



# State of the Sector 2024

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**Government  
of South Australia**

Office of the Commissioner  
for Public Sector Employment



This artwork presents the journey of our Aboriginal public sector leaders and the support available to them through the Aboriginal Leadership Program (ALP), proudly offered through the South Australian Leadership Academy (SALA), Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (OCPSE).

Artist: **Karen Briggs**

As the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment, I acknowledge the Aboriginal people as the first peoples and nations of South Australia.

My office recognises and respects their cultural connections as the traditional owners and occupants of the land and waters of South Australia and that they maintain a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the state.

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# Foreword



**As South Australian public sector employees, we come to work each day to make a difference for our community. The Public Sector Values unite us and guide our actions, regardless of our role.**

Enabling our people to perform at the highest standards expected of us in our trusted roles is imperative, and to do this, we need to continually evolve our understanding of our workforce.

Since my first State of the Sector report in 2014 much has changed but my commitment to building workplaces where employees can be their best and do their best for South Australia is unfaltering.

My office collaborates with agencies to address shared workforce issues. This sector-wide collaboration has driven change on many fronts since 2014, resulting in:

- modernisation of the Code of Ethics and the development of the Public Sector Values
- a coordinated and holistic approach to managing physical and psychological health risks
- a more diverse and inclusive workforce, with more Aboriginal employees and women at executive level than ever before
- a structured framework and the prioritisation of developing managers and executives
- contemporary workforce data and human resources systems to support people management.

With an eye to the future, maintaining employee wellbeing must be a priority.

This year, my office coordinated the 2024 People Matter Employee Survey (PMES), the most extensive employee survey undertaken in the South Australian public sector, with responses from more than 40,000 employees.

It is evident from the results that we have a highly resilient workforce against a backdrop of South Australia's recovery from pandemic disruption and new government priorities and commitments.

More feedback was collected from employees on psychosocial hazards in this year's PMES, following amendment to the regulations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)* requiring employers to eliminate or minimise these hazards to prevent harm. This rich data will help us to develop more targeted strategies to support wellbeing.

The 2024 PMES also collected new data that presents the most comprehensive picture of diversity in the public sector to date.

For the first time, the public sector has an understanding of the representation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people, those who identify as LGBTIQ+, people who live with disability and neurodiverse people in the workforce. More work still needs to be done however to ensure workplaces are inclusive and safe for employees to share information about their lived experience.

Workforce data continues to show a record number of Aboriginal employees in the public sector. As at June 2024, there were 2,584 Aboriginal employees, making up 2.19 per cent of the total workforce.



## My office collaborates with agencies to address shared workforce issues.

The public sector continued to make progress on gender equality with women in executive leadership roles increasing to 59.17 per cent. This is an important driver in reducing the gender pay gap.

At a time when we are working to strengthen inclusivity in public sector workplaces through the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-26 and the Anti-Racism Strategy and Action Plan 2023-28, both of which were launched during 2023-24, we have more insights to measure and review progress of these strategies.

My office is also partnering with agencies to progress government priorities such as the South Australian Autism Inclusion Charter, South Australia's Women's Gender Equality Blueprint, South Australia's Implementation Plan for the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the South Australian Multicultural Charter.

Following the launch of the Building Integrity framework last year, I was pleased to see that 87 per cent of employees responded in the PMES that they knew how to report unethical conduct. I believe this greater awareness of integrity has driven a 14.81 per cent increase in Code of Ethics investigations reported by agencies for the year (744 investigations).

This year, I released two new guidelines on preventing and addressing bullying and harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment. Both guidelines will help agencies to comply with the new positive duty obligations on all employers in the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*. These new resources will help make it abundantly clear that the public sector will not tolerate bullying, harassment and discrimination.

The public sector has always acted swiftly to address risks to employee health and wellbeing. South Australia led other jurisdictions when my office launched the Mentally Healthy Workplaces Framework and Toolkit. Additionally, the Safety, Wellbeing and Injury Management Strategy for the South Australian Public Sector 2023-2032 is in place, bringing an equal focus on physical and psychological health.

My team and I pride ourselves as the independent and trusted adviser to government and the public sector. We set the standards for managing the public sector workforce. Our small team belies our impact in bringing people together to work and learn from each other and I would like to thank each employee in my office – current and former – who have contributed to our achievements.

I would also like to thank all public sector employees for sharing and trusting us with their invaluable insights through the PMES. I assure you they will help inform our future initiatives and action plans as we continue to build workplaces that encourage and support public sector employees in making a significant and positive difference to the lives of South Australians.

Erma Ranieri PSM  
Commissioner for Public Sector Employment

# About this report

The State of the Sector is my annual report to the Parliament of South Australia, as required by the *Public Sector Act 2009* (the Act).

It must describe how the public sector is observing the public sector principles, described in the Act, in relation to public sector employment. This report details my actions to support those principles.

The public sector principles are the expectations of Parliament and South Australians regarding public sector performance, culture, and integrity. For employees, the Public Sector Values provide guidance on how their behaviour contributes to observance of the public sector principles.

Regulations 11(a) and 11(b) of the *Public Sector Regulations 2010* (the Regulations) also require my annual report to include:

- variations or substitutions of the public sector code of conduct
- new public sector employment determinations
- new guidelines relating to public sector employment matters
- the number of occasions on which public interest information was disclosed to the Commissioner under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018*.

The reporting period for this year's State of the Sector is 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Public sector agencies are surveyed each July.

A total of 95 agencies participated in the survey (listed in Appendix 1). There was a total of 118,036 public sector employees as at 30 June 2024.

The survey was in two parts:

### 1. Public Sector Employment Review (PSER)

Agencies were asked to self-assess their compliance with Premier's directions, Commissioner's determinations and guidelines and other workforce policy and legislative instruments.

Assessing agency compliance with these core policies enables me to comment on the observance of the public sector's principles. Based on agency submissions, compliance across the public sector is assessed as:

- *Implemented* – The agency has fully implemented the policy requirement
- *Developing* – The agency is developing a strategy or has approved a strategy to implement the policy requirement
- *Not Implemented* - Implementation of the policy requirement is yet to be considered, or the agency did not respond to the question.

Throughout this report, results from the PSER are weighted by agency employee headcount to better understand the level of compliance across the public sector.

Aggregated responses to the PSER will be published on my office's website after this report has been tabled in Parliament.

### 2. Agency Information Collection (AIC)

Agencies were asked to provide statistical data concerning their implementation of Premier's directions, Commissioner's determinations and guidelines and other workforce policy and legislative instruments.

I recommend the State of the Sector be read together with the Workforce Information Report and the People Matter Employee Survey sector-level highlights report. Collectively, the three reports provide a holistic and comprehensive picture of the public sector workforce, which increases transparency and accountability for the State's investment in the public sector.

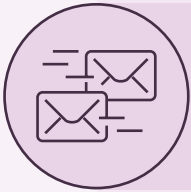
# Public sector principles



## 1. Public focus

**The public sector is to:**

- focus on the provision of services to the public
- recognise the diversity of public needs and respond to changing needs
- consult and involve the public, where appropriate, to improve services and outcomes on an ongoing basis.



## 2. Responsiveness

**The public sector is to:**

- implement the Government's policies in a timely manner and regardless of the political party forming Government
- provide accurate, timely and comprehensive advice
- align structures and systems to achieve major strategies while continuing to deliver core services.



## 3. Collaboration

**The public sector is to:**

- ensure there is ongoing collaboration between public sector agencies
- focus on whole-of-government, as well as agency-specific, services and outcomes.



## 4. Excellence

**The public sector is to:**

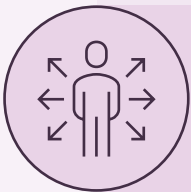
- provide services with a high level of efficiency and effectiveness
- move resources rapidly in response to changing needs
- devolve decision-making authority to the lowest appropriate level
- manage resources effectively, prudently and in a fully accountable manner
- maintain and enhance the value of public assets.



## 5. Employer of choice

### Public sector agencies are to:

- treat public sector employees fairly, justly and reasonably
- prevent unlawful discrimination against public sector employees or persons seeking employment in the public sector
- ensure that public sector employees may give frank advice without fear of reprisal
- encourage public sector employees to undertake professional development and to pursue opportunities throughout the public sector
- set clear objectives for public sector employees and make them known
- acknowledge employee successes and achievement and address under performance
- ensure that public sector employees may join, or choose not to join, organisations that represent their interests
- consult public sector employees and public sector representative organisations on matters that affect public sector employment.



## 6. Ethical behaviour and professional integrity

### Public sector employees are to:

- be honest
- promptly report and deal with improper conduct
- avoid conflicts of interest, nepotism and patronage
- treat the public and public sector employees with respect and courtesy
- make decisions and provide advice fairly and without bias, caprice, favouritism or self-interest
- deal with agency information in accordance with law and agency requirements
- avoid conduct that will reflect adversely on the public sector
- accept responsibility for decisions and actions
- submit to appropriate scrutiny.



