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Verbatim Report

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE

ANNUAL REPORT

Ministry of Civil Service 2022-2023 Annual Report

ENTITY: Ministry of Civil Service
VENUE: Big Committee Room (East Wing)
DATE: Monday, 23rd March, 2026

**VERBATIM REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST
WING),**

**PARLIAMENT PRECINCTS, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ON MONDAY, 23RD MARCH,
2026, AT 10.02 A.M.**

Present

- (1) Hon. L.S. Qereqeretabua - Chairperson
- (2) Hon. R.R. Sharma - Deputy Chairperson
- (3) Hon. P.K. Ravunawa - Member (4) Hon. I. Tuiwailevu - Member
- (5) Hon. V. Lal - Member

Apology

- (1) Hon. T.R. Matasawalevu - Member

Interviewee/Submittee: Ministry of Civil Service In

Attendance:

- (1) Mr. Pita Tagicakirewa - Permanent Secretary
 - (2) Mr. Samuela Moce - Deputy Secretary
 - (3) Mr. Arvin Singh - Acting Director Corporate Services
 - (4) Ms. Fiona F. Danayabaki - Head of Workforce Planning
 - (5) Ms. Atelaite Rokosuka - Head of Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service (FLIPS)
 - (6) Mr. Suliasi B. Tokoni - Manager Training - FLIPS
 - (7) Mr. Krishneel Narayan - Manager Finance
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MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Members and representatives from the Ministry of Civil Service, members of the media and members of the public, good morning to you all. It is my pleasure to welcome every person in the room, as well as those joining us via this live broadcast.

I wish to advise that pursuant to the Standing Orders of Parliament, specifically Standing Order 111, all Committee meetings are open to the public and to the media, so this submission is open to the public and to the media. However, if there is any sensitive information relating to this submission that you cannot share publicly, such information should be provided to the Committee either in writing or in a subsequent closed session. This will only be permitted in limited circumstances, including the following -

- (1) matters relating to national security;
- (2) third-party confidential information;
- (3) personnel or human resource matters; and

- (4) when we sit to deliberate by ourselves as we prepare our reports to submit to Parliament.

I want to remind everyone in the room, please, that all comments and questions should be directed through me, the Chair, and for the viewers who may be interested in submitting questions, please, submit via the comments section and the Committee will only consider relevant questions coming through the comments section. Honourable Members of the Committee may interject during the submission, or you can save your questions till after the presentation.

I want to remind everyone that this is a Parliamentary proceeding. All information provided is protected under the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act and the Standing Orders of Parliament. Any slander or libel of any kind will not be condoned and all information presented to the Committee should be factual.

In terms of meeting protocols this morning, ladies and gentlemen, we ask that we keep movement to a minimum and limit your mobile phone usage or, in fact, turn it to vibrate mode or on silent. I will now introduce the honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.

(Introduction of Committee Members and Secretariat)

Members of the media and the public, today the Committee will receive an in-person submission from the Ministry of Civil Service in relation to the Ministry of Civil Service 2022-2023 Annual Report. I now invite the witnesses from the Ministry to introduce themselves before you proceed with your submission. Unfortunately, we have to give this room up in less than an hour as there will be another Standing Committee with a public submission coming in at 11.00 a.m. So, may I ask that you keep your submission to less than half an hour, to allow the Committee to then also ask you questions. I also ask that we turn our microphones on and speak into the microphones when we have to speak.

(Introduction of Ministry of Civil Service Officials)

MR. S. MOCE.- Madam Chairperson and honourable Members, our presentation this morning is based on the questions that were put forward to the Ministry, and we will be highlighting the issues that are related to those questions. I believe we are starting off with the strategic leadership and public service reform.

In terms of key reform priorities in the stated financial year, improvements were made on workforce planning, performance management, modernising HR policies, digitising people management systems, and building leadership capability across the Civil Service. This was rolled

out in 2022-2023. It was intended to show that systems and processes were able to ease the operations of the Government.

In a snapshot, 79 percent of the budget utilisation of the Ministry in this stated year was prioritised towards reform activities, with the reach of more than 1,855 civil servants, who were made aware and trained through the process, as well as 296 senior officials who were trained in leadership capabilities. With that, the challenges still posed in the reform process that the Ministry continues to work on until today. This has seen the reform emphasis reaching out to all Ministries and Government agencies.

In terms of assessing overall performance and efficiency in the Civil Service, it is through a combination of organisational performance reports, work plans, monitoring, et cetera, that the Ministry monitors the applicability of the reforms that are being done, in addition to customer service assessments made to Ministries on how well they have implemented their customer service guidelines. With that, the Ministry is able to gauge how well these reforms, innovations and initiatives are taking place across Government.

In terms of vacancies, it was seen that the size of Government continues to grow to about 28,000 in this financial year. This has seen a trend of increase on the number of civil servants throughout the years – 28,000 in this financial year compared to around 24,000 in the previous financial year, and it continues to grow until today. As we speak, we have more than 30,000 civil servants. In 2022-2023, we had about 28,000. We had positions and vacancies filled.

In 2022-2023, the Government was trying to get back its capabilities across the Service since it was coming out of the COVID-19 period. As you may be aware, during the COVID-19 period, Government had decided to encourage the Ministries to have savings deviated towards health improvements that were being done during COVID-19. Maybe, all the Ministries for that matter, did not have full capability in their Ministries in terms of establishment size.

There were cutbacks on filling vacancies across Government where some vacancies and positions were put on hold and unfunded. As we moved from COVID-19 towards 2022-2023, the Ministry started getting back those capabilities and were requesting Ministry of Finance to fund those positions that were put on hold. In this financial year, we had about 22,000 positions filled and over 2,400 vacancies, with a 10 percent vacancy rate.

