

**Punching
above our
weight**



**Government
Reform
Commission**




**Government
of South Australia**



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Where

When I established the Government Reform Commission (GRC) in mid-2006, it was in recognition of the critical role the public sector plays in achieving the targets of South Australia's Strategic Plan and creating opportunity for all South Australians.

Our State is on the verge of the most prosperous period in its history, and our public sector needs to be the most agile, responsive, innovative and creative in the nation if we are to maximise this opportunity for the benefit of all.

That is why the GRC, under the leadership of Wayne Goss, was asked to identify and address wide-ranging public sector reforms that would have an immediate and lasting impact. We did not need another report on how to fix the public sector; we needed targeted action to kick-start a change in attitude and focus.

Throughout its term, the GRC worked closely with the Minister Assisting the Premier in Cabinet Business and Public Sector Management, the Hon Jay Weatherill, to deliver many reforms. These ranged from high-impact structural changes – such as a more proactive Cabinet Office and common regional boundaries – to improved employment practices designed to retain experienced older workers and attract high-calibre young people.

The GRC has generated an increased focus on customer service, with the aim of increasing satisfaction with government services by 10 per cent by 2010 (Strategic Plan target T1.7).

In describing the many reforms delivered by the GRC, this document tells a story of action, commitment, effectiveness and making a difference – a process of continuous improvement that must not stop with the end of the GRC. It is a story that should encourage all public servants, in all agencies, to look for opportunities to improve the way things are done in their unit, across their department and throughout the whole public service.

The legacy of the GRC will be a South Australian public sector that continues to strive to make a difference, providing leadership in the State to all sectors of the community.

Mike Rann

Premier of South Australia

Minister for Economic Development

Minister for Social Inclusion

Minister for the Arts

Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change



Whether it be in delivering infrastructure, attracting major defence projects, hosting international sporting events, staging world-class festivals, or being represented in national and international endeavours of all kinds, South Australia has consistently demonstrated that it can 'punch above its weight'.

Why?

Now, facing a new era of prosperity led by the mining and defence industries, the State has an opportunity to make its presence felt on the national and international stage. The key to success is high performance - from government, the public sector and the private sector.

Within government, the public servants themselves must make this happen. They must be recognised as a highly skilled workforce, committed to ongoing reform and innovative solutions to meet the challenges of the future.

With the establishment of the Government Reform Commission (GRC), the South Australian Government took a significant step towards creating a public sector that's focussed on customer service and strives for innovation and continuous improvement. During its 18-month life span the GRC has started a process that will change the face of the South Australian public sector.

A small office was set up to support the Commission with staff seconded from various agencies for short-term assignments. This gave agencies a stake in the outcomes and an interest in seeing tangible results.

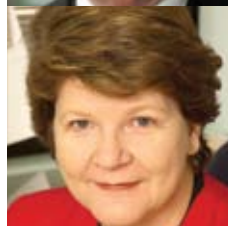
Being drawn from across government also meant that GRC staff were able to bring a broad range of experience and contacts to the Commission, as well as access information sources that otherwise might have been overlooked. The GRC's brief was to identify opportunities to improve the way government operates, to recognise excellence in public service and to promote leadership. The GRC was also asked to look at the sorts of obstacles that slow down government processes, frustrate the public and prevent public servants from doing their job quickly and efficiently.

This document records the ideas that were turned into reality by the GRC. Many of these ideas were put forward by public servants. Hopefully many more ideas for reform will come from that source in the future.

What's needed now is even more effort, commitment and dedication to making South Australia 'the State that punches above its weight'.



Jay Weatherill	<i>Minister Assisting the Premier in Cabinet Business and Public Sector Management</i>
Commission Chair Wayne Goss	<i>Chairman of Deloitte Australia</i>
Commissioner Nick Rowley	<i>Former Senior Policy Adviser to Prime Minister Blair and Premier Carr and current Director of Kinesis Pty Ltd</i>
Commissioner Warren McCann	<i>Chief Executive of the South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet</i>
Commissioner Sue Vardon	<i>Chief Executive of the South Australian Department for Families and Communities</i>
Dr Tom Stubbs	<i>GRC Chief Executive</i>



The Minister, Commission members and Chief Executive

Three main arenas

one

The work of the GRC focused on three main arenas:

decision-making processes

identifying the obstacles, providing sensible risk management without stifling innovation and initiative, streamlining processes and procedures, facilitating exchange of, and access to, information

two

customer service and culture

quality of service, planning with a customer focus and orientation, achieving a tangible improvement in customer service, customer satisfaction and e-government services

three

people and the workplace

attracting and retaining the best possible employees by recognising the need for flexibility, encouraging leadership, and acknowledging excellence.

The activities outlined on the following pages represent different aspects of these three priorities, united by common themes:

Performance

Leadership

People

Capacity

Productivity

Innovation

Skills

Agility

These have been the key drivers for the GRC and should remain the drivers for ongoing reform and continued improvement of the South Australian Public Sector.