## 7. Legal requirements

### Public sector agencies are to:

- implement all legislative requirements relevant to the agencies
- properly administer and keep under review legislation for which the agencies are responsible.

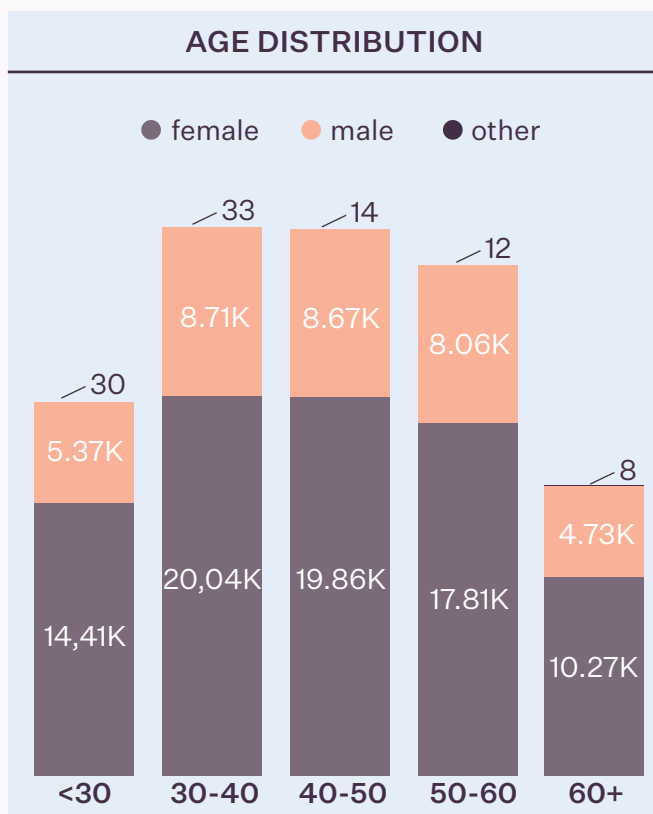
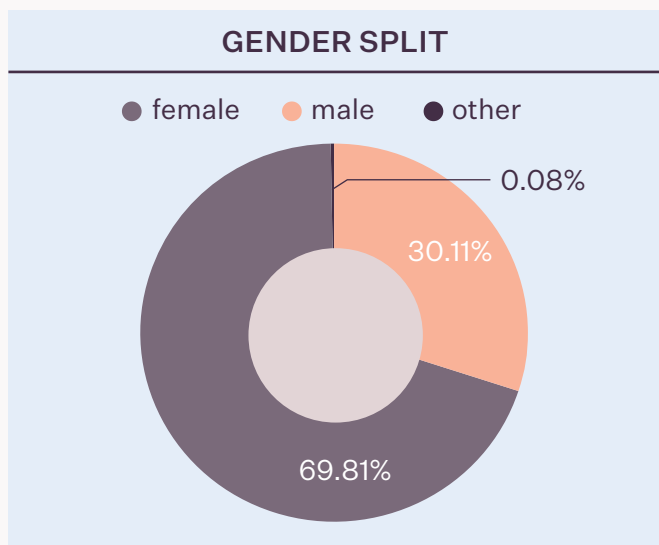
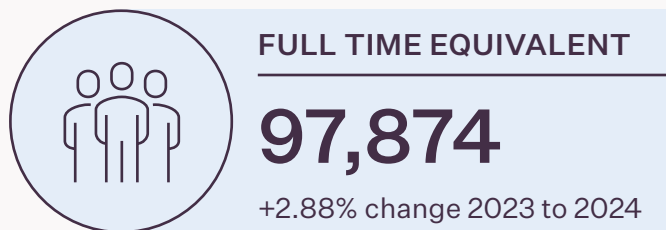
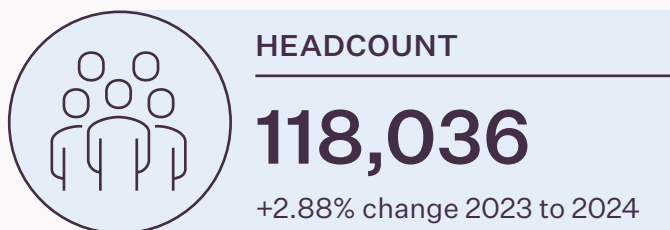
# Public sector at a glance



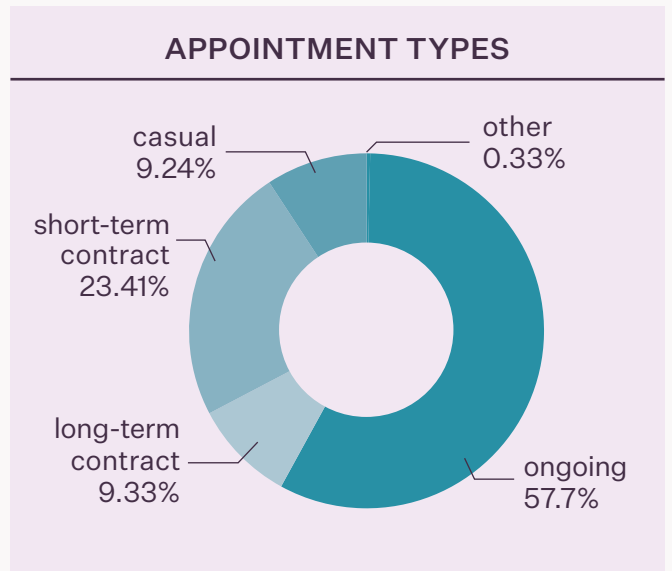
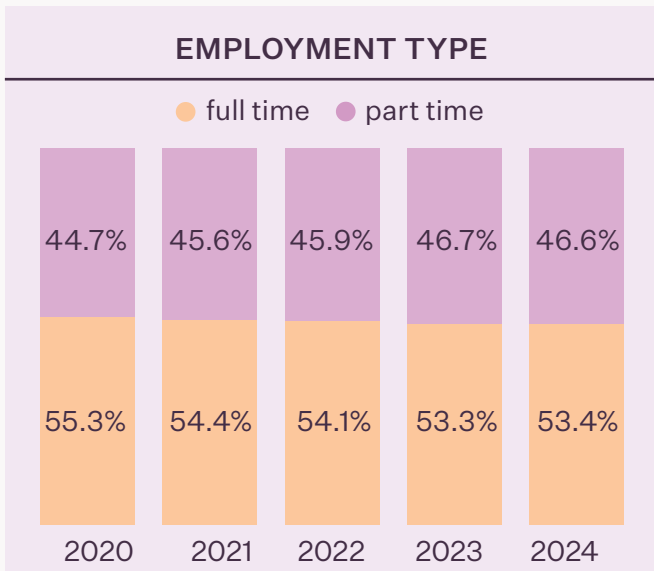
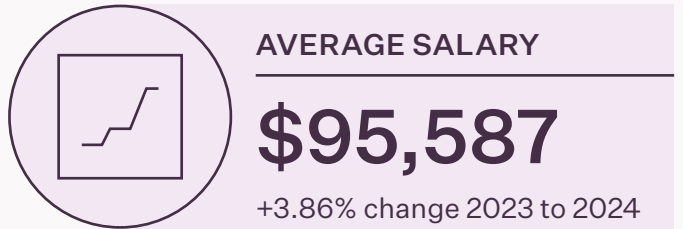
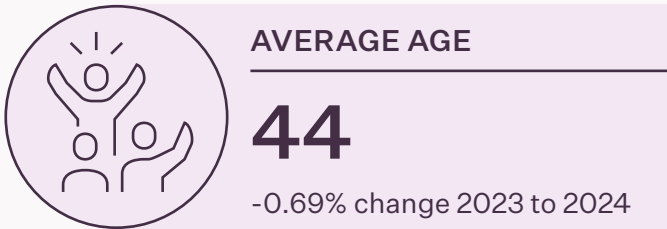
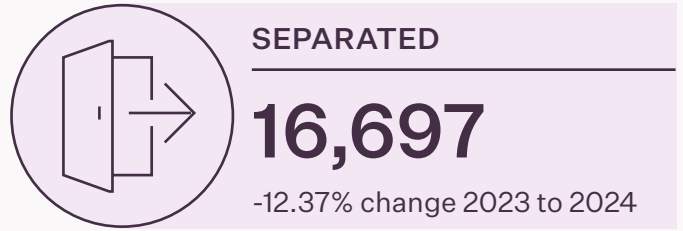
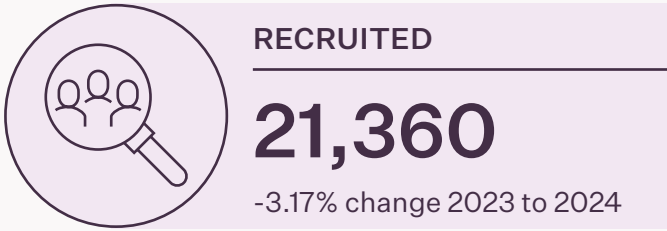
Detailed information about the public sector's workforce size, structure and composition is available at: [publicsector.sa.gov.au/about/Resources-and-Publications/Workforce-Information](https://publicsector.sa.gov.au/about/Resources-and-Publications/Workforce-Information)

Percentages may not total 100 per cent due to rounding.