Because of the increase in size of the Civil Service, as we progress towards normalcy from COVID-19, more vacancies began to get filled and more of those positions that were put on hold were put back into the establishment. The trend suggests that staffing could not fully be resourced in every zone in the trend analysis, and shortages in qualified applicants and labour market competition are

key constraints. These are some factors that affect the filling of those positions. In 2022-2023, the right sizing initiative allocated positions to Ministries with more urgent needs.

In terms of accountability – the Performance Management System (PMS) across the Service was reviewed in August 2021. There were some changes in the PMS due to COVID-19, and it was reviewed in 2021. Again, it is being reviewed this year, where the Ministry is trying to see that the system is practical, with consideration to the remuneration that is always associated with performance management.

Since 2019, I believe, that component has not fully transitioned into where performance is rewarded through remuneration. The challenge now for the Service is to be able to reward good performance and high performance to these changes in the PMS because ideally, employees are usually motivated through financial rewards. It is very difficult to put in place a system where other types of rewards rather than monetary rewards, are able to influence employees positively in terms of motivating them to continue in the Civil Service. We may need to research a good survey just to see how the civil servants are coping with the current performance management mechanism, because of the absence of monetary rewards.

In terms of training capability building and development, the Ministry continues to conduct training and capacity building in the Government. For this financial year, they had about 90 guideline training sessions. Most of the training that the Ministry was conducting for this period was related to the guidelines and policies that were put in place at the time. These included the Open Merit and Recruitment Guideline, Disciplinary Guideline, the Performance Management Framework and other guidelines that were put in place.

Close to 2,000 civil servants were reached in 19 partner-agency sessions that were conducted with the training partners, including the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC) on anti-corruption training and the Ministry of Employment on employment-related matters. There were also participants in the Australian Awards courses who were assisted by the Australian Government.

The Ministry continues to be vigilant in training civil servants every year. As you may be aware, with the establishment of the Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service (FLIPS), other courses are now in place compared to when the Ministry was conducting training this year. The reach has also increased, and more training packages are being put in place as we speak.

In terms of ethics, discipline and employee wellbeing, the Ministry continues to conduct awareness on the Code of Conduct and the Values of Government. This is enshrined in the General Orders of 2011 that the Government continues to be guided by. With that, the

disciplinary guideline is also in place and grievance pathways are there for civil servants to access in terms of grievances that they have and how it is escalated to the proper channels.

The Government encourages delegation of authority for those in leadership roles, how they delegate responsibilities to those below them just to build their capacity in the work that they do. Mentoring through leadership supervision is another way that the Government is trying to increase the capability of leaders and how they conduct themselves in their daily operations.

Conflict of interest steps are put in place and civil servants are always encouraged to declare conflict of interest whenever they are involved in any recruitment or process where they have some interests in, to avoid nepotism and other ethical issues arising.

Apart from that, we have a normal audit oversight on the guidelines that are put in place and how well it is compliant by the Ministries and agencies and the audit of the internal processes that the Ministries follow. For your noting, the current disciplinary guideline has been reviewed and submitted for legal vetting. That is the revision of the disciplinary guidelines that was implemented for this financial year that we are discussing at this moment.

In terms of wellbeing, civil servants are always encouraged to balance their work-life activities. The OHS measures are always emphasised to create an enabling environment for our civil servants. The Ministry is working on the flexible work policy to ease and mitigate the challenges that are being posed to the current issues arising out of traffic congestion in the Suva-Nausori corridor, and other issues that affect the work that civil servants carry out.

On digital transformation, in this time of concern that we are discussing, the Ministry had put in place the HR Management Information System (HRMIS). It had a 95 percent rollout in the Service and the recruitment portal. Applications were made online, so instead of Ministries using their own recruitment portal, they are encouraged to come on board to use this single common recruitment portal that is being administered by the Ministry of Civil Service.

On Payroll and HR data, this is also included in the HRMIS, where leave and performance management are done online. The Ministry also has a Customer Management System that has been established at the Government Services Centre. It captures Ministry inquiries and public concerns. It also captures feedback from the public on Government services. This system receives complaints and positive feedback from the public.

With that system in place, the Ministry is able to monitor how well Government services are being conducted. From this financial year to the next, there was a steady decline in the number of complaints that were received by the Customer Service System at the Government Services

Centre. From 21 percent that was captured in this financial year, in the following year, it went down to 16 percent of the total inquiries that were put in place at the Government Services Centre.

On financial management and resource utilisation, this is mainly focussing on the Ministry, on how it utilises its budget in a financial year. As was alluded to earlier, the Ministry had a 79 percent utilisation rate. As I was mentioning, during that time, the Government was transitioning out of COVID-19, so the funds were re-diverted to key priority areas, so 75 percent to 80 percent utilisation was seen as ideal utilisation rate for Government Ministries.

I would like to highlight some of the main drivers, apart from the ones that I had already mentioned, that had created some savings. From vacant positions not being filled, savings from reducing customer care, call centre agents from 5.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m. These customer service agents worked 24/7, so it was reduced from that time. There were delays in implementing planned activities, including the rollout of the Customer Service Guideline across the Civil Service.

To conclude, some of the risks and forward priorities, the Ministry needs to manage its risks appropriately, in view of the challenges that it is facing. We are executing some of the Governmentwide policies and guidelines.

In terms of recruitment and retention, as you have seen, the upward trend in the size of the Service is something that needs to be considered. We will be looking at how the functional review this year comes up with appropriate recommendations on how the Government may be able to rightsize its services.

