

# STATE SECTOR ACT REFORM FACTSHEET: Overview of the reform proposals

STATE SERVICES COMMISSION  
TE KAWA MATAAHO



New Zealand's Public Service has an enviable international reputation for responsiveness to government, effectiveness for New Zealanders and integrity.

The recently released [Kiwis Count](#) Survey reinforces this reputation, with 2018 results showing New Zealanders have increasing trust in, and satisfaction with, their public services.

Changes to the State Sector Act 1988 will build on the high performance base of the Public Service, with the overall aim of delivering better outcomes and services for New Zealanders.

Changes are also aimed at creating a modern, agile and adaptive public service, and affirming the constitutional role of the Public Service in supporting New Zealand's democratic form of government.

The key enablers to this are public service culture and behaviour; an updated framework for employment; effective leadership; and a greater range of options for configuring fit-for-purpose public service organisations. Alongside these enablers is the need for the Public Service to help strengthen the Māori/Crown relationship.

## Major decisions

The Government has decided that the State Sector Act 1988 will be repealed and replaced with a new Public Service Act. This new Act will include provisions in five areas that will help the Public Service join up services around New Zealanders' needs and secure public trust and confidence so it remains well placed to serve New Zealand in the future. The five areas are:

- A unified Public Service
- Strengthening the Māori/Crown relationship
- Employment and workforce
- Leadership
- Organisations

A Public Service Bill will be drafted and introduced to Parliament in the second half of 2019. The legislative process will take some months. The public will be able to make submissions through the select committee process that will happen shortly after introduction.

Alongside the system-level State Sector Act legislative changes, there is also work to improve how public service agencies organise themselves in the regions. See Factsheet 7 for details.

## Questions and answers

### Why do we need to reform the State Sector Act 1988?

The Act is more than 30 years old and has been amended 13 times. Times have changed and there are areas where the Public Service can do better. The Act needs to reflect the requirements on the Public Service today and into the future.

### How will New Zealanders benefit from the changes in the new legislation?

The Public Service works for the government that New Zealanders elect and New Zealanders depend on the Public Service for a wide range of services. A public service which works better will, over time, be of more benefit to New Zealanders.

### How will these reforms be achieved?

There are two main levers to bring about change:

- Legislation – replacing the State Sector Act 1988 with a new Public Service Act
- Non-legislative – a change programme driven by the State Services Commissioner (this will change to Public Service Commissioner) and chief executives of the Public Service.

These reforms will also complement changes in the way the Government manages public finances that started with the Wellbeing Budget approach.

### Is there an appetite for change?

Yes. Consultation feedback showed strong support for the overall direction of the reforms. These changes are about improving on the high base from which the Public Service operates to enable it to make the biggest possible difference to New Zealanders' wellbeing.

### When will the Bill come into effect and the changes take place?

The Bill is expected to be enacted before the end of 2020. Some of the changes will come into effect immediately, but many provisions are enabling; they will provide the tools and instruments to meet current and future requirements. This means implementation can be phased in over time to bring about change in a managed way, instead of resulting in sudden large-scale change in the system.

**For more information on the State Sector Act reform, and the full series of factsheets, please visit the [SSC website](#)**