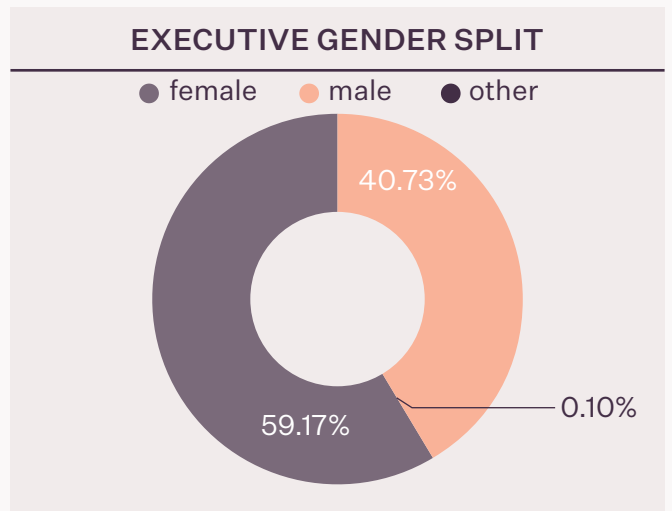
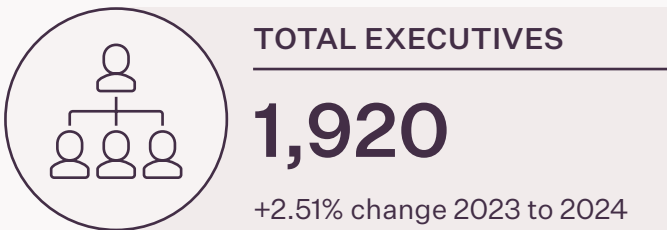
## Employee demographics



# Employment



# Executives



# 01

## Employer of choice

The *Public Sector Act 2009* sets out the expectation that the public sector is a model employer whose employees understand their role, feel supported and included, and are motivated.

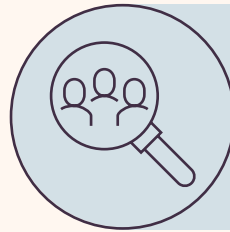
**To help understand whether the public sector lives up to this expectation, my office coordinated the People Matter Employee Survey (PMES) to collect feedback directly and anonymously from employees about their experiences in the workplace.**

Between 28 February and 27 March 2024, more than 40,000 employees completed the PMES - the largest number of responses to an across-government employee survey in South Australia. Results from this and previous surveys are available on my office's website.

This chapter reflects on key insights from the PMES, and reports on the progress made by the public sector on the three areas that were prioritised for action following the 2021 employee survey - leadership, wellbeing, and culture.

I thank each employee for their honest feedback. They have provided critical insights into how agencies are applying the public sector principles. Monitoring and reporting on the public sector principles are central to my responsibilities as Commissioner for Public Sector Employment.

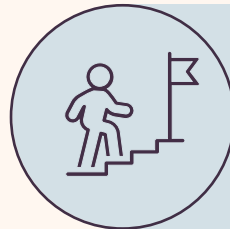
My office will develop an action plan for the public sector that responds to the PMES results, drawing upon drivers identified from the survey results that will have the most impact across the public sector. I look forward to reporting on this in the next State of the Sector report.



**MORE THAN 40,000  
EMPLOYEES COMPLETED  
THE PEOPLE MATTER  
EMPLOYEE SURVEY**



**71% OF EMPLOYEES SAID  
THEIR EXPERIENCE  
EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS**



**70% OF EMPLOYEES FELT  
A SENSE OF PERSONAL  
ACCOMPLISHMENT  
AT WORK.**

# Key employee insights

The 2024 PMES collected the most extensive data to date on workplace issues that matter to employees.

Most survey questions were new or redesigned, with a sample of questions retained from 2021 for continuity.

These changes were necessary to reflect:

- new Government commitments and priorities to improve diversity and inclusion such as the South Australian Multicultural Charter, South Australian Autism Inclusion Charter, South Australia's Women's Equality Blueprint 2023-26, South Australia's Implementation Plan for the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the Public Sector's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2026 and Anti-Racism Strategy and Action Plan 2023-28
- new legislative workplace obligations on employers to eliminate or minimise psychosocial hazards, sexual harassment and discrimination on the basis of sex
- contemporary approaches to measuring employee sentiment.

By making these changes, a new baseline for measuring employee attitudes to work is now available.

Seventy one per cent of employees agreed that their experience met or greatly exceeded their expectations - the highest scoring of the five key employee experience insights. Asked for the first time, this question measured employee satisfaction with their employer and role. A highly positive employee experience can influence employee engagement, productivity and retention.

I believe this result reflects the positive impact of the 2021 sector action plan. Focusing on leadership, wellbeing and culture, this action plan introduced new initiatives and resources to the public sector, including:

- Healthy Workplace Services, a free advisory service that agencies can use to create healthy and thriving workplaces
- Building Integrity, the public sector's framework to embed integrity into everyday work
- Leadership Excellence Framework, to provide a common language for what it means to govern, lead and manage well in the South Australian public sector
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-26, which guides the public sector's efforts to build workplaces where everyone belongs.

With the legislative, policy and program levers available to government, public sector employees can make significant and positive change in the lives of South Australians. This opportunity and the sense of purpose it provides is not replicated in other workplaces. It is unsurprising then that 70 per cent of employees reported that their work gave them a feeling of personal accomplishment, suggesting that the positive engagement, inclusion and intent to stay scores demonstrate the recurring strength of public sector employment lays in the social impact of its work.

We need to better understand why fewer than half of employees felt energised at work. This question is a key indicator of employee wellbeing. There are many factors that affect wellbeing at work, and many things we can do to improve this which I will encourage agencies to address through action plans.

Key employee insights, 2024 PMES



Source: People Matter Employee Survey 2024

# Leadership

We all display leadership in how we conduct ourselves and undertake our roles, and those who have formal responsibility to lead teams and workplaces have a distinct role in delivering on objectives and developing our people.

The 2021 employee survey identified leadership as an area in which effective investment would result in maximum impact across the sector.

As at 30 June 2024, the public sector had 1,920 executives, making up 1.63 per cent of the sector workforce. My office does not have data on the number of managers in the public sector given managers span many classifications and levels.

In the 2024 PMES, employees were asked about management capability in their workplace, using the key attributes set out in the Leadership Excellence Framework: advance (govern well), deliver (manage well) and inspire (lead well). Management capability scored 68 per cent, with almost equal scoring across the three key pillars.

Of the questions that contribute to this scoring, most employees were clear about what was expected of them at work (80 per cent), believed their manager cared about their wellbeing (74 per cent) and considered their manager behaved consistently with agency values (73 per cent). Fewer employees however reported having regular conversations with their manager about performance (59 per cent) or were comfortable discussing mental health and wellbeing with their manager (59 per cent).

These results will be used by the South Australian Leadership Academy (SALA), within my office, to plan its ongoing work to develop public sector leaders and within individual agencies through their own leadership development plans.

Over the past year, SALA delivered the following leadership programs:

## EXECUTIVE EXCELLENCE

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The Executive Excellence Program supports experienced executives to extend their leadership impact, strengthen their capability for strategic influence and broaden their understanding of community and industry perspectives. Twenty-eight executives participated in this year's intake, which included a study tour to the Upper Spencer Gulf to see first-hand the projects and services that the Government delivers to the community.

## EXECUTIVE INDUCTION

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New South Australian Executive Service members must attend the Executive Induction Program, which focuses on the critical knowledge executives need to deliver on the Government's priorities and promotes collaboration to optimise performance. In 2023-24, two intakes were delivered to 137 new executives, including 12 Aboriginal executives.

## NEXT EXECS – PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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The Next Execs Public Sector Management (Next Execs) Program is for high performing managers who are ready to broaden their leadership impact and strategic influence. SALA currently partners with the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to deliver the Next Execs Program, allowing participants to achieve a Graduate Certificate in Business (Public Sector). A total of 41 leaders participated in the 2023-24 program.

## MANAGER ESSENTIALS PROGRAM

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Designed for frontline managers, the Manager Essentials Program develops thinking and performance to manage effectively in the public sector. A total of 399 frontline managers participated during 2023-24 across two intakes.