The funding constraints are being mitigated through prioritising impactful areas, especially now there is a need to focus more on capital-based initiatives, rather than operational, which chews up a lot of funding. This is an area where the Ministry will work, in conjunction with other Ministries, to see how best they can quickly utilise their financial allocations in terms of implementing the guidelines and policies that the Ministry, along with the Public Service Commission, puts in place.

For governance risks, the Workforce Planning Unit has been established in the Ministry to look at procedures put in place in Government, and how well civil servants are carrying out their duties in accordance with their roles and responsibilities, as well as how the Civil Service can best maintain a governance structure ideally to carry out its services efficiently and effectively. Top priorities for the next period is to encourage Ministries to fill their critical vacancies, modernise their HR policies, improve performance management quality, as well as adopting digital systems and building leadership capabilities across the Service, so that they can reinforce ethics, to ensure that the Code of Conduct and Values are properly implemented in Government. Thank you, Madam Chairperson and honourable Members.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We really appreciate your very succinct presentation. I will now open the floor to the honourable Members of the Committee or, indeed, any other member of your delegation can answer the questions that will come from the Committee.

HON. V. LAL.- In your second slide, Mr. Moce, you were saying that 1,855 civil servants were reached. What does that mean? Is it that these many civil servants were recruited?

MR. A. SINGH.- These were civil servants who were trained and capacity built in guidelines and policies. Out of 28,000 civil servants, 1,855 were trained in those guidelines. This concerns civil servants.

HON. V. LAL.- I can see there are some vacancies and some civil servants were recruited. What was the recruitment process? What process was employed to get new civil servants?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Back then, the OMRS policy was used – the OMRS recruitment process.

HON. V. LAL.- How does the Ministry ensure transparency at each stage of OMRS?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Well, there is transparency at each stage of the process, from recruitment right at the beginning to the decision taken by the Permanent Secretary and the Minister at the end. Right throughout the process, we have the check and balance in place to ensure that the process is transparent and there is no conflict of interest.

HON. V. LAL.- To add onto that, what measures are employed to see that there is no bias and no favouritism when we recruit civil servants?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- From the beginning of the recruitment process, the interview panellists who are involved in the recruitment fill out a form of ‘conflict of interest’ or if they have any bias, that is stated explicitly in the form. So, when the recruitment moves forward, all those little things are picked up, before the ultimate decision is made by the Permanent Secretary and the Minister.

HON. V. LAL.- Are recruitment outcomes and scoring criteria made available to the applicants?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- They are advised of the outcome of the process, but with reference to your question, no, they are not informed of the particulars of the process.

MR. S. MOCE.- Madam Chairperson, there is a procedural review process in place. If applicants feel that the processes are not followed during the recruitment process that they are in, they apply for a procedural review of the recruitment process that is being assessed by the Public Service Commission. If the Public Service Commission sees that the processes have not been followed, then the Ministry is advised to redo the process itself.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- A very similar question, through you, Madam Chairperson.

Professionalism and integrity is part of your core values. There is a misconception out there - probably, people say that appointments are based on ethnicity lines, favouritism and whom you know. It is important that 'whom you know' means 'who you know' knows the job. Can you provide more clarity on this to dilute this misconception, that formal policies and legal frameworks prohibit ethnicity-based discrimination in recruitment, selection, promotion and appointment processes?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- That is addressed through the Recruitment Policy that we have been highlighting, or the OMRS – it was known back then. At the end of the process, we trust the interview panel, the Permanent Secretary and the Minister, that it will address those issues.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- You said that back then, it was the OMRS process. What about now?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- It is just the name that has changed from OMRS process to Recruitment Policy, but the particulars remain the same.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- Through you, Madam Chairperson, post 2018 on the Job Evaluation Exercise (JEE) – there was a transition period for those who are already in the Civil Service where they were put on Step 1 of their salary band. Then there was a policy that was put out by the Ministry of Civil Service, the weighting and rating during the interview determines the step where the new participant or the applicant would be placed on.

For the information of the Committee, there is a lot of discomfort, pain and frustration for senior civil servants who are still sitting on Step 1 of their salary band, while the junior officers, mostly new graduates and new recruits, are put on Step 2 or even Step 3, in some instances, where senior civil servants continue to be their supervisor, yet the new graduate are getting more than their senior officer. Can you enlighten the Committee on that, please?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- The OMRS policy or the recruitment guideline states that your salary is determined by your interview performance. The step that you are tagged on or that you are placed on, is determined by that. Then we have the job evaluation leadership team who evaluates

positions. If a position is evaluated and the band size has changed, or it has gone up, then the post that that person is on will also change.

To the concern that senior civil servants are on Step 1, that goes back to the Ministries and the Permanent Secretaries, the internal general committee of that Ministry to determine after their post is evaluated, whether they go up or they remain on the same band. Based on that, it is submitted to the Ministry of Civil Service, which has the general committee for the whole Civil Service, to evaluate and consider changing the band.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- On the OMRS, the turnaround time for recruitment after completing the whole steps in the process, and on that particular question that I had initially asked - the absence of performance appraisal in the Civil Service, there is no Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) being paid out by Government. People are stagnant, while the cost of living continues to rise. Can you enlighten the Committee on that?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- The Government has been addressing that through the pay increase announced in the Budget, the 3 percent or the 7 percent as it was announced in the 2023/2024 Budget. Right now, the Performance Management Framework for the Service is on hold. Only salary step movement is on hold. The other aspects or the components of the Performance Management Framework is still being implemented right across the Service.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We had sent you some questions beforehand and you have answered them in your reply to the Secretariat. On Question No. 2, how does the Ministry assess the overall performance and efficiency of the Civil Service? In the Ministry's reply, you had said that the first phase involved an online self-assessment and the second phase was a field assessment. A total of 29 Ministries were assessed using nine different criteria outlined in the Customer Service Guideline. Can you give us a glimpse of the results, please?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Apart from the Civil Service, Customer Service Guideline is only one of the tools for measuring the efficiency of the Service. The main tool that we use is the Performance Management Framework. As I had mentioned, the step movement is on hold, but the other aspects - the particulars and components of the Framework, are still operational right across the Civil Service.

