

State sector Standards Board June 2022

8 Reports 2000 - 2002

Key points:

The Board's reports have acknowledged the very substantial improvement in many aspects of the performance of the State Sector over the last fifteen years and the generally high standards of behaviours. However, they have also highlighted areas of significant concern, which, despite the initiatives of the past year or so, continue to require serious attention. These include:

- quality of leadership⁴;
- quality and effective use of performance management systems and processes;

³ State Services Commission Statement of Intent 2002, pp 17 & 18.

⁴ In its report of 29 June 2001 the Board defined 'leadership' in these terms: 'leadership in this [State Sector] context, includes establishing direction and ethics, ensuring that staff have the encouragement, support, systems and processes to work effectively, improving capability and performance over time and recognising the opportunities, responsibilities and restrictions of working in the State Sector.'

- inadequate attention to the training and development of staff;
- lack of focus on succession planning and career development;
- need for a State Sector strategy on remuneration, particularly for lower level and front line staff;
- weak orientation to “whole of government” and an inclination to work in compartments; and
- continuing emphasis on outputs at the expense of outcomes.

Other important points of concern are:

- the apparent failure of organisations within the State Sector to effectively disseminate and use the Government’s Statement of Expectations, as the foundation of a culture of ethical behaviour and high performance⁵.
- the need for rigorous policy analysis and effective consultation is endorsed, but there appears to be at times a reluctance to move on to decision and implementation;
- the protracted processes of achieving consensus among the State Sector leadership group (including the relitigation of policy issues) can lead to delays and dilution of clear government intentions, which within a three year electoral cycle can have the effect of defeating the democratic process;
- the working relationships between Ministers and officials. To achieve good outcomes, the State Sector depends on both leadership from ministers and responsiveness, professionalism and commitment by officials⁶. From time to time, for example after a General Election, more effective ‘orientation’ measures designed to facilitate the smooth functioning of these crucial relationships would be useful; and
- circumstances where it appears that State Sector organisations avoid constructive engagement with an issue, particularly when another organisation is taking the initiative or has the main responsibility. Effective performance management should give more positive incentives for the desired behaviour and sharper consequences for undesirable behaviour.

⁵ In its report the Board emphasised that if the Statement of Expectations were to lead change ‘a considered programme of support by Ministers, the State Services Commissioner and others in positions of influence in the State Sector is required’.

⁶ The Statements of Expectations and Commitment set out the required values and behaviours quite explicitly.