

The independent Review of Whole-of-Government Internal Regulation (Belcher Red Tape Review) - Key findings

The review identified opportunities to remove internal red tape across whole-of-government and entities, to facilitate public sector agility and enhance collaboration and innovation.

Ms Belcher noted four whole-of-government themes, which emerged in the course of the Review, including:

- over regulation
- inefficient regulation
- unclear and inaccessible regulations and guidance, and
- a culture of risk aversion.

Addressing these areas provides the opportunity to improve public sector agility and culture. To ensure these benefits are maintained the Review's primary recommendation is to develop all regulation, within and across entities, against [five Principles for Internal Regulation](#).

These require regulation to be:

- the minimum needed to achieve whole-of-government or entity outcomes
- proportional to the risks to be managed and supportive of a risk-based approach
- coherent across government and not duplicative
- designed in consultation with stakeholders for clarity and simplicity in application, and
- reviewed periodically to test relevance and impact.

Greatest reductions in regulation

The Review noted that recommendations likely to yield the greatest reduction in regulation are those that propose:

- removing requirements for baseline security clearances for ongoing staff, relying instead on basic employment screening (21.5)
- reducing unnecessary and duplicated information collection processes, compliance certification, evaluations of external law firms under the Legal Services Directions and the Harradine motion for reporting on file titles (4.4, 8.4, 8.5, 13.1)
- reducing duplicated work by moving to online, continuously updated reporting on contracts, grants, consultancies and appointments, and enabling users to analyse the data and generate reports (8.5, 8.6)
- reducing printing and design costs by moving to electronic tabling in Parliament, and reducing requirements for government documents that continue to be tabled in Parliament in hard copy (12.2)
- streamlining investment and assurance processes to focus on higher risk projects and removing processes that encourage a 'check-a-box' mentality (3.1-3.9)
- streamlining and reducing property, fraud and financial reporting requirements, with particular emphasis on benefits to small entities (2.3, 2.6, 6.2, 10.2)
- better targeting of ICT benchmarking to focus on heavy users of ICT, and gathering minimal data from lighter ICT users (7.8)
- clarifying mandatory requirements and better practice suggestions in guidance (1.5-1.9, 2.5, 22), and
- encouraging the creation of sample templates, processes, contracts and guidelines for lower and higher risk activities and functions, particularly for internal processes for procurement and human resources (1.5, 5 generally, 11.2, 22).

Actions for entities

Portfolio secretaries agreed to a set of actions to be implemented within entities in response to the review. These are to:

- assess current and future internal regulation with the Principles for Internal Regulation (1.1)
- review data collection exercises, and planning and reporting requirements to consolidate duplicate data collection and 'collect once, use many times' (1.3)
- actively assist portfolio entities to meet regulatory requirements (for portfolio departments) (1.13)
- maximise responsibility of SES Band 1 and 2s to make strategic corporate decisions (1.14)
- review delegations and give greater responsibility to junior levels where possible, including to EL and APS officers (1.15)
- establish an acceptable level of risk to encourage innovation (1.16)
- reduce internal systems and processes for Austender notification (5.5)
- provide portfolio departments with access to the Central Budget Management System to reduce duplication in monthly expenditure reporting (10.1)
- support the implementation of electronic tabling (12.2)
- introduce electronic distribution systems for Cabinet documents as a priority (14.3)
- examine FOI practices to ensure they impose the least burdensome mechanism and consider actively publishing information to decrease FOI requests (17.1)
- implementing fit-for-purpose HR policies and practices in consultation with the APSC (22.2)
- review internal performance management systems (22.5)
- promote informal consultation as the first step in dispute resolution processes (22.7)
- review recruitment processes to ensure they are not unnecessarily burdensome, (22.9) building on new guidance to be produced by the APSC (22.8).

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Submitted by Ruth Edge –Cardinia Shire Council