MR. A. SINGH.- This is a Customer Service Guideline. The assessments are done through all the Ministries – 29 Ministries were involved. There was a criterion used through emails, like a suspicious shopper visiting the Ministries and looking at the services they provide – how long the Ministries take to answer the email, the phone, how long they take when you attend to the reception or to come to the reception. There were criteria used to assess the Ministries and then

they were awarded based on those criteria. There were a handful of Ministries who were achieving those criteria and then these results were shared by PSC to all the Ministries.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, exactly my point. We would love to see the results if that is possible to share with us.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- We noted from the presentation that there was a reduction in the number of complaints from 21 percent to 16 percent. What does the Ministry do in terms of the 157 platforms that you had talked about, in terms of advocacy and awareness for the general public and this is especially, if I may declare my interest, on health services?

Our people, our Fijians need to understand if they have issues in regard to the service, they need to know that the 157 platforms are there. As you have mentioned, it is open 24 hours. How much advocacy and awareness did you put out on radio, on billboards and on advertisements, et cetera, and who provides the stickers that you paste on the Ministry and Department facilities for the public to know if they have issues with customer service - that they can reach out to that number and get a formal response from the relevant Ministry?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- That is something that we will need to improve on. Perhaps, let the public know that we have a call number if they are concerned about the services of a certain Ministry.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- On page 22 of the Report, I see staff engagements and then I see discipline and industrial relations. There are two separate cases of breach of Code of Conduct, and both related to harassment. This has been brought to my attention, and I had said that in Parliament as well, about how the younger ones or interns are being bullied and harassed by senior staff, which is something that absolutely should have zero tolerance. I see on the ethics, discipline and employee wellbeing slide, you have code of conduct and ethics awareness. Can you elaborate on what measures exist to protect the whistleblowers, in fact, or people who feel victimised of these harassments and bullies? What is in there? Your answer would be for them. Those who have raised those issues would be listening and, probably, may not have been heard or do not even have the courage to speak up against the seniors.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- For the Service as a whole, we have no whistleblower policy, but internally within the Ministry of Civil Service, we have our own whistleblower policy. We make sure that those who have a concern, if they want to raise an issue, they follow the channels that are in that whistleblower policy.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Are you saying that other Ministries do not have a whistleblower policy?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- We are not sure whether they have whistleblower policies or not, but our focus is the Ministry of Civil Service, and we have put in place a Whistleblower Policy.

MR. S. MOCE.- Madam Chairperson, may I add, there is also a grievance pathway that PSC receives grievances from members of the Service. Whenever there is a grievance in terms of what the honourable Member is stating, then they have access to show or to submit to the Public Service Commission any grievance that they are encountering, and the Public Service Commission will address with their Permanent Secretaries.

There is Anti-Bullying and Anti-Discrimination Policy in place for the whole of Government. That guideline supports the move towards anti-bullying in the workplace, ensuring that there is a safe environment in place in terms of employee relations.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I would like to ask about capacity building for civil servants. I know that capacity building-wise, they will go through their own HR departments, but with FLIPS, may I just ask you, how well is the outreach to rural maritime civil servants?

MS. A. ROKOSUKA.- With regards to capacitating the wider civil servants, as you noted in our presentation, we run policy and guideline-based courses. We do not only run it for mainland, for land-based, but we also do sessions for rural maritime areas. For the courses, just moving on to the grievances and the anti-bullying policies, these are part and parcel of the capacity building and the training that are undertaken at FLIPS for all civil servants, and they have access to this training at the Institute.

HON. V. LAL.- I can see on your slide 7 - ethics, discipline and employee wellbeing, and you are talking about flexible work policy. Can you elaborate on that, please?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- We are thinking of bringing back the flexible work policy as announced in Parliament, and it will be in place by December. For instance, someone staying in Nausori is going to arrive late to work at 9.00 a.m., 10.00 a.m. or 11.00 a.m. The flexible work policy allows for that person to start work at 11.00 a.m., but he makes it up after hours.

HON. V. LAL.- What I am asking is; what is the progress in regard to that plan?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- Right now, it is being piloted in six Ministries and once the Public Service Commission meets next, in April, it will review the pilot and then recommend how it is going to be rolled out by the end of the year.

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- What are some of the challenges that the Ministry of Civil Service is currently facing that would help this Committee to recommend in Parliament?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- In specific areas?

HON. P.K. RAVUNAWA.- The Ministry of Civil Service should be top notch in terms of employment. It is the biggest employer in the country, and our young graduates should already be interested to join the Civil Service because of its ethics, its level of efficiency and training, capacity building, et cetera. At the end of this presentation, we will make our report to Parliament, and part of our report is a recommendation to assist the stakeholders, like the Ministry of Civil Service. What would be top of your list that is obstructing or maybe a real challenge that is affecting the delivery of the Ministry as a whole? Perhaps, some of the things that the Ministry is facing right now.

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- The biggest challenge, as you have heard through our presentation, is the reward given to civil servants – the financial reward. Right now, that is on hold due to the current financial situation that we have. However, the Ministry is considering other forms of reward for civil servants.

