

STATE SECTOR ACT REFORM FACTSHEET: A unified Public Service

STATE SERVICES COMMISSION
TE KAWA MATAAHO

A unified Public Service that acts as a single team, with a spirit of service to the community, will lead to more joined-up and better services for all New Zealanders.

Major decisions

Proposed law changes will:

- help create a unified Public Service with a common purpose, upholding foundational principles and displaying affirmed values
- make appropriate officials (eg, chief executives) responsible for upholding the principles
- acknowledge 'a spirit of service' as fundamental to the Public Service
- reaffirm the term 'the Public Service' to include Crown agents.

What it means for public servants

New legislation will affirm and clarify the common purpose, and bedrock principles and values for all public servants. This will capture why the Public Service exists and how it fits into New Zealand's system of government; the five public service principles currently scattered throughout the existing legislation; and ideal behaviours that support the integrity of the public sector.

Strengthening the shared identity of public servants is aimed at bringing them closer together in the goal of serving New Zealanders, regardless of which agency they work in.

This will include Crown agents, many of which are already providing core public services in areas like health, education, transport and housing. They already give effect to government policy and often need to work closely with other public service agencies.

Joined-up core public service delivery agencies will help drive the cultural shift to build a unified Public Service, able to quickly mobilise across the sector to tackle specific issues that improve living standards and New Zealanders' wellbeing.

Questions and answers

What is the common purpose of the Public Service?

There are several components, including:

- to support the government to develop and implement policies
- to support the operation of government and delivery of public services
- to work in a way that is lawful, open, democratic, trusted, competent, politically neutral and in the public interest
- to deliver better outcomes for all New Zealanders.

What are the five public service principles?

Political neutrality, free and frank advice to Ministers, merit-based appointment, open government and stewardship.

What are the values?

These are still being determined. There was strong support in the public consultation to include values in the legislation, and these are being developed for inclusion in the Bill. The values will be discussed at the Public Service Leaders Summit on 3 July, 2019.

What is the difference between principles and values?

The principles are fundamental features of the way in which the Public Service operates, inherited through New Zealand's Westminster system of government.

The values describe necessary behaviours of public servants to maintain the integrity of the Public Service.

Why put a common purpose, principles and values for the Public Service into law?

It preserves them and underscores how important they are. Providing a stronger understanding of what is expected is aimed at influencing public servant behaviours.

Who is responsible for upholding the principles?

Chief executives will ensure the principles are followed in their agencies. The Public Service Commissioner will issue guidance on what the principles and values mean for public servants.

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What happens if someone breaches a value?

The Public Service Commissioner's guidance on the values would be binding on public servants as terms of their employment. Behaviours inconsistent with the guidance would be addressed through employment management processes.

Why are Crown agents now included in the Public Service?

They are public organisations using public money to deliver public services for public good.

Which organisations are in the Crown agents' group?

There are [46](#). They include agencies such as ACC, Housing New Zealand, New Zealand Transport Agency, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, Tertiary Education Commission, PHARMAC and district health boards.

Will the legal status or decision-making powers of Crown agents change?

No. This is about strengthening the shared identity and underlying behavioural foundations of all public servants – regardless of where they work. It's aimed at bringing them closer together in the goal of serving New Zealanders.

When are these new provisions expected to be law?

It's expected these provisions will come into law by the end of 2020, subject to the legislative process.

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