

Per Capita

Response to question on Notice

Public Accountability and Works Committee, inquiry into the NSW Government's use and management of consulting services

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There are some recent examples of significant public sector reforms in similar jurisdictions. New Zealand, perhaps more than other jurisdictions, has embraced cross-agency collaboration, formalised under the Public Service Act 2020. This allows for the sharing of expertise across agencies and allows for senior leaders in the public service to identify avenues for growth and career transition across the sector. The Public Service Leadership Team (PSLT) established under the Act represented a shift away from the previous focus on agency leadership to a new focus on system leadership, with the purpose of strengthening cross-departmental collaborations. Further research on the efficacy of these relatively new reforms, alongside reforms in other jurisdictions, would be required to identify the best approaches for retaining expertise within the public service. Temporarily freezing executive-level pay is not in itself a misguided attempt to crack down on public sector expenditure nor does it represent a refusal to invest in expertise. However, we note that government expenditure on outsourcing functions that traditionally have been the remit of the public service is incredibly high, and reducing the reliance on external consultants is a preferable cost-saving measure, to staff pay freezes at any level. Particularly if it allows for the reallocation of funding that could be used for developing early career staff, rebuilding the capability of essential services, and investing in frontline workers.