Secondly, we have the functional review of the Civil Service that has started in January. Hopefully, that will be completed by the end of this year. The functional review is going to look at systems and processes for Ministries, starting with the five piloted Ministries and, hopefully, the ripple effect will touch other Ministries as well. One of the biggest intentions of the functional review is to make the Civil Service more effective, apart from efficiency, and that is something that we are looking at.

The third is FLIPS through capacity building. We hope to build on the capability development of civil servants in various Ministries, that it will be ongoing from this year on to next year and beyond that. We hope to build a capable Civil Service that will be able to perform and deliver the outcomes that the Government wants of us.

HON. V. LAL.- On Wednesdays' sporting and wellness activities from 3.30 p.m. across all Ministries, it has been brought to our attention that some civil servants, instead of participating in wellness activities, they leave for home. Is there any monitoring mechanism to monitor these civil servants, or how do you keep a record of this - who are participating and who are not?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- We leave that to each individual Ministry to look after their staff in terms of leaving home early from the wellness programme. It is down to the Ministries to monitor their staff and how they take part in the wellness programme. Again, as I have mentioned, that it is up to the individual Ministries through their Permanent Secretaries.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Going back to the Code of Conduct, I am not happy with what I have received or have heard. I need to hear more, because your Ministry looks at supporting Ministries and Departments with ongoing implementation. When you can post or publish calls received by various Ministries, again, I want to go back and find out why, when it comes to bullying and harassment, because for me, protection of our workforce is paramount. That is where I am coming from. Their protection is important, because that determines the productivity of the executive arm. Does PSC publish the number of cases that have been reported against harassment and bullying and all of these things? If the Ministry can start publishing this, because that is something that needs to be spoken of.

Again, I would like to repeat myself on this, their protection is paramount, in my perspective. So, what do you see going on from here in terms of the Ministry putting this out in their report? Does PSC publish this? Where is it published? Is the PSC getting reports from every Ministry that is there on the number of harassment and bullying cases of civil servants who feel victimised?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- I believe there is an improvement needed for the current processes, and we will have to take a look at the Civil Service Act 1999 and the regulations for us to tweak it so that it can facilitate what you have just mentioned.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- One last question, again, for clarity, because there is a lot of misinformation out there. I will use a current scenario, for example. Teachers have been waiting for their pay upgrade since 2023, or the cease of overtime payments of medical staff. Is this the responsibility of the particular Ministry, or is this the responsibility of the Ministry of Civil Service to budget accordingly before the national budget? Who is responsible for what? Can you just provide clarity on this?

MR. P. TAGICAKIREWA.- The Ministry of Education, in the instance that you have raised, will be the responsible Ministry, with guidance from the Ministry of Civil Service.

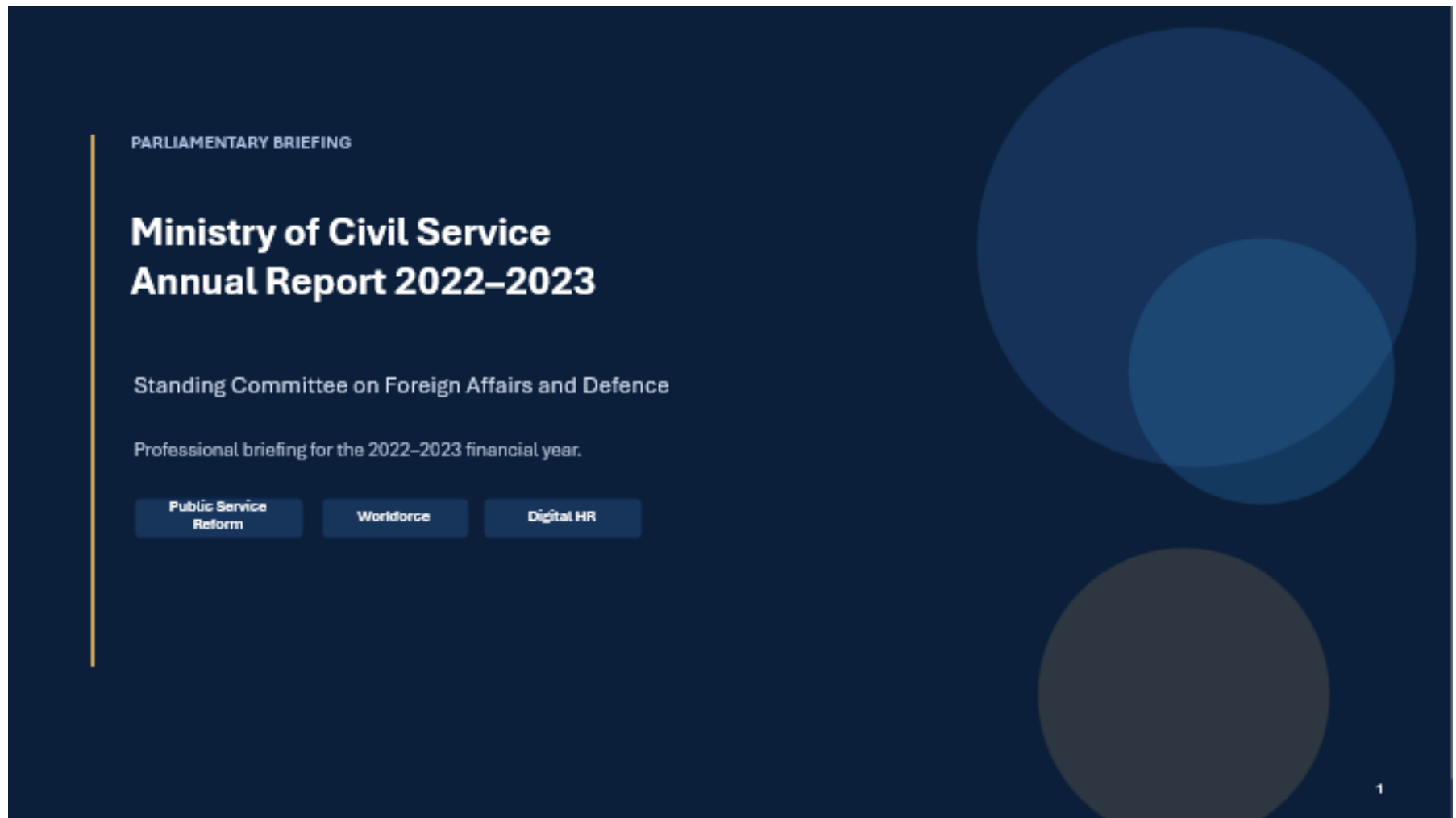
MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you very much, honourable Members. I am mindful of our time, and I want to say, “thank you very much to the PS and your management team”. Thank