Ideas into reality

Cabinet Office	A new office with a new way of working and a whole-of-government approach to policy and planning.
South Australian Executive Service	A means of nurturing and investing in high-performing, flexible, future leaders.
Customer Service and Culture	Building a better customer service culture through a customer service network, new tools and achieving a new South Australian Strategic Plan target.
Common Regional Boundaries	12 uniform South Australian regions for coordinated planning, monitoring and service provision across government.
Remote Workers	Looking at better ways to attract and retain skilled workers in rural and remote communities.
Project Coordination Board	A mechanism to streamline implementation of major projects and infrastructure developments.
Flexible Work Arrangements	Promotion of flexible work practices and a working environment that retains and attracts a skilled workforce.
Recruitment Practices	A Good Practice Guide providing efficient, effective recruitment processes that support managers and adhere to best practice.
Youth Recruitment and Retention	Giving young employees a voice in their organisation, listening to their needs and encouraging the participation of future leaders.
Performance Management	A Good Practice Guide and review of legislation to support managers in managing performance and dealing with underperformance.
Premier's Awards	Acknowledging and rewarding excellence in public sector work performance.
Public Sector Week	Celebrating public sector achievements and showcasing the public sector.
Information Sharing	Removal of barriers to information sharing across government, particularly through access to intranets.
Plain English	A guide promoting more effective, simpler communication within government and with the public.
Project Management Network	A comprehensive whole-of-government strategy aimed at maintaining and improving government's project management capability.
Public Value	A new perspective for evaluating policy and projects from the point of view of all stakeholders.
Reporting Requirements	Streamlining and rationalising reporting requirements.
Procurement Processes	Overcoming the inefficiencies, barriers and myths associated with the procurement process through a Good Practice Guide.
Building Accessibility	A photo-ID system to simplify employee access to government buildings and promote a sense of the public sector as one organisation while maintaining security.
Governance	Making the decision-making structures of government more effective and accountable.

Cabinet Office

Having a serious policy backroom is fundamental if States are to drive the policy agenda, participate in national reform and provide leadership for cross-portfolio reforms.

The GRC gave top priority to the creation of a new Cabinet Office - a 'policy powerhouse' with a more strategic focus, greater policy capacity, and a defined role in putting South Australia 'toe-to-toe' with other governments on the national stage.

The GRC recommended a Cabinet Office to

drive the policy agenda with a focus on the opportunities and challenges before South Australia, delivering the balance between policy and finance.

be a real player in the national agenda with a stronger inter-governmental relations unit to improve South Australia's ability to influence the Council of Australian Governments', and Council for the Australian Federation's agendas, so that South Australia's voice will make a difference on the national stage.

Cabinet business has to be streamlined and its agenda focused on the strategic issues.

The Cabinet Office will look for new ways to work with agencies in developing policy proposals, especially across portfolios.

The new Cabinet Office will continue to look for better ways to put the State at the forefront of public policy development in Australia.

There's an increasing strategic focus in the national reform agenda and the Premier and Cabinet need to be well served to ensure South Australians interests are advanced.

The Office will attract the best and brightest, with a focus on graduates and young people. It will bring in people from agencies to increase its understanding of the operational environment.

Making a difference

The new Cabinet Office is off to a flying start according to its new head, Tanya Smith:

It is much better positioned to drive the policy agenda, lead national debates and work across the public sector to bring to life the government's commitments to SA's Strategic Plan. At the heart of a strong public sector we need a strong Cabinet Office with more policy 'horsepower' if we are to improve the prosperity and wellbeing of South Australians.

We're here to make a difference by raising our profile in the national debate. We want South Australia to be getting the best deal for our people. The way that we will get there is by driving the policy agenda and being a step ahead. We will co-ordinate our government agencies to go into bat for the best outcome for the people of South Australia.

South Australian Executive Service

Raising the bar on performance means investing in public servants - that's the key to better leadership and decision-making. We need a team of highly skilled, well-informed executives who understand the government and the whole public sector, not simply the patch they have worked in.

The GRC found that many executives in the South Australian public sector rarely move out of their own territory and don't have a strong sense of being part of government as a whole. If the South Australian public sector wants to win the war for talent and create a strong leadership team for the future, this has to change.

The government must get and keep the best leaders, make it easier for executives to move around public sector agencies, and provide a solid basis for the development of future executives and chief executives. The government must invest in public servants by developing their careers and building their skills. In return, our leaders must be role models of good performance. The GRC saw the answer in creation of the South Australian Executive Service (SAES), which was established in July 2007.

The SAES features:

nominated executives from the South Australian public sector who have been assessed against a set of common skills and enter into a time-limited contract without tenure

recruiting and developing executives for leadership skills not just for technical knowledge

a focus on the training, development and performance management of future leaders to work well in a government wide and national context.

The SAES is an investment in our future, not simply for the public sector but for the whole State. The future leaders it generates will bring new energy, new skills and new confidence to the South Australian economy. Through developing these leaders the SAES will become a team of leaders, working together throughout the public and private sectors to achieve results for the people of South Australia.

To support leadership development, South Australia has now joined the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). The government will invest in SAES careers by funding ANZSOG leadership scholarship programs.

Lifting the bar

Bridgid Connors, Department of Premier and Cabinet, is delighted with the early response to the establishment of the SAES.

This is a chance for public servants to step up and be developed. The government must invest in our future leaders and building their skills. Public servants are putting their tenure on the line because they are confident that they will perform. Even before the invitations had gone out we had people calling to ask about the Service. I think it will go a long way to helping us 'lift the bar' in public sector performance.

The most critical factor will be the departments themselves - they have to realise the importance of supporting and developing their executives. We can set the process in motion but they have to carry it through. It's about creating the right environment right across government.

Customer Service and Culture

While leadership may be the force behind an organisation, customer service is the face that it presents to the world. In the end, government is always judged by the quality of the services it provides to its customers—the people of South Australia.

Rising to the challenges of the future requires strong public servants who have the courage to ask people what they need and respond to changing and increasing community expectations. Given this, the GRC's emphasis has been on improving the customer service culture throughout the public sector and highlighting that all aspects of service planning and design must have a strong customer focus.

The GRC's main goal in this area was to drive real improvements to the public's experience and satisfaction with government services.

The Commission worked with agencies to select a common customer satisfaction measurement tool, develop standards and business improvement tools, and publish best practice examples.

The key achievements were:

Customer Service Conference (May 2007), involving 350 public servants and featuring international, national and local speakers

the Canadian Common Measurement Tool (CMT) available to all agencies to measure customer satisfaction and enable benchmarking

Customer Service Good Practice Guide

Customer Service Network to share information.