# Health and wellbeing

My office supports agencies to fulfil the public sector's obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012*, *Return to Work Act 2014* and associated Regulations by reporting on performance.

I provide agency chief executives with quarterly reports on their safety and injury management performance, including mental stress.

Across the public sector during 2023-24, there were 3,097 new workers compensation claims recorded - an increase from 2,907 last year.

The number of mental stress claims lodged increased by 99, making up 18 per cent of the total number of claims, which account for 33 per cent of claim expenditure.

On average, 143 seriously injured worker claims were active (had payments made in the previous six months) over the reporting period.

The average time to determine claims was on average 19.8 days, more than the ten days required by legislation. My office continues to monitor operational claims management and provides education and support to agencies to improve performance.

The PMES provides additional data for agencies to continue to improve the sector's performance in health and wellbeing measures.

# Culture

## Each employee should be valued for the unique knowledge and experience that they bring.

There are multiple government commitments to increase diversity and strengthen inclusion within the public sector which influences workplace culture, including:

- South Australia's Women's Equality Blueprint 2023-26
- South Australia's Implementation Plan for the National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- South Australian Multicultural Charter
- State Disability Inclusion Plan 2019-23
- South Australian Autism Inclusion Charter and SA Autism Strategy 2024-29
- Anti-Racism Strategy and Action Plan 2023-28
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-26.

I have long been concerned that some cohorts of employees were not being accurately reflected in the workforce data collected through payroll. Workforce data depends on self-disclosure of personal information, usually when an employee commences a new role. Many employees may not feel safe or ready to share their personal information, such as whether they live with a disability. In addition, there are system limitations in the demographic information currently captured through payroll.

To address these gaps and align with best practice, new questions were included in the PMES to allow employees to share more about themselves. Responses were anonymous, allowing employees to answer openly.

The PMES results confirm my view that the public sector workforce is more diverse than previously reported. I am pleased that, for the first time, the public sector has strong baseline data for gender identities, cultural and linguistic diversity, disability and neurodivergence.

In December 2023, I launched the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-26 that seeks to promote a workforce where everyone belongs and is valued for their uniqueness. Implementation of the strategy has commenced, including:

- public sector agencies are required to improve processes for sharing disability status, which will also apply to other diversity groups
- public sector agencies including my office becoming members of Equal Opportunity SA's We're Equal initiative, marking their commitment to zero tolerance for discrimination, bullying and harassment
- release of new guidance from my office to address bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment) and discrimination
- commencement of White Ribbon Australia Workplace reaccreditation for public sector agencies to affirm practices that nurture a culture of respect, safety and equality and commit to addressing family and domestic violence.

## Aboriginal employment

The total number of Aboriginal employees is at a record high.

Workforce data as at June 2024 reported 2,584 Aboriginal employees in the public sector, making up 2.19 per cent of the workforce. This is an increase in headcount of 2.66 per cent since June 2023.

Increasing the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal people and supporting their career aspirations is a key priority of mine, together with my commitment to reconciliation. My office will actively consider how we can incorporate the Government's Closing the Gap commitments into all of our work.

My office worked with agencies during the year to support the recruitment and professional development of Aboriginal employees.

A public sector Aboriginal Staff Forum for more than 200 employees from across the State was successfully held in May 2024. Curated by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal employees, the forum celebrated achievements, encouraged new relationships and shared wisdom and tools for career development and personal wellbeing. Participant feedback was very positive, and I plan to deliver another forum in 2025.

My office and Tauondi Aboriginal College continued to deliver the Aboriginal Leadership Program to aspiring and new managers in a culturally safe environment. Twenty-five Aboriginal employees participated in the program in 2023-24, joining an alumni that includes 29 leaders from the 2022-23 pilot intake. Full scholarships were awarded to four employees from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to help build capability in that sector. More intakes will open in 2025.

The Aboriginal Leadership Program sits alongside agencies' own efforts to promote leadership development opportunities to Aboriginal employees that are tailored to their needs. As at June 2024, most agencies, employing 93.5 per cent of the total workforce, offered leadership development to their Aboriginal employees, but fewer agencies monitored employee uptake of these opportunities. A small number of agencies, employing 24.7 per cent of the total workforce, had an Aboriginal mentoring program.

Building pathways to leadership for Aboriginal employees is important, as Aboriginal people continue to be under-represented in executive roles. A positive development during the year was the participation of 12 new Aboriginal executives in the Executive Induction Program.

When the results for elections to South Australia's First Nations Voice to Parliament were announced in April 2024, several public sector employees were among those elected. The public sector's investment in its Aboriginal employees has assisted them to be strong advocates for their communities. I updated Commissioner's Determination 3.1 to provide special leave with pay to fulfil Voice responsibilities and issued advice to these employees and their agencies on managing obligations as both a public sector employee and Voice member.

## Gender equality

The representation of women at the executive level increased from 58.41 per cent in June 2023 to 59.17 per cent in June 2024 (Graph 1). This is the result of many years of implementing the now concluded Gender Equality in Leadership Strategy across the sector and within agencies.

There is still much to do to promote gender equality, noting that women make up 69.82 per cent of the workforce. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-26 includes the following actions for my office:

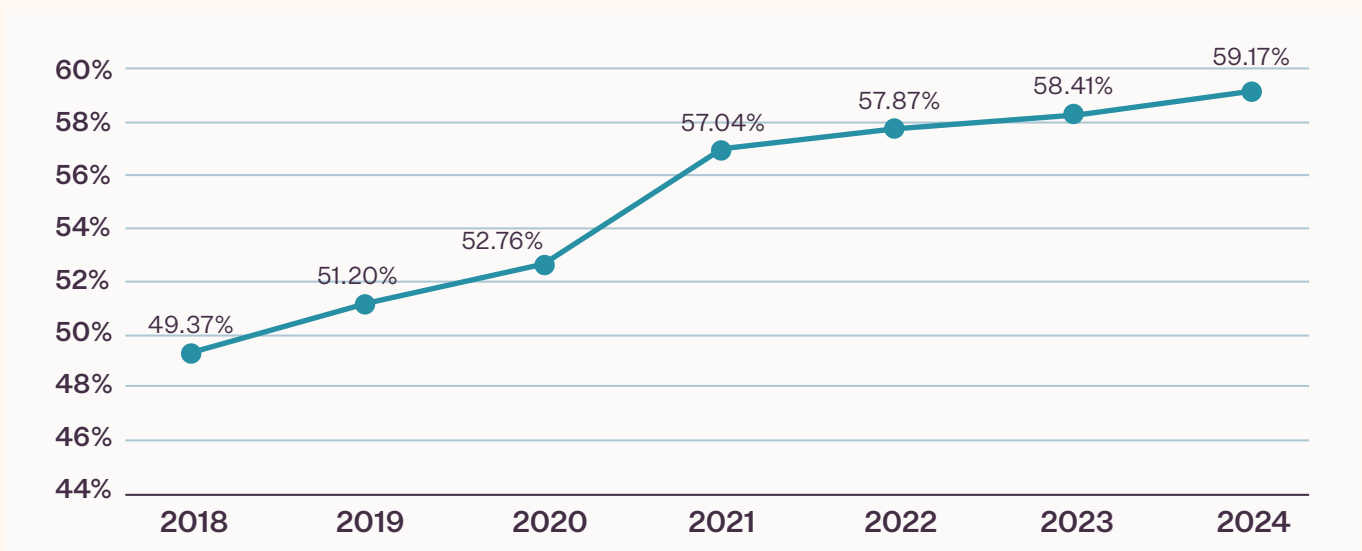
- review recruitment processes to promote inclusive practices and remove bias
- enhance workforce data to better measure the gender pay gap
- develop new materials and tools to help create inclusive cultures free of bullying, harassment and discrimination
- coordinate White Ribbon Australia Workplace reaccreditation for public sector agencies.

A key measure of equality is the gender pay gap, which measures the difference in pay between men and women. Addressing the gender pay gap is a commitment under South Australia’s Women’s Equality Blueprint 2023-26 (the Blueprint).

The Blueprint includes an action for my office to work with the federal Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) to improve analysis and reporting of the gender pay gap in the public sector. My office and WGEA have agreed to commence a small pilot to collect pay gap data that meets WGEA requirements. I look forward to the pilot’s results.

Additional opportunities to reduce the gender pay gap in the public sector are being considered by the Gender Pay Gap Taskforce for recommendation to the Government in late 2024 and through the Government’s commitment to introduce a Gender Equality Bill.

Graph 1: Women at executive level, 2018-24



Source: Workforce Information Report 2018-24

## Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (CALD)

The public sector may not be fully harnessing the skills and experience of CALD employees because workforce data on these employees is limited.