you for taking the time to come before the Committee this morning. If there are any other questions that we have not had the opportunity to ask, we will send it to your office from our Secretariat.

Thank you, Permanent Secretary, and ladies and gentlemen. I want to say, “thank you” also to the Secretariat and Nirupa from Hansard. I will close this meeting.

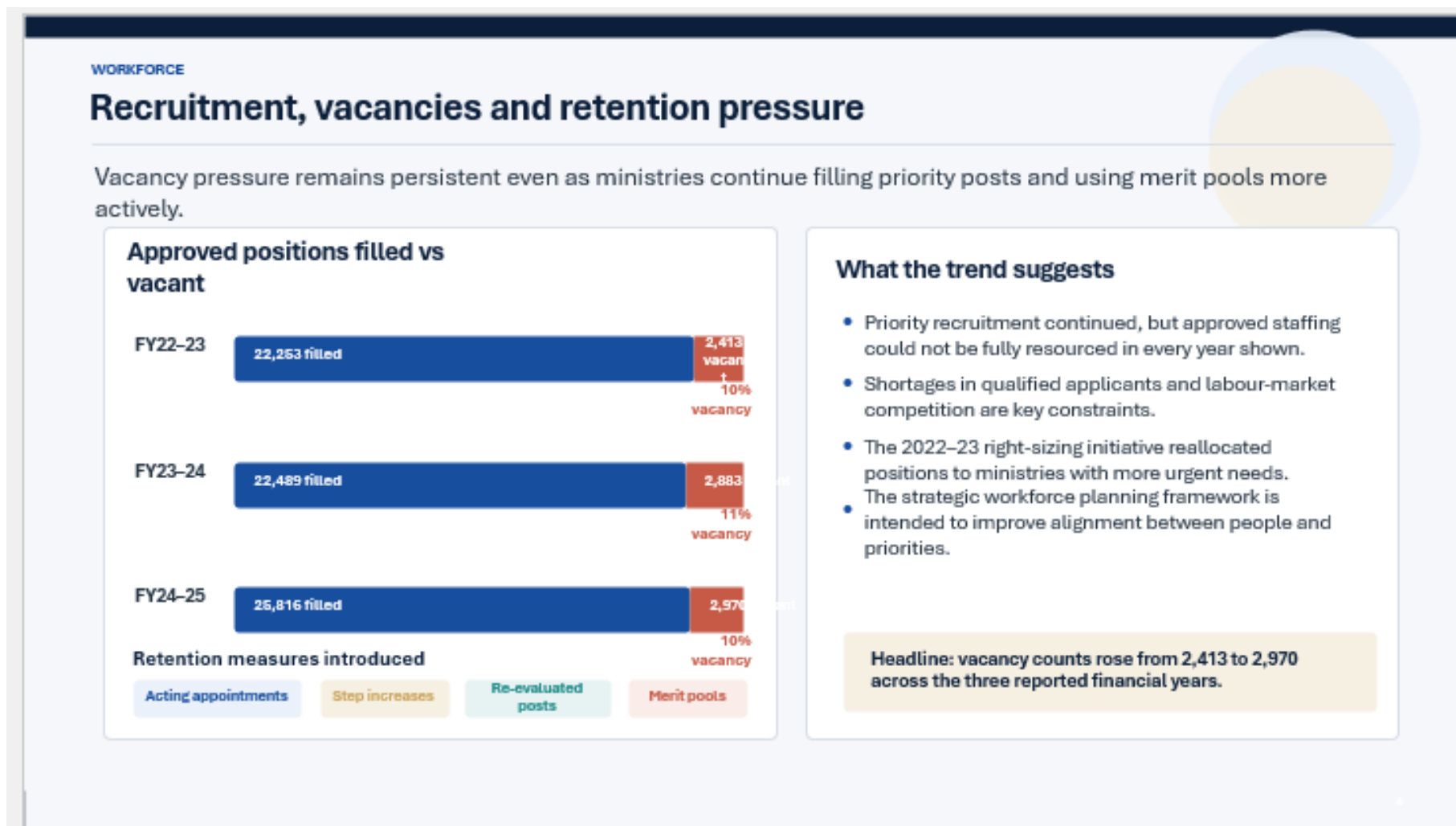
The Committee adjourned at 10.57 a.m.