For the first time a Strategic Plan target requires the measurement and improvement of customer satisfaction. chief executives will lead the customer service improvement initiatives, including measuring customer satisfaction and reporting on progress.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is organising a household survey to measure general community satisfaction with government services.



The real stories

When they are sick, people expect fast medical attention. Noarlunga Hospital has changed its admissions process to ensure that medical patients receive immediate nursing care on arrival. The admission process is now conducted in the ward where the patient is receiving medical attention, and patients, their relatives and hospital staff are all benefiting from the reduced stress and improved process.

People need to get information quickly and easily. The Land Services Group, has changed its practice so that members of the public can now access the Title Register Search (certificate of title of their property) on-line. Previously, such requests needed to be made in person at the city office.

At times public servants go much more than the extra mile. Staff at the Department for Families and Communities were recently faced with an aggressive client after a misunderstanding regarding his application for housing assistance. Despite the incident the office manager was determined to help the man, and tracked him down several days later sheltering under a tarpaulin on a riverbank on a very cold and wet morning. In return for short-term accommodation the customer agreed to receive mental health services and undertake drug and alcohol counselling.





-  Adelaide Hills
-  Barossa
-  Eastern Adelaide
-  Eyre and Western
-  Far North
-  Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island
-  Limestone Coast
-  Murray and Mallee
-  Northern Adelaide
-  Southern Adelaide
-  Western Adelaide
-  Yorke and Mid North

Common Regional Boundaries

All State government departments will soon have the same regional boundaries to make it easier for communities to access services and streamline planning. The people of South Australia want easily accessible and consistent services from government. The lack of coordination between government services has been a common complaint both by members of the public and from public servants.

A major hurdle to better coordination has been the inconsistency in regional boundaries across government; that is, different departments had different definitions of what areas a particular region includes. For example Health, Police and Education have different boundaries for the Adelaide region, often splitting local council boundaries, which makes it confusing for community engagement and reporting.

This change was demanded by the community during the community engagement process to revise South Australia's Strategic Plan.

The GRC took up the challenge, driving negotiation with departments to create one set of regional boundaries for use across government to support better planning, reporting and service delivery.

In December 2006 the Government created 12 State Government Regions based on local government areas and ABS Statistical Local Areas. These regions are being adopted and will be fully in place in all departments by December 2008.

Planning SA is the lead agency working with departments to coordinate implementation of the new boundaries.

Departments are currently developing reporting systems that will enable them to report by the common regions, and are committed to working with other public sector and local government partners on service delivery, including considering co-location and sharing regional staff resources.

The end result will be better planning and coordination of government services leading to better customer service.

Collaboration, Coordination, Communication

The move to common regional boundaries has been welcomed by the emergency services and health sectors. Improved emergency response planning will be one of the early benefits for these groups, for whom good communication and coordination can be a matter of life and death.

Bronwyn Halliday, Executive Director, Planning SA believes the new boundaries should improve services:

Already mental health workers have praised the opportunity to align their emergency response teams and to develop closer working relationships with other agencies, especially SA Police.

SA Country Fire Service and State Emergency Service will also align their regional teams with SA Police and other agencies. This will provide for better coordination during emergency planning, response and recovery.



Remote Workers

One of the major challenges for the public sector is getting and keeping quality staff in country locations. The public sector competes with private companies, local government, and other non-government organisations, who are all trying to attract quality staff and feeling the pressure from loss of workers to the more lucrative mining sector.

The mining boom, major developments such as the proposed Penola pulp mill and increased regional tourism mean even more public servants will be needed for the country workforce. While a range of generous incentives to get people to work in the country have recently been provided, tight budgets and reluctance to introduce different employment arrangements for new staff mean that these incentives have been under-utilised.

The quality of public services in regional communities will suffer if vacancies for skilled professionals are not filled e.g. social workers, teachers, police and nurses.

Previous local and interstate experience has proven that keeping public servants in country locations is a hard task to achieve.

There is no one easy solution, so the GRC came up with a menu of activities, programs and actions for departments to consider, such as:

branding and promoting country South Australia as an attractive and exciting place to work

grouping front counter services into 'one stop shops'

taking advantage of technology solutions

working together with industry and local councils (see the Whyalla example)

development programs for locals

spouse employment registers - to help workers' partners get jobs.

The GRC has put these proposals to Government, so it's now up to departments to work together on programs to attract and retain staff in their country locations.

Whyalla - a community working together

Despite the drought, the Upper Spencer Gulf regional communities are experiencing something of a boom, and one community is leading the way in getting and keeping skilled people.

In Whyalla, an informal network of partners from across the private sector, non-government organisations, university and Local, State and Commonwealth governments are working together to attract and retain professionals in the region.

Some of the problems the network has identified include keeping workers for the longer term, isolation of young professionals coming to work in Whyalla, lack of coordinated welcoming of new arrivals and inconsistent information for new residents.

Together, the network members have:

- > developed ways to welcome new arrivals, introducing and helping them and their families settle into the community
- > launched a Young Professionals Network, which uses local sponsorship to support the generation of ideas by young people
- > developed a regional leadership program across neighbouring regions
- > created a database of spousal resumes to help workers' partners get jobs.

The most important lessons learned so far are about building relationships and developing trust across sectors and organisations, sharing a 'can do' attitude, and the value of working together on difficult problems as well as new initiatives.

Project Coordination Board

In an increasingly competitive market place, even the perception of delays to major projects caused by bureaucracy and red tape can be a significant disincentive to development. If major State projects are not well managed the resulting cost blow-outs can be a serious issue and a potential threat to the State's capacity to build the infrastructure necessary for its future.

Consultation with business and government demonstrated that changes needed to be made, preferably in a way that:

enabled quick intervention if processes become slow or obstructive

provided some legislative backing, using existing legislation wherever possible

led to a more predictable and consistent path for key stakeholders

didn't create another confusing and unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.

