However, it noted that, while there was anecdotal evidence that the APS had continued to recruit good quality graduates to meet current and expected skill needs, increased competition for the 'best and brightest' meant that agencies were 'addressing how best to manage graduate and skilled employee intakes to ensure that they have access to employees who, over time, will make a contribution to the leadership of the APS, as well a workforce that meets the needs of the organisation'.²¹

4.23 Further, the APS Commission advised that major recruitment campaigns run by individual agencies may be contributing to the substantial movement 'in year on year numbers of graduate/non-graduate engagements'. It noted that, 'since 1996, the levels of trainee recruitment have fallen as a percentage of all engagements (from 17.6 percent in 1996 to 9.7 percent in 2001) and that, 'within the Trainee classification

19 Mr P D Gourley & Dr J West, Submission no. 29, p.5

20 DOHA, Submission no. 28, p.5

21 APSC, Submission no. 15, APS Commission, p.24

there is strong evidence of increased proportions of graduates, with more widely fluctuating numbers of non-graduate trainees'.²²

4.24 The increasing tendency to 'laterally recruit' graduates into advertised vacancies suggested that the numbers of graduates within the APS were increasing. The APS Commission advised that, rather than graduates being the 'elite recruits' with most base grade recruits high school leavers, in many agencies (for example, DoHA and ABS), base grade recruitment is now 'dominated by graduates'.²³

Although the targetted recruitment of graduates within the Trainee classification represents a small proportion of all engagements to the base employment levels, there is also anecdotal evidence of a trend to recruit people who have tertiary qualifications to higher entry level positions (APS 3 and 4). Overall, given that recruitment to these classifications represented more than 51 percent of all engagements for 2001, this would suggest that there has been a substantial increase in the numbers of employees holding graduate qualifications within the service.²⁴

4.25 Increasing lateral recruitment of graduates meant that analysis of information about graduate trainees did not provide the full picture about graduate recruitment in the APS. Although graduate trainee numbers had not increased markedly over the past decade, the APS appeared to be 'relying far more on graduates' than it had done in the past.²⁵

4.26 The committee notes the different scales of the graduate trainee programs conducted by different agencies. (In the analysis below, in addition to excluding graduate recruitment into vacant positions, Indigenous trainees are also excluded unless otherwise indicated.) Quantification of graduate trainee recruitment provided to the committee included the following:

- Geoscience Australia has increased its graduate recruitment from two in 1999-00 to twelve in 2001-02 (the latter from a field of 120 applicants, with 4 successfully relocating from regional areas).
- Reflecting the increasing complexity of work, Defence graduate trainee numbers have increased from 42 in 1995 to approximately 150 graduate trainees in 2002 (excluding Defence Science and Technology Association's scheme which recruits over 50 graduate research scientists, engineers, IT specialists and technicians per year) into one of four separate programs:
 - the Graduate Development Program, a corporate level program with generalist, business analyst and people strategy streams, preparing

22 *ibid*

23 Mr A Podger, APSC, *Committee Hansard*, 14 August 2002, p.4

24 APSC, Submission no. 15, APS Commission, p.24

25 Mr A Podger, APSC, *Committee Hansard*, 11 November, 2002, pp.235, 244

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- graduates for a wide range of management, administrative and policy roles throughout Defence (69 participants);
 - Materiel Graduate Scheme, offered by DMO with a commercial stream and an engineering stream (43 participants);
 - Defence Signals Directorate Graduate Program, which offers a technology stream and a generalist (intelligence analyst) stream (31 participants); and
 - Infrastructure Graduate Program, in its first year and focussing on graduates with civil engineering, environmental science and facilities management (6 participants).²⁶
- Between eight and twelve graduates (with consistently high academic achievements) are recruited to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet each year.
 - DFAT recruits 20-30 ‘highly talented and resourceful’ graduate trainees annually (excluding Indigenous trainees) from a field of approximately 2500, and, in addition, aims to recruit about four graduates through a new Corporate and Financial Management Trainee scheme to help manage departmental assets and resources in Australia and overseas.
 - AFFA recruits 30-40 graduates (with even gender representation) and ABARE recruits between 10-15 graduate economists, annually.
 - EA recruits 20 graduates annually on average (excluding Indigenous trainees) from a field of approximately 1000 applicants, the majority of whom are female (consistent ratio of 2:1).
 - The Treasury has increased its number of graduate trainees to about 45 annually, compared with about 25 in earlier years.²⁷

4.27 The majority of agencies participating in the inquiry, in particular DFAT, DEH, ATO, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resource (DITR) and Geoscience Australia, considered that graduate recruitment was the main avenue of recruitment for young people. Indeed, engagement of graduate recruits has contributed to an increase in the number of younger staff in some agencies. For example, the proportion of young people employed in Treasury has risen from 18.4 to 21.8 per cent over the past three years due to recruitment of graduates.