Written Response

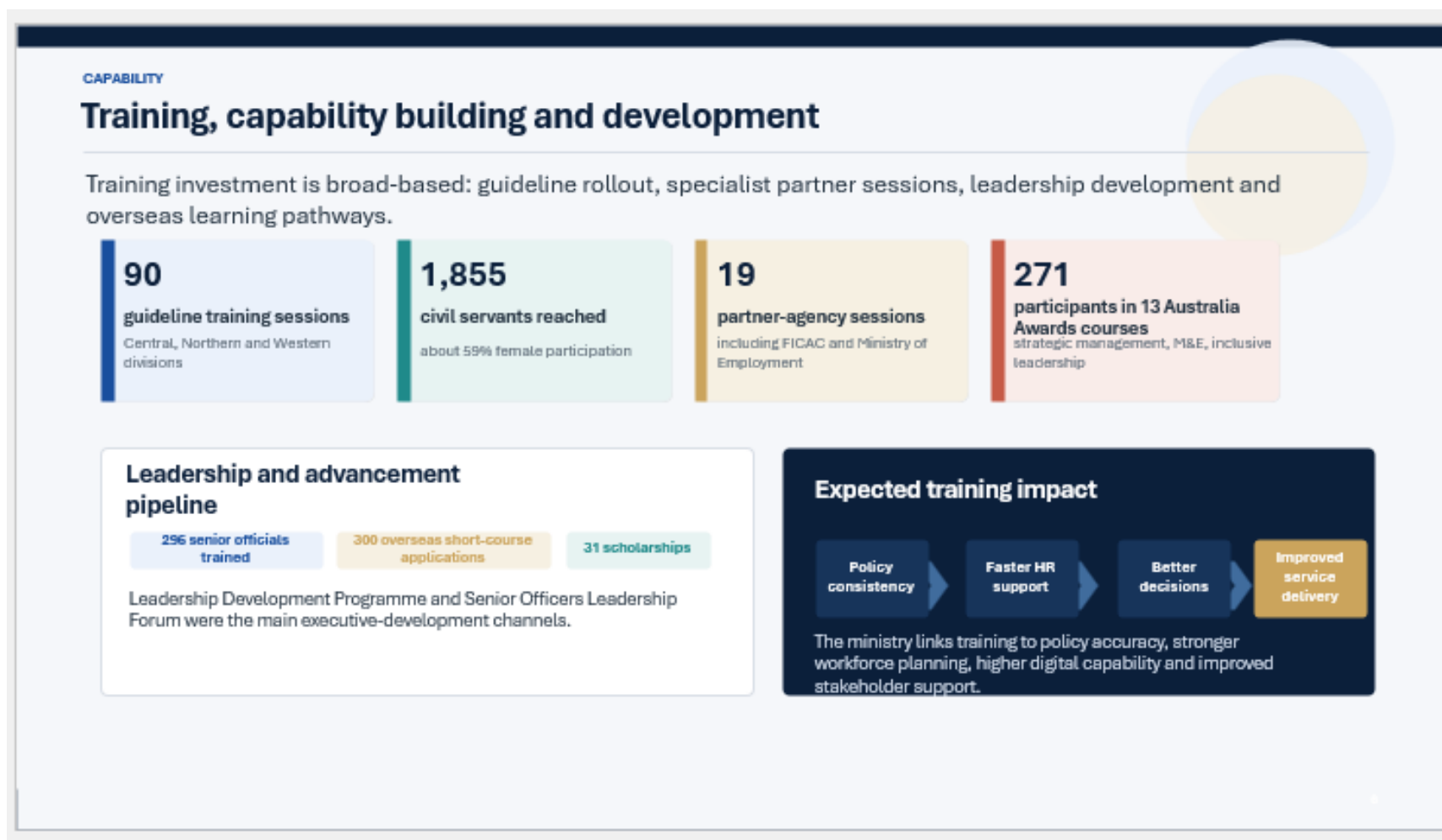