The result was a proposed new model - the Project Coordination Board - that would complement existing mechanisms but without the need for additional bureaucracy or new legislation.

Cabinet agreed to the creation of a small Project Coordination Board that, under the provisions of the existing *Economic Development Act*, could 'step in' and take on decision-making powers where necessary. Its presence will act as a catalyst for delivery of outcomes.

Chaired by Jim Hallion, Chief Executive, Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, the Board has a three-year term, subject to annual review. Board members are drawn from across government, including public sector chief executives and a nominee from the Economic Development Advisory Board.

Paving the way

Jim Hallion says the Board is off to a good start:

With the range and pace of development expected in South Australia over the coming decade, the State can't afford to see proposals bogged down in lengthy approval processes. The Board will play a vital role in shifting barriers and unblocking deadlocks to get developments started and keep them moving to completion.



Flexible Work Arrangements

One of the public sector's greatest challenges is overcoming the problems of a highly competitive labour market and an ageing workforce facing retirement. If it is to survive, let alone achieve its high performance targets, it needs to stand out in the labour market as a preferred employer.

Youth, women and older workers often have specific needs or commitments that don't fit comfortably with a rigid work regime. Offering a range of flexible working arrangements could make remaining in or joining the public sector a much more attractive option to a wider range of people.

The GRC's research revealed that the public sector already has an impressive 'toolkit' of flexible work options, but that these aren't widely understood or used. Flexible working arrangements (FWAs) were seen as difficult to manage for workers in executive or managerial positions where there was an expectation that the person must be available on site 'full-time'.

What was needed was a 'revamping' of choices and a targeted campaign to inform potential and current employees and executives of the wide range of employment options available to them.

The first step for the GRC was to make changes to long service leave to enable leave to be used strategically in single days instead of the previous seven day minimum. It also supported work on changes allowing older workers (aged over 55 years) to draw down on their superannuation under a transition to retirement contract, effectively reducing their working hours without a loss of income.

A set of information sheets was developed and promoted across the public sector advising employees of existing FWA provisions. These provisions are available to most public sector employees, and include flexitime, home-based work, working part time, purchased leave (e.g. working 48 weeks out of 52, or four of every five years), working compressed weeks and job sharing.

The issue isn't simply about maintaining workforce numbers. It's also about retaining valuable workplace knowledge and skills, increasing productivity, and attracting skilled workers by providing a working environment that supports a better work-life balance.

Cabinet has approved a GRC recommendation that all job descriptions should list the available FWAs.

Flexible options

Joanna Busato and Rosa Hulm share the position of Manager Financial Accounting, AS08, in Housing SA. They also share considerable business knowledge and skills picked up over the years. In this case, flexible work practices mean the department keeps their experience and skills while they can balance their working life with raising young families:

There's no guilt about not being at work because you're confident the job is still being done when you're not there. You're not stressed out trying to balance everything and family life is genuinely relaxed and rewarding.

Mardy Ponton from Super SA says the change in long service leave provisions has been very well received by participants in her retirement seminars:

Many public sector employees have only just heard about the 'one-day-at-a-time' leave option, but they're really enthusiastic about being able to reduce their hours without any impact on their superannuation.

One employee intends to use the option to spend one day a week caring for her young grandson who has a disability, giving her more time with him and providing extra support for his parents.



Recruitment Practices

There is no excuse for taking four months on average to recruit to a position. Worse still the lengthy process often results in not attracting or selecting the best candidate.

The first step in building a high-performing, skilled workforce is the recruitment process. The more effective and well managed the process, the more likely the organisation will attract, select and keep high quality employees.

An on-line survey during March 2007 identified a number of problem areas in public sector recruiting, including lack of specialist human resource management involvement in the selection process, no compulsory training, time taken to recruit, and over-reliance on meaningless rules.

If the public sector is to attract and retain the best staff, its recruitment processes need to be as efficient, effective and as high-quality as it wants its employees to be.

Because line managers need the best recruitment tools, the GRC decided to produce a Good Practice Guide to assist them with the recruitment process.

The GRC also undertook a range of pilot projects to test the principles of good practice, including the following:

Department of Education and Children's Services - pilot to review selection training.

Department of the Premier and Cabinet - pilot to reduce time taken for the selection phase of the recruitment process to 14 days.

Southern Adelaide Health Service - pilot to move current practice to best practice principles and remove any myths affecting recruitment and selection processes.

The Recruitment Good Practice Guide has been published in hard copy and on-line, with hyperlinks on the website to more detailed fact sheets. It will also be available on agency websites.



Getting it right from the start

Simone Fogarty, Director Policy, Planning SA, says that good recruitment practices are essential to building and maintaining the right team.

Inexperienced and untrained panellists, narrow interpretation of criteria and lack of guidance make choosing the right candidate all the more difficult. A candidate may look good on paper, perform well in the interview, but still not be a good 'fit' with the existing team - we need to aim for the best outcome for everyone.

Alice Staniford, a graduate student working with the GRC, agrees. Her experience working on a pilot conducted with the Allied Health Unit at Flinders Medical Centre revealed that recruiting policy and principles were frequently misunderstood and practices inconsistent even within the unit:

Understanding of recruitment policy and principles was fairly limited and people tended to feel bound by the job specifications. They needed to 'think outside the square' more. For example, most people didn't realise they could ask for additional referees to those provided by a candidate if they wanted more-specific information. The guide will help to clarify things.

Youth Recruitment and retention

The future of the South Australian public sector, and the State itself, is its young people. Faced with an ageing workforce and a higher than average exit rate among the 15 to 35 years employee age group, the need to recruit and retain young employees has become critical.

In response to this challenge, the Government Reform Commission and the Office for Youth combined forces and turned to the obvious source for advice - young public sector employees.