4.28 However, the GCCA advised the Committee that ‘the demographics of the graduate labour market (in the specific sense of new university graduates)’ had changed in recent years, with more graduates aged over 25 entering the labour market than was the case twenty years ago.

26 DOD, Submission no. 36, p.10

27 The Treasury, Submission no. 21, p.1

Anecdotally it would appear likely that the opportunities for mature graduates in the APS have improved, at the possible expense of opportunities for the under-25s.²⁸

4.29 Further, GCCA stated that, while the majority of graduates were still aged under 25, there was ‘an increasing mature student graduate output from universities’.²⁹

4.30 Information provided to the Committee on the age of graduate recruits included the following:

- Defence advised the Committee that the average age of graduate recruits was increasing, from under 25 to over 25.³⁰
- The median age of Environment Australia graduate recruits was 25;³¹
- Treasury advised that graduate trainees are usually recent graduates at the start of their professional careers, but older applicants are appointed, if competitive;
- The DITR pointed out its graduates had included ‘folk in their mid-forties’ in the recent past;³² and
- AFFA advised that, while it does not specifically target young people, AQIS’ major recruitment activity over the past year, reflecting the government’s priority action areas of border protection and quarantine measures, resulted in approximately 700 new staff most of whom were young people. This had contributed to the lowering of the average age of all AFFA staff, to 40.1 years.³³

4.31 The MAC report found that the prospects for training and career development in the APS are an important factor in attracting graduates.³⁴ It also considered that ‘the role played by some agencies as a training ground of particular expertise in demand across the Service should also be recognised’.³⁵

4.32 Like all recruitment arrangements, responsibility for graduate recruitment was devolved to agencies with the passing of the PS Act in 1999. Prior to this, a centrally administered system involving a single graduate selection test similar to the arrangements for base grade recruitment, was in place.

28 GCCA, Submission no. 8, p.2

29 Mr R Bartley, GCCA, *Committee Hansard*, 15 August 2002, p.149

30 DOD, Submission no. 36, p.3

31 AEC, Submission no. 24, p.20

32 DITR, Submission no. 5, p.3

33 AFFA, Submission no.19, p.2

34 *Organisational Renewal*, Management Advisory Committee 3, March 2003, p.6

35 *ibid*, p.7

4.33 Mr Gourley and Dr West stressed that it was important for each agency to ‘pull its weight’ and maintain strong graduate recruitment programs, rather than ‘poaching’ recruits engaged by other agencies, stating:

It would be highly undesirable for some to avoid the expense of recruiting and training generalist graduates and then use the money saved to pay higher salaries in an attempt to poach graduates from others who have taken a more responsible approach and recruited and trained to their needs.³⁶

4.34 The Committee notes that Centrelink maintains an IT graduate recruitment program but not a generalist graduate recruitment program. This reflects the fact that more than half of Centrelink’s National Support Office are IT specialists.

4.35 CASA, a non-APS agency submitted that, while it did not presently maintain a graduate recruitment program because of the infrastructure required to support even a small intake, such an initiative was currently under consideration as part of its People Management Strategy.

4.36 Some agencies have additional programs to enhance the possibility of their recruiting graduates, in particular, graduates with a good understanding of positions in that agency. For example:

- DITR is trialling a Year in Industry program for second and third year university students of Chemistry or Chemistry related study.³⁷
- Defence Materiel Organisation (DMO) offers a Vacation Employment Program to raise its profile as a prospective employer of engineering and commerce graduates, including up to 20 positions to 3rd and 4th year students in the 2002-03 summer break. This program also assists engineering students complete the mandatory 12 week work-experience component of their degree.
- Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) participates in university employment experience programs (such as Industry-based Learning). It offers vacation employment opportunities to 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students during which each student is allocated a research project for a 12-week period of paid employment (December to February).³⁸

Effectiveness of devolved graduate recruitment arrangements

4.37 No agency contributing to the inquiry indicated that they were dissatisfied with the devolved arrangements for recruiting graduates. On the contrary, a number of agencies, including DoHA, DEH, and Geoscience Australia indicated that they found the devolved arrangements highly effective.