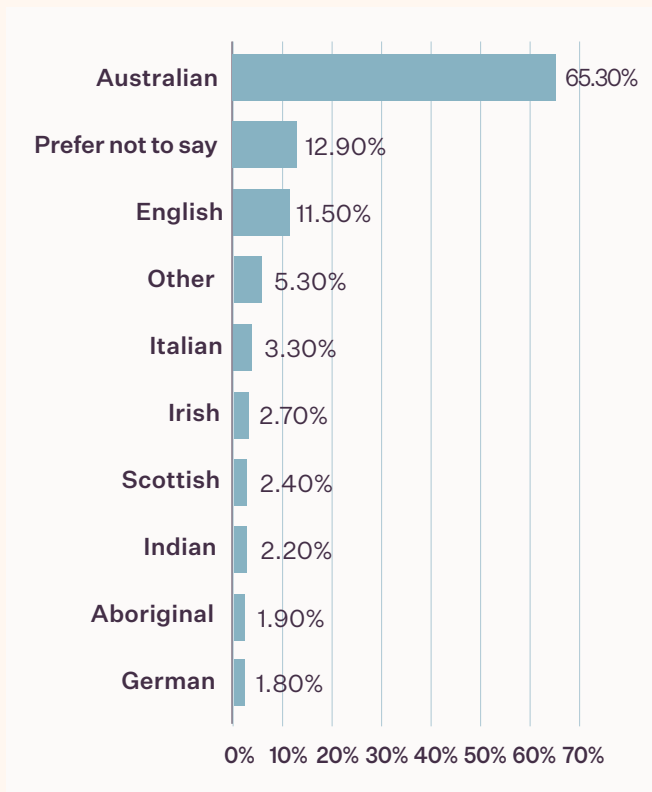
My office is working to improve this which will contribute to the objectives of the Government's Multicultural Charter and support delivery of the public sector's Anti-Racism Strategy.

To this end, two new questions on cultural background and language spoken at home were included in the PMES. Responses to these questions are in Graphs 2 and 3 below. This data will be further analysed by my office to inform future activity to increase the recruitment and retention of CALD employees. Attention is needed to understand why nearly 13 per cent of employees preferred not to share their cultural background in the anonymous employee survey.

Few agencies reported that they provided leadership development opportunities for CALD employees or monitored the uptake of leadership development opportunities for this employee cohort. This is an opportunity with potential high impact that the public sector should look into further.

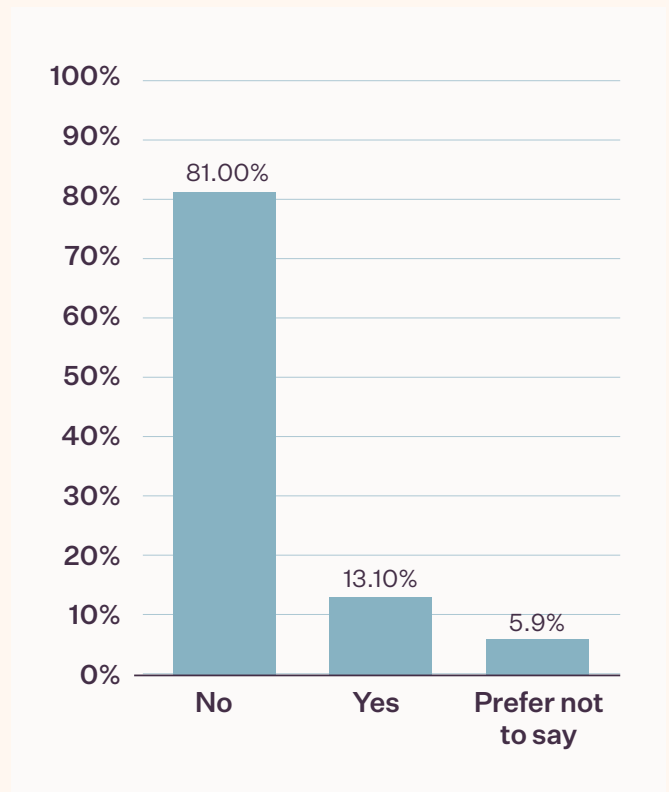
The CALD data provides the most comprehensive ever insights into cultural diversity within the South Australian public sector. It will be used to evaluate the impact of current cross-government initiatives such as the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy and Anti-Racism Strategy in increasing the representation of CALD people in the public sector.

**Graph 2: Cultural background of public sector employees, 2024**



Source: People Matter Employee Survey 2024

**Graph 3: Language spoken by public sector employees at home other than English, 2024**



Source: People Matter Employee Survey 2024

## Disability

The public sector through its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy is working towards a target for disability employment of three per cent by the end of 2026. My office has the key role of monitoring the progress of agencies towards this target.

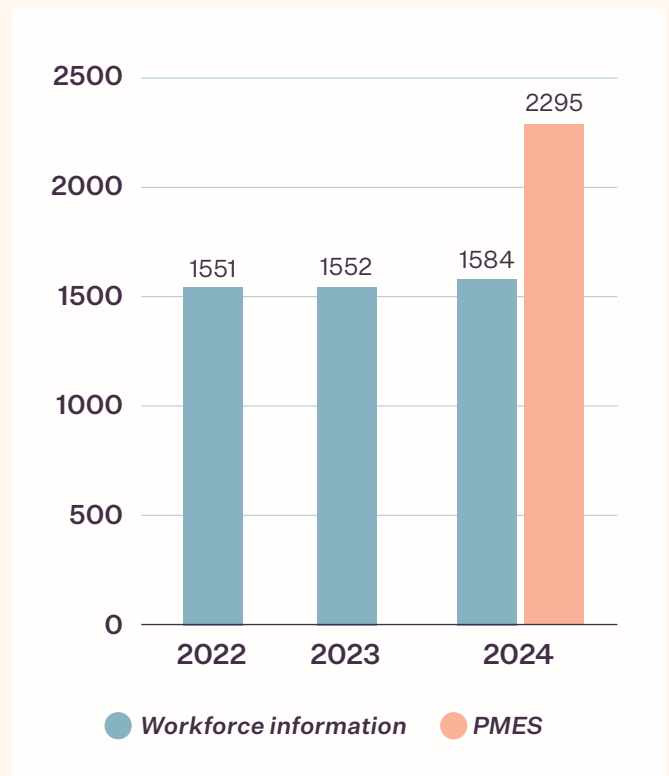
The data collected in this year’s PMES indicate that the public sector is more progressed towards this target than previously reported. A total of 2,295 survey respondents disclosed a disability, or 5.73 per cent of responses. The workforce data collected from payroll however recorded 1,584 employees living with disability in June 2024, or 1.34 per cent of the workforce. See Graph 4.

I believe the PMES created an opportunity for employees to share their information anonymously, therefore we need to consider how we collect this data in future, including using consistent definitions to reflect acquired, physical and all forms of disability.

In the State of the Sector agency survey, I asked whether agencies required delegates and hiring managers to give serious and positive consideration to requests from successful job applicants living with disability for reasonable workplace adjustments. Agencies employing 59.9 per cent of the total workforce did so. Reasonable adjustments to the workplace can help address barriers that an employee may face in their employment.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy includes several actions that support agencies to increase recruitment and retention of people living with disability. Actions my office is leading include: seeking feedback through the PMES from employees living with disability on their workplace experiences, reviewing the Disability Employment Toolkit and implementing contemporary best practice in disability awareness and inclusion training. Training is particularly needed, as agencies employing 67.5 per cent of the sector workforce provide disability awareness and inclusion training to employees, indicating there is an opportunity to increase this.

**Graph 4: Employees living with disability, variance between People Matter Employee Survey and Workforce Information Report 2022-2024**



Source: People Matter Employee Survey 2024 and Workforce Information Report 2022-24

## Autism

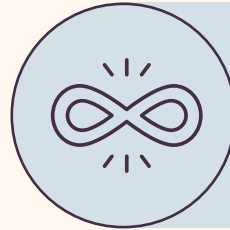
The launch of the South Australian Autism Inclusion Charter in April 2024 and the first SA Autism Strategy 2024-29 in June 2024 presents an opportunity to raise awareness of autism across the public sector and the opportunity to unlock the potential of Autistic people.

More than 600 employees disclosed they are Autistic in the 2024 PMES. This is invaluable data that has not been available previously. My office and the Office for Autism will analyse this further to increase understanding of the experiences of neurodiverse employees at work.

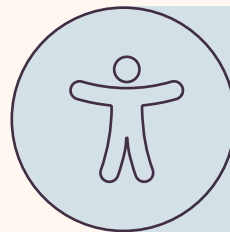
More work is needed to promote the South Australian Autism Inclusion Charter and the awareness training offered by the Office for Autism to employees, with only a minority of agencies, employing less than 10 per cent of the total public sector workforce, reporting that they have a strategy to promote the charter. Agencies employing 17.8 per cent of the workforce have made the awareness training available to employees. I will be monitoring this data given the importance of training to building awareness of autism and the confidence of employees to work meaningfully with Autistic colleagues, clients and stakeholders.