Using the Office for Youth Policy Action Team (OfY A-Team) model, three Policy Action Teams (A-Teams) were created to find out how the Government of South Australia could become a preferred employer for younger people. More than 30 young employees from 12 government agencies were involved in the three teams, each of which looked at a different issue for getting and keeping young staff:

A-Team 1 asked how the government could remain competitive in keeping young people already in public sector jobs.

A-Team 2 examined how HR processes/policies could be improved to get and keep young people and ensure that the State Government is seen as a preferred employer.

A-Team 3 looked at best practice in the attraction and recruitment of young people.

The teams produced a collective report: *SA Public Sector- One Generation Away From Extinction? The recruitment and retention of Generation X and Y*. The report provided a range of recommendations, including ideas for improving and promoting flexible work practices and modernising recruitment methods.

The GRC has turned recommendations by the A-teams into action. The important thing now is for the public sector to maintain the momentum-getting and keeping young people is an ongoing need, not a passing whim.

The wider use of the A-Team model will raise the voice of younger employees. Young people have fresh ideas and new approaches which need to be listened to, as they are the public sector's future leaders.

The 'reality check'

Kelly Baines was a member of A-Team 2, which focused on Human Resources, and describes the A-Team initiative as a 'reality check' for a public sector facing a critical skill shortage.

I joined the public sector because I was attracted by the training and development opportunities it offered - and that's the image we need to promote to young people. We need to build on the sort of networks the A-Teams create and encourage mobility across the public sector. These are the sorts of things that will help to attract and retain younger people.

Kelly's comments confirmed the findings of the Office of Public Employments Graduate Employer of Choice Survey May 2006, which surveyed graduates within government asking why they chose the SA Government as an employer. At the top of the list was training and development (72% of respondents), followed by diversity of career opportunities (66%), employment conditions (63%), job security (51%), and giving back to the community (46%).



Performance Management

Everyone wants to know what they need to do at work and when, and how to do it well. They want their manager to tell them when they are doing a good job and how to do it even better. Like good recruitment practice, effective performance management is one of the most important management tasks if we are to ensure that the public sector gets the best from its people-and that its people (and the public) get the best from the public sector. Good performance management gives both sides the opportunity to create a better working environment where everyone can deliver their best.

Employees want their job and career to move forward and they need guidance and feedback to do that. Managers want the work done well and on time, so they have to guide and support staff. It's a win-win where the job gets done, careers grow and everyone benefits.

However, the GRC found that managing people and their performance wasn't always treated as a high priority and that practices varied considerably across the public sector.

The management of unsatisfactory performance was singled out as a priority. In response the GRC has developed The Good Practice Guide on Managing Performance, which provides straightforward advice and tips for managers in the importance of day-to-day performance feedback. The Guide also includes information on tools that can be used in

various areas to make things easier for people, and practical suggestions for improving the effectiveness of performance management systems at all levels.

The GRC identified three critical success factors to improved management of unsatisfactory performance. One was legislative reform of both the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act* and the *Public Sector Management Act*. The second was to create a culture of high performance. The third was organisational capacity and individual capability to deal with unsatisfactory performance.

The GRC contributed to the review of the *PSM Act* and sought amendment to the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act*. In addition, a report was prepared for chief executives on the issues they could address to achieve better outcomes in managing unsatisfactory performance.

Better management, better performance

Marj Ellis, Regional Director, Families SA, has welcomed the Good Practice Guide and believes the recommended legislative reforms could go a long way to supporting better performance management.

Managers need to be better informed about performance management, including the systems and processes in place. We also need to review those systems and practices, particularly those dealing with under-performance - managers need to feel more confident in these situations.

Erma Ranieri, General Manager Human Resources, PIRSA, says:

We take managing performance seriously in PIRSA because it shows staff that we pay attention to them, we value them, and we have a mutual commitment to their career progression. For management, it means we know what each person is doing, how it contributes to our business outcomes and individual personal career goals.



Premier's Awards

One of the best ways of developing a high performing organisation is to make sure that outstanding achievements are recognised. Most industry groups have their own awards that serve to acknowledge achievements, reward outstanding performance and promote their industry.

While there are a range of awards across the public sector in SA, they are mostly agency-specific and not necessarily focused on performance. What's been lacking are public sector-wide awards that specifically recognise and promote outstanding contributions to serving the public and achieving government goals.

The Premier therefore accepted a GRC recommendation that annual Premier's Awards - Showcasing Excellence in the SA Public Sector - be established to formally recognise outstanding contributions made by public sector employees.

The Awards are focused on contributions to achievement of the objectives of South Australia's Strategic Plan. The six award categories correspond to the Strategic Plan objectives—Growing Prosperity, Improving Wellbeing, Attaining Sustainability, Fostering Creativity, Building Communities, and Expanding Opportunity.

The Awards will:

recognise and reward creativity, innovation and excellence

encourage and motivate public sector employees to aim higher and make a difference

contribute to retaining and attracting a skilled workforce by demonstrating that the public sector values and rewards its high performers.

The awards will form a focal point of the new annual Public Sector Week that looks to showcase the public sector to South Australians.

Two of the best

Dr Martin Doolard, Executive Director, SA Dental Service, is obviously very proud of his Oral Health for Older People project team—and he wants the rest of the public sector to know it. That's why the team was nominated for the 2007 Premier's Awards.

The team added a simple oral health screening to the standard health assessment of people 75 and over and now refers 'at risk' patients for immediate dental treatment in the public system. The results in terms of preventative care have been impressive.

This project was special in all sorts of ways - it was led by a dental therapist rather than a dentist, it brought together various health sectors in addressing the problem, it enhanced everyone's skills and knowledge. It's a perfect example of the sort of creative, innovative thinking we need and the awards give us the opportunity to celebrate it.