36 Mr P D Gourley and Dr J West, Submission no. 29, p.5

37 DITR, Submission no. 5, p.3

38 DOD, Submission no. 36, p.3

4.38 DoHA stated that the devolved arrangements were much more effective in terms of meeting agency requirements for graduates. Better targeting of graduates allowed recruitment of people ‘with knowledge and active interest in health and ageing issues, and alignment with our corporate values’ which DoHA considered aided retention and maximized ‘return on investment.’³⁹

4.39 DoHA had formally evaluated its graduate program using both qualitative information and benchmarking against other public sector employers as well as private sector employers and European practice. The latter was achieved through its participation in HRM Consulting’s Australian Annual Graduate Recruitment Benchmarking study. Involvement in this study over a number of years allowed DoHA to compare its recruitment process on a range of measures. The results of the January 2002 benchmarking report showed that DoHA’s graduate recruitment process was relatively efficient, with a shorter recruitment time than most other organizations. This led to reduced costs and less chance that successful candidates would accept alternative offers, as indicated in DoHA’s acceptance rate of 88 per cent compared with the median 83 per cent.⁴⁰

4.40 Geoscience Australia advised the Committee that recruitment had been identified as a key corporate activity as a result of a number of pressures including ‘downsizing, outsourcing, cost saving, skill shortages and changing workforce demographics’. In this context, its graduate recruitment program had been particularly successful in recruiting ‘young graduates with high levels of technical, scientific and leadership potential’. It stated that:

the devolved arrangements for recruitment in the APS have been particularly beneficial to Geoscience Australia in relation to having the flexibility to design and implement a graduate program that meets the agency’s specific needs for a combination of scientific/technical and leadership skills.⁴¹

4.41 Geoscience Australia considered that its successful retention rate had been largely due to high level coordination of the program that involved:

- university Information Sessions (conducted by SES Officers accompanied by a Graduate from the previous year’s intake);
- interviews (with selection panel comprised of SES Officers);
- psychometric testing of applicants selected for interview (to assist determination of leadership potential);
- mentoring by senior staff (to facilitate their graduate year); and

39 DOHA, Submission no. 28, p.7

40 *ibid*, p.8

41 GE, Submission no. 12, p.1

- an informal buddy system, utilising Graduates from earlier intakes.

4.42 Defence also advised of coordinated action to attract suitably qualified and skilled recruits into its Business Analyst stream by creating a positive but realistic expectation amongst graduates about opportunities by:

- including both senior members of the Chief Finance Officer's staff and former business graduates in the Defence team at University Career fairs, to answer questions about the nature of work and career opportunities in Defence;
- emphasising support for further study, including opportunities to gain eligibility for professional bodies; and
- emphasising opportunities available in Defence for varied and high-level experience.⁴²

4.43 The ATO also advised that it had experienced difficulty in attracting business and finance recruits recently. It suggested that difficulties recruiting the *number* of graduates across the business disciplines such as law, accounting and commerce required in the year 2001 were due to ATO's strong emphasis on quality (recruits required a credit average).⁴³

4.44 On the other had, Treasury pointed out that an emphasis on graduate recruitment alleviated the difficulties it experienced in attracting suitable policy analysts at the APS 6 and EL 1 levels.⁴⁴

4.45 Defence stated that, in order to improve retention rates amongst participants in the Graduate Development Program, it was implementing a 'later-years development strategy including assistance to graduates to identify their career potential and the kinds of work to which they are most suited'.⁴⁵

4.3 The Defence approach may anticipate at least one concern that was raised with the committee regarding graduate recruitment in regional areas. Mr Robin Henry, a Human Resources Development Specialist based in Alice Springs, considered that, with regard to appointments to regional areas, graduates seemed to be recruited with little consideration of tasks, organisation and, in some cases, 'geographic fit'. He advised the Committee:

Some graduate administration assistants with whom I have discussed these issues have told me that they had absolutely no idea what type of work they would be doing in their new jobs and were totally unprepared... we need to

42 Answers to questions on notice, Q.10, pp.7-8

43 Answers to questions on notice, Q.10, p.4

44 The Treasury, Submission no. 21, p.2

45 Answers to questions on notice, Q.9, p.6

ensure we fully inform them about the jobs in which we intend to place them and perhaps do psychological assessments to determine job fit.⁴⁶

Areas for improvement

4.4 While agencies claimed that graduate recruitment arrangements were satisfactory, a number of organisations told the Committee that they had experienced difficulties with current processes.