My office is working with the Office for Autism to support agencies. Autism awareness training was also delivered to chief executives and human resources leaders following the charter's launch, and information and resources have been embedded into SALA programs and distributed to SALA alumni.

Now that South Australia has launched its first Autism Strategy, the need for the public sector to build its capability to connect and engage Autistic people in employment is more important than ever.



**MORE THAN 600  
EMPLOYEES DISCLOSED  
THEY ARE AUTISTIC**



**2,295 EMPLOYEES  
DISCLOSED A  
DISABILITY**

# 02

## Trust and respect

As Commissioner for Public Sector Employment, I work with chief executives to strengthen integrity and respectful behaviours across the public sector.

The *Public Sector Act 2009* requires the Commissioner to:

- issue the Code of Ethics
- monitor and report on the observance of the Code
- investigate matters of employee conduct or discipline.

I made no changes to the Code of Ethics and the Public Sector Values in 2023-24.

# Building integrity

In my last State of the Sector, I reported on the new integrity framework for the public sector, Building Integrity, which was launched on 27 June 2023. Building Integrity was developed to improve employee understanding of their integrity obligations and how to report suspected misconduct.

To assess the impact of this work, I asked employees in the PMES if they knew how to report suspected unethical conduct. I am encouraged that 87% of employees responded that they did, but more can be done to ensure all employees, including new starters, understand how to report suspected misconduct.

Nearly all agencies reported that they had adopted the Commissioner's guideline on the management of misconduct, had processes in place for employees to make reports under current integrity legislation and the Code of Ethics, and maintained records on unsatisfactory performance including misconduct.

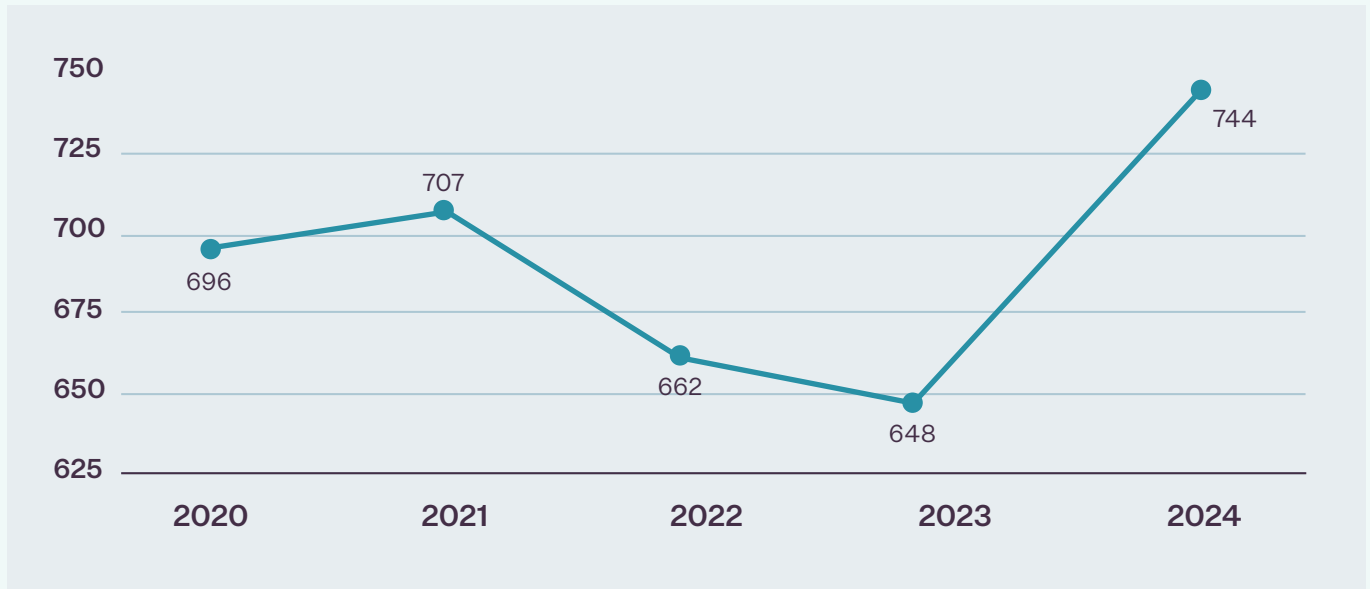
# Code of ethics investigations

Agencies reported 744 investigations of suspected Code of Ethics breaches in 2023-24, which is 96 more than last year or increase of 14.81 per cent (Graph 5).

This increase is consistent with my assessment after Building Integrity was launched that more reports of suspected misconduct would be made if employees better understood their integrity obligations.

The outcomes of the investigations from 2020 to 2024 are reported in Table 1 below.

**Graph 5: Number of Code of Ethics investigations, 2020 to 2024**



Source: State of the Sector Agency Information Collection 2020-24.

**Table 1: Outcomes of Code of Ethics investigations, 2020 to 2024**

OUTCOME	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Breach found	352 51%	267 38%	274 41%	278 43%	328 44%
Breach not found	123 18%	197 28%	145 22%	87 13%	117 16%
Investigation continuing	221 32%	243 34%	243 37%	283 44%	299 40%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>696 100%</b>	<b>707 100%</b>	<b>662 100%</b>	<b>648 100%</b>	<b>744 100%</b>

Source: State of the Sector Agency Information Collection 2020-24. Percentages may not total 100 per cent due to rounding.

The main types of suspected breaches investigated in 2023-24 were:

- Professional and courteous behaviour (453 investigations)
- Combination of breaches (66 investigations)
- Handling of official information (65 investigations)
- Criminal offenses (64 investigations).

One hundred and ten investigations took more than six months to complete in 2023-24, which is 13 more than last year.

A total of 656 investigations (88 per cent) were conducted by local management or a human resources practitioner. An external investigator may be used when a matter requires specialist investigation skills or an additional level of independence. During 2023-24, agencies reported 53 investigations using an external investigation firm from the Workplaces Investigations Panel. The panel currently includes four licensed and experienced investigation firms. Each has an office in South Australia, with three based locally.

As seen in Table 2, formal disciplinary action was undertaken in 45 per cent of investigations that found a breach. Termination of employment occurred in 10 per cent of proven investigations.

Section 14(1)(g) of the Act confers powers on the Commissioner to investigate matters of public sector employee conduct or discipline, either as required by the Premier or requested by an agency, or on the Commissioner's initiative (including investigating public interest information under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018*). During 2023-24, I conducted no investigations of matters referred to me under section 14(1)(g).

Two public interest disclosures were made to me as a relevant authority under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2018* in 2023-24.

**Table 2: Outcome of investigations that had found a breach, 2023-24**

OUTCOME	2023 (TOTAL)	%	2024 (TOTAL)	%
Formal disciplinary outcome	108	39	146	45
Employee managed outside formal disciplinary process	88	32	92	28
Employment terminated	26	9	32	10
Employee resigned	56	20	58	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: State of the Sector Agency Information Collection 2023-24. Percentages may not total 100 per cent due to rounding.

# Respectful behaviours

Being respectful to others helps build positive workplaces, promotes inclusion and connection and supports employee wellbeing. Respecting others is fundamental to being a public sector employee. It is at the heart of the Code of Ethics and Public Sector Values that all employees must uphold.

The 2024 PMES sought to measure a wider range of respectful behaviours than the 2021 survey. My office will undertake further analysis of this data to identify trends and concerns.

Although bullying is reported separately from harassment in the 2024 PMES, some employees experienced or witnessed more than one of these behaviours, and calculating this overlap allows identification of a decrease in the reporting from 2018 to 2024 (Graphs 6 and 7).