PACE, the Plan for Accelerating Exploration, was nominated for an award by Dr Paul Heithersay, Executive Director of the Division of Minerals and Energy Resources, who says:

Exploration expenditure in South Australia has climbed well beyond expectations since PACE was launched in April 2004. PACE introduced innovative drilling partnerships with industry, which have provided increased opportunities for indigenous people, better understanding of the environmental impact of exploration and mining and tackled the skills shortage.

The South Australian Government has demonstrated through the investment of PACE that we are pro-business, pro-jobs and pro-mining.



Public Sector Week

While the Premier's Awards focus on individual and team achievements, public sector performance as a whole also needs to be recognised, not just within the public sector but also in front of the wider community. With this in mind, the GRC recommended that an annual Public Sector Week be established (with the Premier's Awards as a focus), providing greater opportunity to demonstrate the diversity of the sector and shed a different light on what we do.

Inside Out 07, the inaugural Public Sector Week, features a variety of events, that aim to showcase government as an employer of choice and show the public the breadth of career opportunities available within the sector. It's also about developing a sense of pride and purpose internally.

The blueprint for this year's program is innovative and exciting - here's what we are doing:

Flinging open the doors of government to allow the public unprecedented access to some of our most unusual areas and workplaces that are not normally open to the public. This is about a 'sneak peak' behind the scenes of some of our most interesting 'workplaces' such as our cultural institutions, medical facilities and wildlife parks.

Helping the homeless as a demonstration of how the public service can pull together and make a big difference! This year public servants will be supporting Common Ground, a charity that renovates derelict buildings and turns them into affordable accommodation for those in need. With this in mind, we will be donating goods for home starter packs and assembling beds for Adelaide's homeless.

Innovating to improve service delivery to show that the public sector is constantly striving to improve customer service. During Inside Out 07 certain agencies will be trialling new and innovative ideas to improve the way we deliver services.

Recognising and acknowledging the people that work in the sector. A key focus of Inside Out 07 is the Premier's Awards, aimed at recognising excellence and high performance. This is also a chance for agency heads to acknowledge the work of their staff.

Inside Out 07 - A snapshot

Flinging open the doors

So the public has a chance to tour some of our most interesting and unusual workplaces, for example:

Training with the raptors - participating in a training session with magnificent free flight birds such as eagles and owls at Cleland Wildlife Park.

Southern Ranger On Show - a chance to climb aboard the state of the art fisheries patrol vessel that is at the forefront of our fight against illegal fishing

Grey's Anatomy Tour - behind the scenes of an operating theatre (with mock caesarean section!), the rescue helicopter, a medical research institute and the hyperbaric medicine unit.

Cops and Canines Open Day - an opportunity to get up close and personal with the star force, dog squad and mounted police.

Traffic Controller for the Day - go deep into the control centre to see how we manage the maze of roads and traffic signals in the city.

Restoring Renoir - a chance to see how we conserve famous paintings and artworks for the Art Gallery.

Helping the homeless

*To show the public service can make a **BIG**, difference, public servants will be supporting Common Ground, a supported housing project by:*

Donating goods - to form home starter packs made up of basic essentials such as cleaning products, cooking utensils and bed sheets to give a homeless person a head start.

Donating time - to participate in a working bee to put together the starter packs.

Competing for a cause - putting a work team together to compete in a bed assembly competition to make beds for supported accommodation.

Information Sharing

The ability to access and share information easily is fundamental to good practice, effective customer service and productivity. However, it's often difficult for public servants to find the information needed from other agencies. People tend to rely on their own informal networks to obtain information - a significant problem for those without such networks, including new employees.

Improved information sharing across government became a key objective for the GRC, particularly making individual agency information more broadly available to all public sector employees.

People withhold information for many reasons, mostly the wrong reasons. Sometimes it's because charging regimes discourage others from accessing the data. Often it's based on a false interpretation of privacy or confidentiality.

Cabinet wants information to be shared across government. As a first step it gave specific approval for all government intranets to be made available across the public sector.

Linking it together

A new web page is being created on the whole-of-government intranet (intra.sa.gov.au) that will include links to all agency intranet addresses. The site incorporates a search capability allowing a general search of all the intranets for relevant information rather than having to manually access each site.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) will continue the work of the GRC in this area, and will investigate ways to build on the initiative to make access to information across government even easier.

Making the most of resources

Seconded to the GRC, Ben Adams has experienced first-hand the benefits of being able to access information from other agencies and departments.

I can access my home department's intranet from the GRC office, check payroll details etc. and keep up with what's going on. It makes mobility a lot easier.

Of course the most immediate benefit is to the public sector, but being able to check information quickly and directly ultimately makes for better customer service.

It also means agencies can share information and knowledge more easily - they don't have to keep reinventing the wheel, they can capitalise on other people's experience.



Plain English Program

One of the most frequent criticisms from both within and outside the public sector is the quality of written communication, particularly 'longwindedness' and the use of jargon. Communicating and writing effectively is essential for good customer service and efficient public administration - whoever the audience is, people should be able to understand the message the first time they read or hear it.

Although a number of agencies had established better writing programs supported by style guides and training, this hasn't been widespread. The GRC has responded by establishing a three-pronged program centred on the publication of a Good

Practice Guide. The guide is complemented by a resource kit comprising web links, book references, and useful PDF documents.

In addition to the guide and resource kit, the program includes a register of training providers who have delivered writing training to public servants in the past and who have agreed to develop training programs that reference the Good Practice Guide.

Agencies must now take up the challenge and arrange training for their staff using the Good Practice Guide and their own style guide as the basis for customised programs.

Knock out gobbledegook

The Plain English Good Practice Guide is all about good communication:

Don't say:

It is important that you shall read the notes, advice and information detailed opposite then complete the form overleaf (all sections) prior to its immediate return to the department by way of the envelope provided.

If there are any points on which you require explanation or further particulars we shall be glad to furnish such additional details as may be required by telephone.

