Public Service Commission

Size and composition

Chapter 2

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NSW employed persons

10.5% of all NSW employed persons are NSW public sector employees

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Increase in NSW public sector

+1.4% census headcount, **up by 5,568** from 2019

Decrease in NSW employed persons

-4.7%

Size of the NSW public sector workforce

The NSW public sector is the largest employer in Australia. Figure 2.1 and Table 2.1 show that in 2020 the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in the census period increased by 3.2% (10,721) and the census headcount increased by 1.4% (5,568) compared to 2019.

Table 2.1: Public sector census headcount and census period FTE, 2011–2020

Year	Census headcount	Change from previous year (%)	Census period FTE	Change from previous year (%)
2011	394,789	2.2	330,400	2.5
2012	401,703	1.8	332,555	0.7
2013	399,243	-0.6	329,336	-1.0
2014	396,036	-0.8	328,111	-0.4
2015	394,194	-0.5	326,765	-0.4
2016	393,442	-0.2	326,706	0.0
2017	393,333	0.0	325,917	-0.2
2018	396,243	0.7	329,005	0.9
2019	407,999	3.0	337,787	2.7
2020	413,567	1.4	348,508	3.2

Figure 2.2 shows that 2020 marked the first time in 10 years that the number of NSW employed persons contracted (-4.7%), reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment in the state. However, the NSW public sector continued to grow, increasing by 1.4%. Consequently, the proportion of employed persons in NSW who worked for the NSW public sector increased to 10.5% in 2020 (see Figure 2.3).

Composition of the NSW public sector

While headcount is an important measure of the size of the workforce, FTE provides a better indication of the resource level of the public sector workforce.

In 2020, the increase in census period FTE was close to double the increase in census headcount (10,721 FTE compared to 5,568 headcount). These increases, revealed in the June 2020 Australian Public Service employment data, likely relate to the additional resourcing required in the early response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2.2: Composition of the public sector by service, census period FTE, 2019–2020

Service	2019	2020	Change	Change (%)
Public Service	64,834	66,631	1,797	2.8
NSW Health Service	119,886	122,921	3,035	2.5
NSW Police Force	20,267	20,613	346	1.7
Teaching Service	67,616	70,261	2,645	3.9
Transport Service	13,062	13,645	583	4.5
Other Crown services	43,234	45,310	2,076	4.8
Total government sector	**328,900**	**339,382**	**10,482**	**3.2**
State owned corporations	7,879	8,129	250	3.2
External to government sector	1,008	997	-11	-1.2
Total public sector	**337,787**	**348,508**	**10,721**	**3.2**

Table 2.2 shows that almost all services experienced increases in the census period FTE from 2019 to 2020. The largest proportional increases occurred in other Crown services, the Transport Service and the Teaching Service, with rises of 4.8%, 4.5% and 3.9%, respectively, compared to 2019.

The increase in other Crown services was mainly due to a rise in the number of FTE in School Administrative and Support Workers (1,362 or 6.9%). Increases in the Teaching Service, School Administrative and Support Workers and the Department of Education workforce were due to several factors, including increased school enrolments, the commitment to maintain staff in drought-and/or bushfire-affected schools, and commitments made to casual employees and some temporary employees for engagement in term two 2020 as part of the pandemic response.

Within the Transport Service, the Sydney Metro workforce increased (107 FTE or 31%), showing the impact of large-scale infrastructure projects on NSW employment.

The Public Service grew by 2.8% in 2020. The Department of Education (844 FTE or 11.2%) and Service NSW (494 FTE or 19.8%) were key contributors to this increase, both of which had significant roles in managing the pandemic.

The NSW Health Service FTE increased (3,035 or 2.5%), including an additional 712 Nurses (1.5%) in 2020. The Ambulance Service FTE also recorded growth (488 or 10.4%), partly because an increase in paramedic resourcing was brought forward as part of the pandemic response.

The NSW Police Force FTE also increased (346 or 1.7%). This was due to the Government commitment announced in late 2018 to add 1,500 Police Officers over four years, from 1 July 2019. This increase helped the delivery of the additional policing services required as part of the Government's response to the bushfires and COVID-19.

Machinery of government changes

The Department of Regional NSW was established in 2020 and associated agencies moved out of the Planning, Industry and Environment cluster to form this new cluster.

Resilience NSW (94 FTE in 2020) was established in 2020 as an executive agency in the Premier and Cabinet cluster, replacing the former Office of Emergency Management within the Stronger Communities cluster (61 FTE in 2019).

Table 2.3: Composition of the public sector by cluster, census period FTE, 2019–20[2]

Cluster	2019	2020	Change	Change (%)
Customer Service	7,562	8,210	648	8.6
Education	105,744	110,507	4,763	4.5
Health	120,973	124,086	3,113	2.6
Planning, Industry and Environment	20,082	16,103	-3,978	-19.8
Premier and Cabinet	3,943	3,835	-107	-2.7
Regional NSW	-	4,428	4,428	0.0

Cluster	2019	2020	Change	Change (%)
Stronger Communities	51,804	52,342	538	1.0
Transport	25,403	26,454	1,052	4.1
Treasury	2,022	2,293	271	13.4
Total public sector	**337,787**	**348,508**	**10,721**	**3.2**

Other than the decrease in Planning, Industry and Environment due to the creation of Regional NSW, Premier and Cabinet was the only cluster that recorded a decrease in census period FTE – all other clusters show an increase. The largest decrease in Premier and Cabinet was in the Sydney Opera House Trust (-122 FTE or -20.8%), reflecting the impact of the pandemic on events.

The largest proportional increases occurred in the Treasury and Customer Service clusters. The increase in the Treasury cluster was mainly due to a 38.5% rise in FTE at Insurance and Care NSW (313 FTE). A 19.8% increase in Service NSW (494 FTE) drove the overall change in the Customer Service cluster.

Notes

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2020, *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed*, 'Table 16. Labour force status by Labour market region (ASGS) and Sex', cat. no. 6291.0.55.001, viewed 29 January 2021, **https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/la...**

[2] 'Other' has been excluded from the clusters list but included in the public sector totals.

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