## Bullying

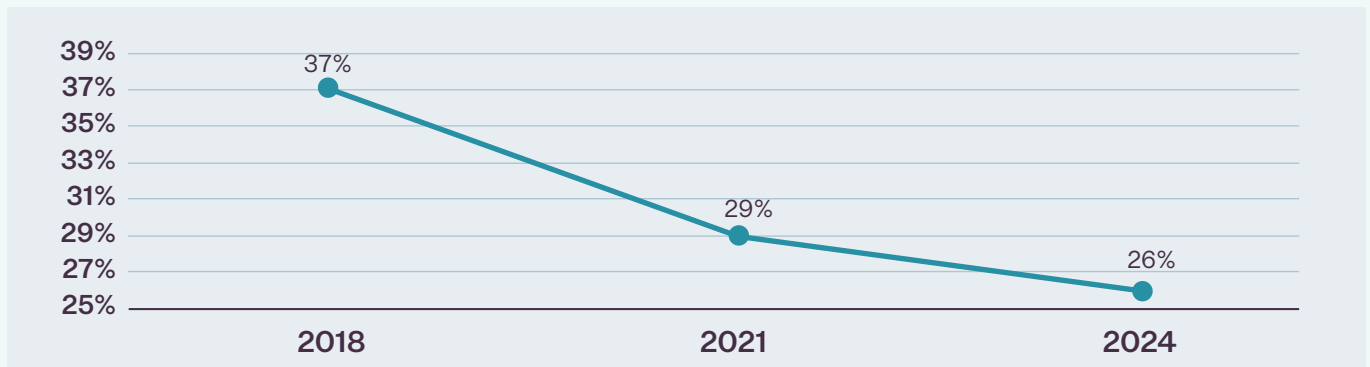
In the 2024 PMES, 25 per cent of employees witnessed bullying and 16 per cent experienced bullying in the workplace in the last 12 months. A co-worker was responsible in a third of bullying reports, with someone more senior in 18 per cent of instances. Bullying was more likely to be verbal abuse.

Bullying behaviours may breach state and federal laws, in particular the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* (SA). All employers have a duty to address psychosocial hazards, including bullying, at work.

In December 2023, I issued the Preventing and Addressing Bullying in the Workplace guideline. This contains practical advice for agencies and managers to reduce the risk of bullying. Agencies employing 71.7 per cent of the sector workforce had a bullying policy consistent with the guideline.

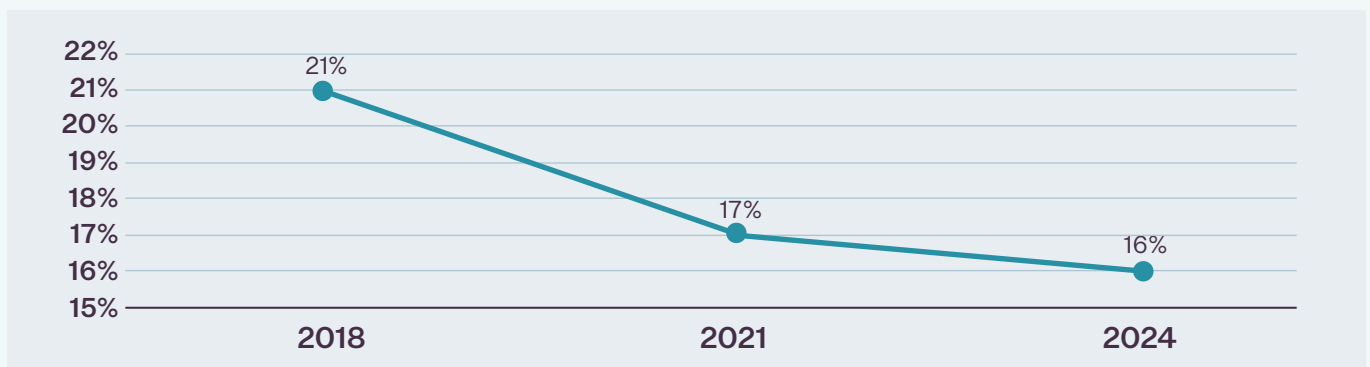
Almost all agencies reported they had training for employees to identify and respond to bullying.

**Graph 6: Employees witnessing bullying or harassment 2018-2024**



Source: I Work for SA Your Voice 2018, 2021 and People Matter Employee Survey 2024

**Graph 7: Employees experiencing bullying or harassment 2018-2024**



Source: I Work for SA Your Voice 2018, 2021 and People Matter Employee Survey 2024

## Harassment and Discrimination

In the last 12 months, three per cent of employees witnessed and two per cent experienced sexual harassment, according to the 2024 PMES. Employees reported a co-worker was responsible in 41 per cent of instances, followed by a client, customer or stakeholder in 28 per cent of reports. Harassment was more likely to be comments on physical appearance and suggestive jokes.

Additionally, 12 per cent witnessed and 7 per cent experienced discrimination. Twenty-two percent of reports identified a co-worker was responsible for the behaviour, followed by someone more senior in 19 per cent of reports. Discrimination was more likely to be based on age and sex, but discrimination based on race, caring responsibilities, disability, neurodivergence, sexual orientation and gender identity were also reported.

The public sector has a positive duty as an employer under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)* to eliminate workplace sexual harassment, sex discrimination and sex-based harassment. From December 2023, the Australian Human Rights Commission can investigate and enforce compliance with positive duty.

In response, I released a new guideline on Preventing and Addressing Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace in December 2023. Almost all agencies reported to me that they had a policy in place that is consistent with the guideline.

Training for employees on harassment and discrimination is not available across all agencies, with agencies employing a total of 63.8 per cent of the total workforce offering this training to employees. During the second quarter of 2024, my office coordinated the development of a new Preventing Violence Against Women online course, which agencies can use for their employees as part of their White Ribbon Australia workplace re-accreditation. I will report next year on the course's uptake across the public sector.

## Racism

Ten per cent of employees witnessed and ten per cent experienced racism. A client, customer or stakeholder was responsible in 30 per cent of racism reports and a co-worker in 27 per cent of reports.

The public sector's Anti-Racism Strategy and Action Plan, launched in November 2023, commits the public sector to removing racism in all its forms. The strategy and action plan includes actions to tackle racism experienced by both Aboriginal people and people of CALD background.

One of the actions in the action plan was to improve understanding of the experience of racism in the public sector. In addition to the new questions on racism in the PMES, agencies were asked additional questions in the State of the Sector agency survey on their organisational responses to racism. The key insights from agencies were as follows:

- nearly all agencies had a process to inform staff of how to report workplace racism and would investigate staff complaints about racism
- eleven Code of Ethics investigations relating to suspected racism and / or racial discrimination were conducted during the year
- a minority of agencies, employing 26.2 per cent of the total workforce, offered anti-racism training to staff.

The information provided by agencies on the availability of anti-racism training re-affirms the focus of the anti-racism strategy on raising employee awareness of racism and what they can do. My office is partnering with agencies to understand how anti-racism training can be delivered to more employees in the coming year.

Implementation of other actions in the anti-racism action plan commenced during the year. As well as improving data on racism, my office held workshops as part of the current recruitment review to identify barriers to Aboriginal and CALD job seekers. The insights from these workshops will help shape guidance next year on enhancing recruitment practices. An action implemented this year was the Aboriginal Staff Forum, which was successfully held in May 2024. Communities of practice on diversity, equity and inclusion and Aboriginal employment and retention have been established to share good practice to address inequality.

# 03

## Commissioner's reports

This chapter presents data I am required to report by the *Public Sector Act 2009* or the *Public Sector Regulations 2010*, or where there is public interest.

# Premier's directions

The Premier may give directions to public sector agencies, except for the Courts Administration Authority, Legal Services Commission and the Office for Public Integrity, on the implementation of specified whole-of-government objectives, under section 10(1) of the Act.

During the year, no new Premier's directions were issued and none were withdrawn.

The Premier's directions available on my office's website as at 30 June 2024 are listed below.

**Table 3: Premier's directions, as at 30 June 2024**

TITLE	DESCRIPTION
<b>Standard Duration of Executive Level Employment</b>	Requires agencies to restrict the term of new contracts for executive-level employees to a maximum three years, except in exceptional circumstances
<b>Recruitment</b>	Outlines the minimum standards that relevant public sector agencies are obligated to implement in their recruitment systems
<b>Restraints on Re-engagement of Former Executive Employees and Other Public Office Holders in Certain Circumstances</b>	Outlines obligations of relevant public sector agencies when engaging a person previously employed on an executive basis under a fixed-term contract, or appointed to public office and whose employment was terminated, or who was removed from office, entitling them to a termination payment
<b>Induction</b>	Outlines the minimum standards that relevant public sector agencies are obligated to implement in their induction systems
<b>Employee Exit Feedback</b>	Outlines the minimum standards that relevant public sector agencies are obligated to implement in their employee exit feedback systems
<b>Performance Management and Development</b>	Outlines the minimum standards that relevant public sector agencies are obligated to implement in their performance management systems
<b>Flexibility for the Future</b>	Outlines the minimum standards that relevant public sector agencies are obligated to implement to increase the opportunities for existing and future public sector employees to access flexible working arrangements and invest in the creation of additional new positions for trainees and graduates

## Performance management and development

The Premier’s direction on performance management and development describes the minimum performance management and development (PMD) standards across the public sector.

In accordance with the Premier’s direction, nearly all agencies advised that they had a PMD system in place.

The Premier’s direction also requires employees and their managers to complete a PMD review twice a year. Data reported by agencies below suggest over half of the workforce had completed two PMD reviews in 2023-24.