While reasonable progress has been made, based on agency presentations, the Council considers that many of the savings identified represent the 'low-hanging fruit' and some agencies need to undertake more fundamental reform.

Say:

Please read the notes opposite before you fill in the form. Then send it back to us as soon as possible in the envelope provided.

If you have any questions, please phone.

While agencies have made progress, many of their activities have targeted easy reforms. The Council believes that some agencies should undertake more fundamental reform.

Project Management Network

One of the government's most important roles is the management of major projects, making top-quality project management skills, processes and procedures a high priority.

The need to improve public sector capability in this area has long been recognised; however, initiatives in the past have tended to be program specific, agency based or time limited.

Government faces several issues in this area, not the least being the loss of project management skills associated with an aging workforce and the shortage of skilled labour. What's needed is a comprehensive whole-of-government strategy to ensure the continued capacity to manage and facilitate an increasing number of large and complex projects.

The Project Management Network initiative is driven jointly by the Department of Trade and Economic Development (DTEI), Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA), and the Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure (DTEI) with support from the GRC.

Improving capability and practice

Christine Bierbaum, Executive Director Government Relations and Reform Office, DTEI, believes the Project Management Network has an important role to play in improving project management capability and practice:

Government simply has to develop more rigorous and consistent approaches to project management. As a first step toward building project management capabilities and improving practices, the network will help to identify opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing.

The Network is initially tackling 5 key activities:

training, mentoring and staff development

developing a shared web-based resource

updating key policy and program guidelines, including the project handbook

developing tool kits, including a roadmap of government processes for public and private projects

creating a consistent project and case management reporting framework across government.

Each of these activities is being undertaken by a small inter-departmental working group led by a designated senior officer. The groups also include staff from other agencies with a particular interest and expertise in the area.



Public Value

Sometimes reform begins with the simple process of just looking at things differently. 'Public value' is an increasingly useful lens through which to examine policy because it goes beyond traditional cost-benefit approaches and looks at the value various policy or investment options might create from the point of view of each stakeholder.

The value in a specific approach may be financial, but it could also be better services (leading to improved satisfaction), improved outcomes, or increased levels of trust (e.g. between government and the public).

Improved decision-making processes in government have been a key focus for the GRC. In this context, the GRC investigated the management concepts surrounding 'public value' and arranged a seminar for over 200 executives from across government outlining the concept.

The seminar successfully raised the profile of the public value concept throughout government, and encouraged attendees to examine its application in their areas. With GRC support, a number of agencies have successfully trialled a value framework, including the Department for Families and Communities (DFC), the Land Services Group (LSG) and the Department of Further Education, Employment Science and Technology (DFEEST).

DFC used a value framework to develop an innovative solution to protect the anonymity of their customers when possible solutions to their personal or financial problems are being investigated. The process also identified the importance of

DFC obtaining consent from its customers - a key factor in being able to simplify business processes and save time and cost for all stakeholders.

All agencies are now urged to apply the public value approach to their assessment of new initiatives.

New perspective, new solution

LSG applied a value framework to analyse a business process modernisation program that could require significant redevelopment of the organisation's computer systems. The analysis determined which option would deliver substantially better improvements to the overall business processes of the LSG for significantly less money and with greater benefit to customers.

Kevin O'Callaghan, Executive Director, LSG, said the value framework was very useful in looking at the alternatives for the business process modernisation program.

It helped us identify a potentially lower cost solution that could deliver better results for customers and stakeholders, and give our overall program of improvement a much greater chance of success.

DFEEST applied a value framework to a business case for a new student information system for TAFE SA. The work identified many benefits, not only cost savings and improved services to students but also to staff, the organisation as a whole, the community at large and other state and federal agencies. According to Elaine Bensted, Deputy Chief Executive, DFEEST:

The value framework approach enriched our understanding of the new system's positive impacts, in particular, our ability to respond to the needs of students, industry and employer groups.

Reporting Requirements

Fulfilling extensive reporting requirements is one of the most labour-intensive and time-consuming activities undertaken by agencies and departments. In that context, it's not surprising that reports are sometimes viewed as a bureaucratic burden, without any real value to the group generating the report or government as a whole.

Feedback from chief executives regarding the cost, volume and relevance of reports convinced the GRC that streamlining and rationalising reporting requirements would go a long way to relieving this burden and contribute significantly to greater efficiency and productivity, allowing busy public servants more time to serve the public.

Less is more

Bob Kinnane, Manager of the Corporate ICT Section in DTEI, says that corporate managers often comment on the yearly growth in the size of the annual reports they are responsible for:

The people who prepare these reports are senior staff with substantial duties that are being affected by the three-month reporting season. The gains from this initiative will be a major benefit as it will free up the time of busy public servants to focus on customer service.

Samantha Fletcher, Executive Officer to the Management Advisory Committee, said the Committee Members are extremely pleased with the response to date:

The Committee has made several suggestions that have been very well received and have already resulted in positive changes. The emphasis is on looking at each report and asking 'Is it really necessary?'.

The Commission responded to the challenge with the following goals:

improve the efficiency and quality of reporting and requests for data

improve the level of reuse and availability of previously reported data

increase organisational understanding of the need for reports and their value.

In response to a suggestion from the GRC, the Senior Management Council (SMC) set up the Management Advisory Committee to conduct reviews. The Committee, which has 11 members from across government (all at Executive Director or Chief Executive level), aims to:

reduce the frequency of reports

move them away from the busy period of annual reports where they create peak loads on agencies

abolish some irrelevant reports.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) will continue to pursue this initiative, and investigate further ways to simplify access to information across government.

Procurement Processes

Although procurement processes have undergone significant reforms in recent years, procurement is still seen as one of the more inefficient, unwieldy and/or time consuming of key government activities. The extent to which new approaches to procurement have either been implemented by individual agency procurement units or understood by business managers varies, and the GRC found that several myths concerning outdated rules or processes are still in circulation.