4.5 The GCCA considered that there was a lack of cohesion and ‘presence’ for the APS in terms of graduate employment and that better awareness-raising and promotion of the APS as a graduate employer could be investigated.

There is considerable scope for APS to improve its ‘profile’ on campuses by developing both its branding and its broader marketing strategies in targeting university students. In particular the advantages of working within the APS could be more strongly emphasised.⁴⁷

4.6 The GCCA stated that the dissemination of information concerning graduate employment in the public sector was less coordinated, and therefore less effective, than under past arrangements. They indicated that, from the point of view of universities, the information about graduate employment provided through the RSA had been more consistent and also more equitable, in terms of the institutions receiving it.⁴⁸ The GCCA told the Committee:

When APS graduate recruitment was substantially coordinated from one office (RSA) it was easier for students to gain a sense of what was going on... A common observation is that APS graduate recruitment is ‘fragmented’. Some departments only advertise their graduate vacancies in newspapers and do not contact universities at all; others appear to contact universities electively. A few Departments use the hga.net on-line vacancy service and field applications through that medium. Some Departments use third-party recruitment consultants who do or don’t contact universities.⁴⁹

4.7 A recent survey of the job seeking behaviour of university students conducted by Careers and Employment from the University of New South Wales’ had found that ‘careers service websites were a primary source of information regarding graduate employment opportunities’. Careers and Employment suggested to the Committee that it would be useful if all APS agencies made relevant recruitment information available online, so that career services could provide links to the information in a systematic

46 Mr Robin Henry, Submission no. 1, p.4

47 GCCA, (Supplementary to Submission 8), Submission no. 46, p.2

48 Mr R Bartley, GCCA, *Committee Hansard*, 15 August 2002, p.148

49 GCCA, (Supplementary to Submission 8), Submission no. 46, p.2

way. It considered that, if this were the case, university career services could become ‘one-stop shops’ for information on graduate recruitment.⁵⁰

4.8 The Graduate Managers’ Forum (GMF) has emerged as a focal point for APS graduate recruitment, providing stimulus to the overall APS recruiting effort and developing the Graduate Links page on the Australian Job Search website. However, the GCCA noted that this group was not an official entity and that there were limits to what it could achieve, given its lack of specific marketing responsibilities and a budget.⁵¹

4.9 The CPSU also urged greater consideration of strategies to advertise and promote the Graduate Program.⁵² Citing survey results that students had come across the Graduate Program ‘by accident’, it suggested better advertising of the program at careers fairs and university career offices.⁵³ The CPSU further suggested that the information provided to universities should include descriptions of APS agencies and how to comprehensively address APS position selection criteria.

4.10 The GCAA noted that, while an overall presence was lacking, some agencies, in particular DFAT and Treasury, had directed significant effort towards promoting themselves as graduate employers and that this had resulted in attracting students.

4.11 Applicants too can be at a disadvantage in the devolved environment. The task of applying for positions is considerably more complex if difficulties in accessing information arise, and applicants may now need to participate in numerous application processes. As Mr Gourley and Dr West submitted:

From the point of view of applicants, they might now go through literally dozens of differently agency based assessments to join what is still called a career service. The effect on the perceptions of potential applicants that this creates can only be guessed at, not to mention its additional costs.⁵⁴

4.12 The Committee considers there is a fine line between a devolved system of recruitment and a fragmented approach. Mr Gourley and Dr West stated that, while the present arrangements optimised competition between agencies for good graduates, they minimised the possibility of coordination across the APS and the opportunity to present a unified position in the labour market against other competitors.⁵⁵ Dr West also told the Committee:

50 UNSW, Submission no. 2, p.1

51 GCCA, Submission no. 8, p.2

52 CPSU, Submission no. 42, p.17

53 *ibid*, p.15

54 Mr P D Gourley and Dr J West, Submission no. 29, p.5

55 Mr P D Gourley and Dr J West, Submission no. 29, p.5

Sometimes the competition in particular disciplines is very tough. However, [agencies] are each required to go out on their own and undertake extensive advertising campaigns, short-listing campaigns and recruitment campaigns against essentially very similar criteria for a graduate in that agency. There is an enormous cost there.⁵⁶

4.13 The Committee further discusses recruitment in the context of devolution in Chapter 6.