**Table 4: Employee performance management and development 2024**

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	TOTAL
PMD review between 1 July 2023 and 31 December 2023	61,626
PMD review between 1 January 2024 and 30 June 2024	72,445

Source: State of the Sector Agency Information Collection 2024

## Recruitment

Nearly all agencies reported that their recruitment practices aligned with the Premier’s direction and Commissioner’s guideline on recruitment. These practices include the requirement for the successful candidate to complete a pre-employment declaration and undergo referee checks and other screening including reviewing the Eligibility for Re-employment Register.

Less than half of employees (41 per cent) however, perceived selection decisions in their agency were fair, according to the PMES. Selection decisions included recruitment, as well as promotions and acting activities. This result underlines the need to improve recruitment practices across the sector.

Last year, I reported that my office had commenced a review of recruitment practices to identify any improvement opportunities. As part of this, multiple workshops were held with stakeholders during the year. I anticipate the recruitment review will be completed in 2024-25.

# Commissioner's determinations

Pursuant to section 16(1) of the Act, I may issue determinations relating to employment in the public service and, in some cases, to public sector employment outside the public service.

Determinations are binding on agencies to which the determination applies.

During the year, no Commissioner's determinations were withdrawn.

As at 30 June 2024, the following determinations are available on my office's website:

**Table 5: Commissioner's determinations, as at 30 June 2024**

1	Merit, Engagement, Assignment of Duties and Transfer of Non-Executive Employees
2	Excess Employees – Income Maintenance
3.1	Employment Conditions – Hours of Work, Overtime and Leave
3.2	Employment Conditions – Remuneration – Allowances and Reimbursements
5	Classification and Remuneration of Employees
6	Recovery of Overpayments (which is also a guideline)
7	Changes to Workforce Composition and Management of Excess Employees Redeployment, Retraining and Redundancy (which is also a guideline)
8	Flexible Workplaces (which is also a guideline)
9	Employment Relations (which is also a guideline)

## Flexible workplaces

Flexible ways of working are encouraged in the public sector. It allows employers to attract and retain talent, build diverse and inclusive workplaces and support employee wellbeing, while ensuring business needs continue to be met.

Determination 8 sets out the flexible working arrangements available to employees, including remote work. Nearly all agencies reported to me that they have policies consistent with Determination 8.

Remote work received significant attention during the COVID-19 pandemic, when public health directives limiting the number of staff in workplaces were in place. A minority of public sector employees however could work from home, with about three quarters of the workforce required to attend their worksite to deliver services in-person to the community.

With the cessation of public health directives, those employees who worked remotely have now returned to their worksites, unless they have a formal flexible working arrangement with their manager.

Agencies reported a total of 17,284 employees who performed part or all of their work remotely, as at 30 June 2024. Determination 8 advises that remote working arrangements should be formalised and approved by the appropriate delegate and monitored and reviewed to ensure the needs of the employee and the team are being met. Agencies reported more remote working arrangements were in place this year (15,135) compared to the preceding year (10,966).

# Commissioner’s guidelines

I may issue guidelines on employment matters, as per section 14(1)(d) of the Act. Guidelines are non-binding; they are intended to help managers and employees improve practice in specific employment matters.

During 2023-24, two new guidelines on bullying and harassment and discrimination were released.

The guideline on requests by Members of Parliament for briefings was withdrawn during the year and re-issued as a Premier and Cabinet circular.

As at 30 June 2024, the following guidelines were in force (note four determinations are also guidelines, as identified in table 5):

**Table 6: Commissioner’s guidelines, as at 30 June 2024**

Bullying
Harassment and Discrimination
Induction
Employee Exit Feedback
Performance Management and Development
Volunteers
Domestic and Family Violence
Recruitment
Review of Employment Decisions
Management of Misconduct
Management of Unsatisfactory Performance
Gifts and Benefits
Management of Excess Employees
Extent of Obligation on Employees to Report They have been Charged with a Criminal Offence
Power to Require Medical Examination

# Excess employees

Redeployment is the process of transferring an employee who is excess to requirements into another role within the public sector.

As at 30 June 2024, there were 118 excess employees in the public sector.

Ninety four of these employees have been declared excess for more than nine months. As I reported last year, the privatisation of tram and train services have increased the number of excess employees with 100 of the 118 excess employees being from the Department for Infrastructure and Transport.

**Graph 8: Excess employees, 2014-24**



Source: OCPSE

# Exemptions to merit-based selection processes

Regulation 17(1)(i) allows a chief executive to engage an individual without a merit-based selection process, considering the individual's skills and experience.

During 2023-24, agencies reported 189 exemptions as per Regulation 17(1)(i). This is a decrease of 29.48 per cent compared to the previous year.

Nearly all agencies reported to me that they maintained records of the chief executive approval and the reasons for the appointment.

Note: In the 2023 State of the Sector, two different numbers for exemptions were inadvertently reported. The correct number of exemptions in 2023 was 268.

**Graph 9: Exemptions from merit-based selection processes 2014-24**



Source: State of the Sector Agency Information Collection 2020-24

# Appendix 1

## Participating Agencies

## PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Adelaide Cemeteries Authority	Adelaide Festival Centre Trust
Adelaide Festival Corporation	Adelaide Venue Management Corporation
Alinytjara Wilurara Landscape Board	Art Gallery of South Australia
Attorney-General's Department	Auditor-General's Department
Barossa Hills Fleurieu Local Health Network	Carclew Youth Arts Centre Incorporated
Carrick Hill	Central Adelaide Local Health Network
Commission on Excellence and Innovation in Health	Country Arts SA
Courts Administration Authority	CTP Regulator
Dairysafe	Defence SA
Department for Child Protection	Department for Correctional Services
Department for Education	Department for Energy and Mining
Department for Environment and Water	Department for Health and Wellbeing
Department for Industry, Innovation and Science	Department for Infrastructure and Transport
Department for Trade and Investment	Department of Human Services
Department of Primary Industries and Regions	Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Department of Treasury and Finance	Education Standards Board
Electoral Commission of South Australia	Electorate Services
Environment Protection Authority	Essential Services Commission of South Australia
Eyre and Far North Local Health Network	Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board
Flinders and Upper North Local Health Network	ForestrySA
Funds SA	Government House
Green Industries SA	Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board
History Trust of South Australia	HomeStart Finance
Independent Commission Against Corruption	Infrastructure SA
Jam Factory Contemporary Craft and Design	Kangaroo Island Landscape Board
Legal Profession Conduct Commissioner	Legal Services Commission

\* Department names were current as at 30 June 2024. On 1 July 2024, Machinery of Government changes were implemented that merged some agencies and renamed others. The list of agencies below does not reflect these changes.

## PARTICIPATION IN THE 2022-23 STATE OF THE SECTOR AGENCY SURVEY

Lifetime Support Authority of South Australia	Limestone Coast Landscape Board
Limestone Coast Local Health Network	Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board
Northern Adelaide Local Health Network	Northern and Yorke Landscape Board
Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing	Office of Hydrogen Power South Australia
Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment	Office of the South Australian Productivity Commission
Premier's Delivery Unit	Preventive Health SA
Public Trustee	Renewal SA
ReturnToWorkSA	Riverland Mallee Coorong Local Health Network
SA Ambulance Service	SA Housing Authority
SA Water	SACE Board of South Australia
South Australia Arid Lands Landscape Board	South Australia Police
South Australian Country Fire Service	South Australian Film Corporation
South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission	South Australian Government Financing Authority
South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service	South Australian Museum
South Australian State Emergency Services	South Australian Tourism Commission
Southern Adelaide Local Health Network	State Library of South Australia
State Opera of South Australia	State Theatre Company of South Australia
Study Adelaide	Super SA
TAFE SA	Teachers Registration Board
Veterinary Surgeons Board	Vinehealth Australia
West Beach Parks	Womens and Childrens Health Network
Yorke and Northern Local Health Network	

### AGENCIES THAT DID NOT PARTICIPATE - NIL

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### OUT OF SCOPE AGENCIES

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Parliament of South Australia

# Public Sector Values

Ministers, chief executives and other public sector employees have collectively defined values to guide the sector’s long-term development.

The values are, in part, based on the traditional tenets of public service. Yet they also reflect the evolution of the sector, and the contemporary world in which it operates.

The values are articulated in the *Public Sector Values and Behaviours Framework*.

All public sector employees should endeavour to embody the values in their work.

## SERVICE

Proudly serve the community and Government of South Australia.

## COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Create solutions together.

## PROFESSIONALISM

Strive for excellence.

## HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

Act truthfully, consistently, and fairly.

## TRUST

Have confidence in the ability of others.

## COURAGE AND TENACITY

Never give up.

## RESPECT

Value every individual.

## SUSTAINABILITY

Work to get the best results for current and future generations of South Australians.

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for Public Sector Employment**

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**Government  
of South Australia**

Office of the Commissioner  
for Public Sector Employment