Given the procurement reforms currently being implemented by the State Procurement Board, the GRC decided to focus on two main objectives:

improving general understanding of procurement principles and processes by way of a Good Practice Guide

exploring additional improvements in procurement processes that could give chief executives better control, reduce costs, simplify and speed up processes and/or enhance capability.

The GRC developed a short, plain English, Procurement Good Practice Guide (complete with actual case studies) clarifying the current situation, explaining the underlying principles of procurement and the rights and responsibilities of business managers, and addressing myths and misconceptions.

The guide is relatively brief and succinct in regard to general procurement issues and directs readers to existing whole-of-government and departmental policies and procedures for further detail.



Removing the mystique

Andrew Richmond, Director, Procurement, Department for Families and Communities, believes that the Good Practice Guide is proving to be a valuable tool for all staff involved in any stage of procurement, from simply requesting goods to undertaking a major tender:

For many people the Guide successfully explains for the first time what procurement is actually about and removes some of the 'mystique' surrounding the procurement process. It's proving a useful reference point in our learning and development programs and helping us to sell the message that procurement is a professional work stream in its own right.

Building Accessibility

Every day large numbers of public servants move between buildings to work with colleagues. Many of them expressed frustration at the delays they experienced when required to sign in before entering a government building. The process made people feel 'like a visitor' rather than an employee of the same organisation who just happened to work in another building.

However, any change needed to recognise the importance of maintaining building security as well as chief executives' responsibility for the safety of staff and visitors under OHS&W legislation.

In consultation with agency security managers it was agreed that an interim system could be designed based on a combination of visitor lists and photo IDs.

The changes enable public sector employees attending a

meeting in another government building to show their photo ID to security guards on arrival and have their name checked against a list of expected visitors before proceeding to the meeting room.

After a successful two-month trial in a limited number of buildings in the Adelaide CBD, the changes were implemented across most government buildings where security is managed by security guards.

As the result of further staff input, the original initiative will now be taken one step further. Most government employees' location and contact details are currently listed on SA Direct (accessible via the whole-of-government intranet). Eventually photographs will be added, making the whole process of identification even more secure and reliable.

Easier, faster and a sense of belonging

Ian Gust, Security Officer, SA Police, likes the new system:

The changes have had a major positive effect. The new system provides a double check: a name and agency photo ID. We can now put a face to a name.

It also enables us to get to know people over time and know which agency they're working for. We're now able to provide a better service as it enables a much better flow of people through reception and into their meeting.

It's saved time, made our jobs easier and freed us up to do other work.

Tony Lawry, Manager of Transport Property Services at Walkerville has found the new system has eliminated the delays previously experienced when going to Wakefield House for meetings.

Occasionally I need to meet with other sections of DTEI that are located in Wakefield House. It's so much easier than before—I just show my photo ID to the security staff, have them check that my name is on the list of people attending the meeting and go straight through. Previously I had to fill in a form and wear a visitors badge even though I work for the same department.



Governance

In both the private and public sectors, governance (the structures and processes used by an organisation to manage its business) can have a dramatic effect on the quality and speed of decision-making.

Governance systems tend to evolve over time, incrementally building on previous structures. Most organisations are very good at creating new initiatives, processes and structures, but less effective in removing the sludge created by the redundant elements of the old way of doing things.

With the support of agencies, the GRC prepared proposals for streamlining decision-making processes and structures. The key areas for attention included boards and committees appointed by Ministers and inter-departmental committees.

The GRC worked with the new Cabinet Office to establish a process for reforming the inter-departmental committee structure to make more effective use of committee members' time and improve inter-agency coordination.

Agencies will now regularly review the relevance, purpose, defined outcomes, and delivery timeframes of their inter-departmental committees. Similarly, chief executives will be asked to personally approve the continuation of committees in

their portfolio area.

The GRC proposed a new Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) Circular 22 on the establishment of boards and committees which includes the need for more streamlined practices, such as:

sunset clauses or mandatory reviews for all boards and committees

published terms of reference setting out scope, tasks and expected outcomes

regular reporting of performance against stated objectives.

Ministers will be required to ensure that boards and committees under their direction comply with these criteria.

The changes advocated by the GRC are designed to make the decision-making structures of government both more effective and more likely to be reviewed and improved as a regular part of everyday business.

A focus on what really matters

Belinda Wood, Director of the Office of the Economic Development Board says:

Government boards and committees provide a way for a broad spectrum of South Australians to give good advice to government. They cover the issues in a whole range of economic, social and environmental areas. The new guidelines for boards and committees focus on what really matters in the accountability of these bodies. What the GRC has accomplished sets an example for how less is more in internal policy-making, and establishes a sound basis upon which boards and committees can be evaluated on an ongoing basis.



Where Now?

The members and staff of the GRC are justifiably proud of the practical reforms they have initiated during the relative short life of the Commission. However, while these achievements have had a significant impact already, many require ongoing agency support and implementation to ensure that reforms are maintained and the process continues.

It is hoped that the success stories that have emerged over the past 18 months will encourage others across the SA public sector to take a more active role in the reform process.

One of the legacies the GRC hopes to leave is a culture of continuous improvement in all areas of public service - an environment where staff are encouraged and motivated to put forward innovative approaches, where managers

are recognised for leading initiatives, and where teams are rewarded for implementing positive change.

Some people find change intimidating, others find it liberating - a challenge to be met, an opportunity to be embraced, a chance to rise to the occasion. More than ever before South Australia needs a public sector made up of individuals that don't simply respond to change but actively initiate it.

Where there are concerns about operational inefficiencies, ineffective customer service, bureaucratic red tape and inflexible work practices, there are also avenues to be heard and to address these issues - and to ensure that South Australia continues to 'punch above its weight' nationally and internationally.



Government
of South Australia