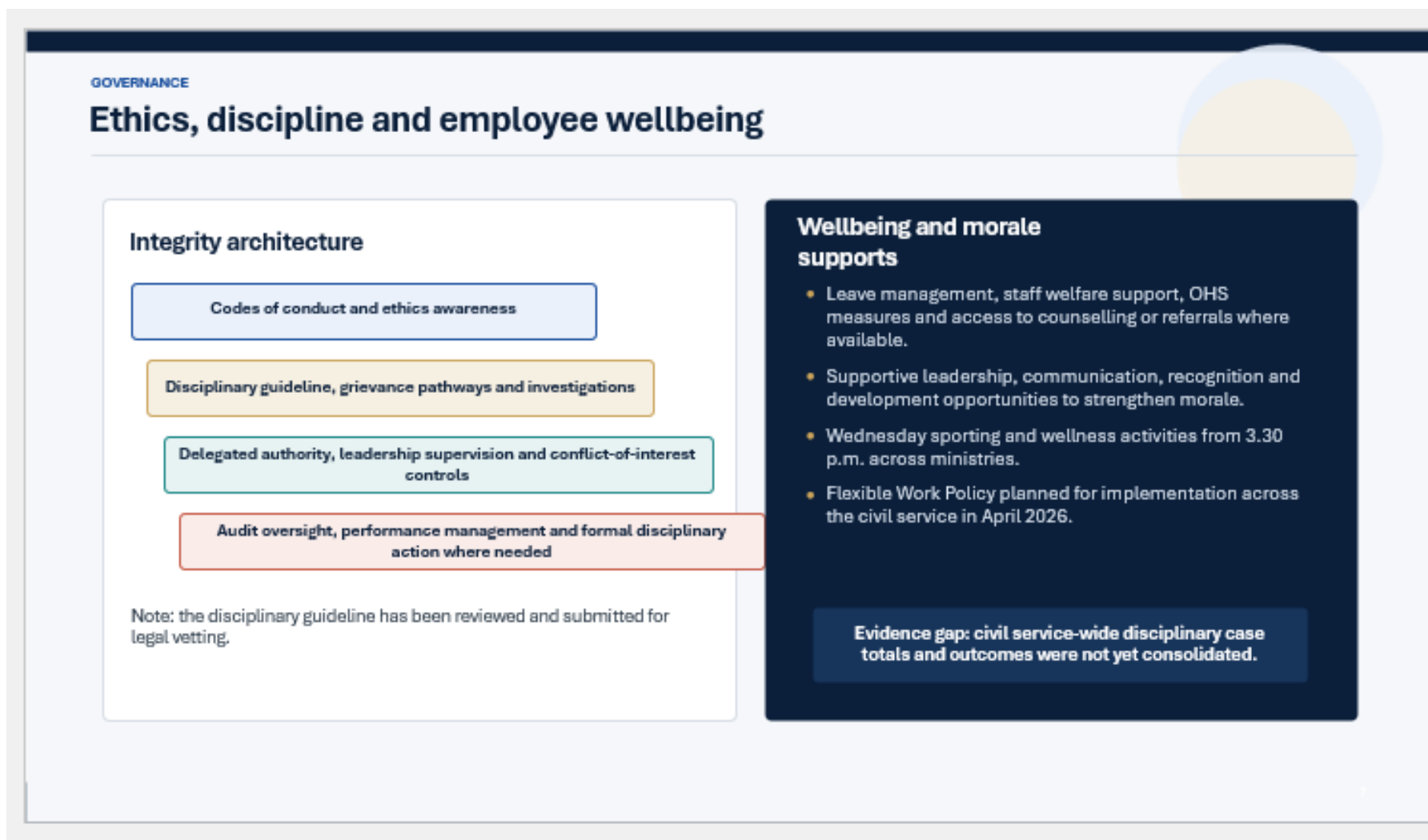


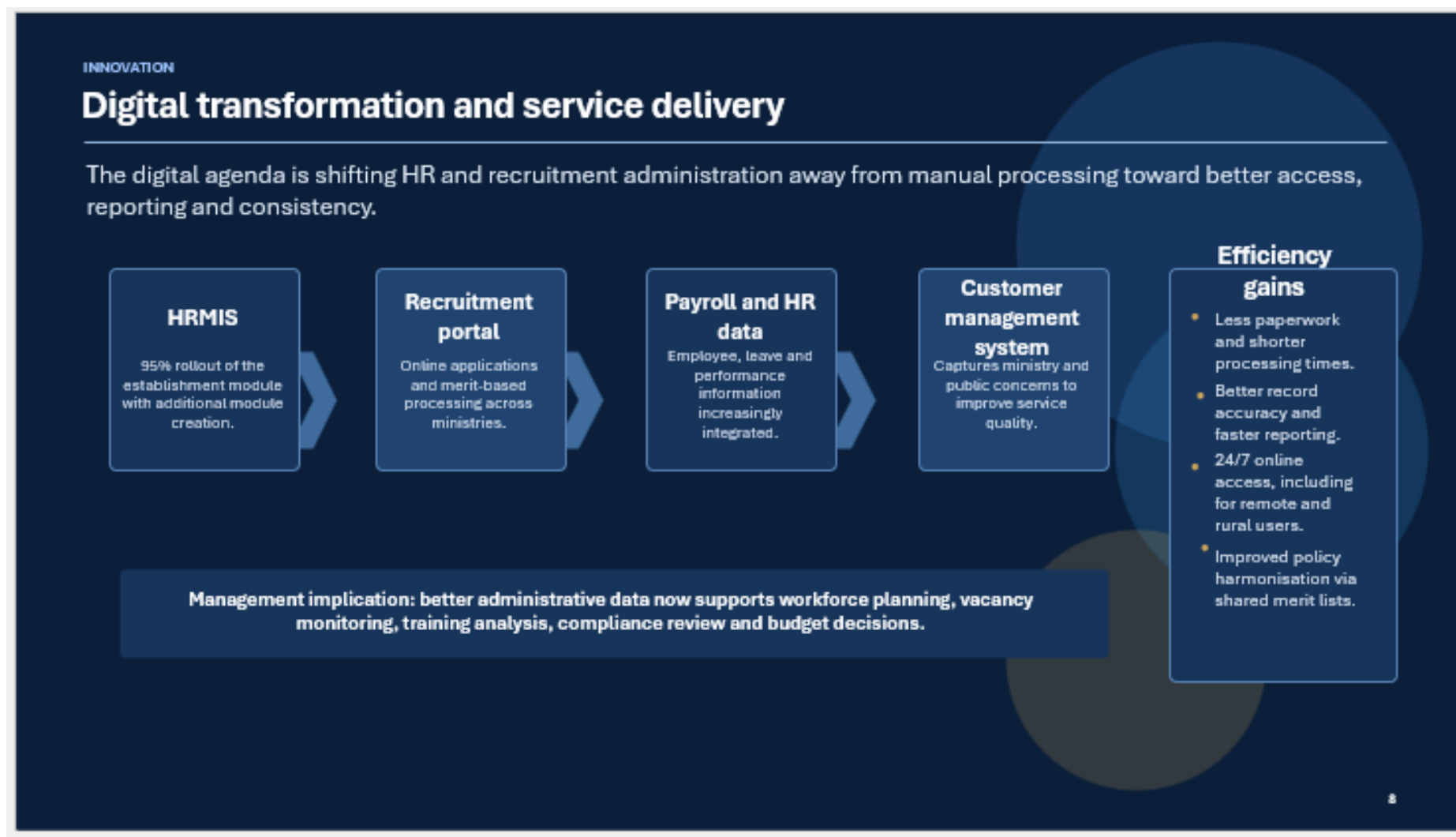


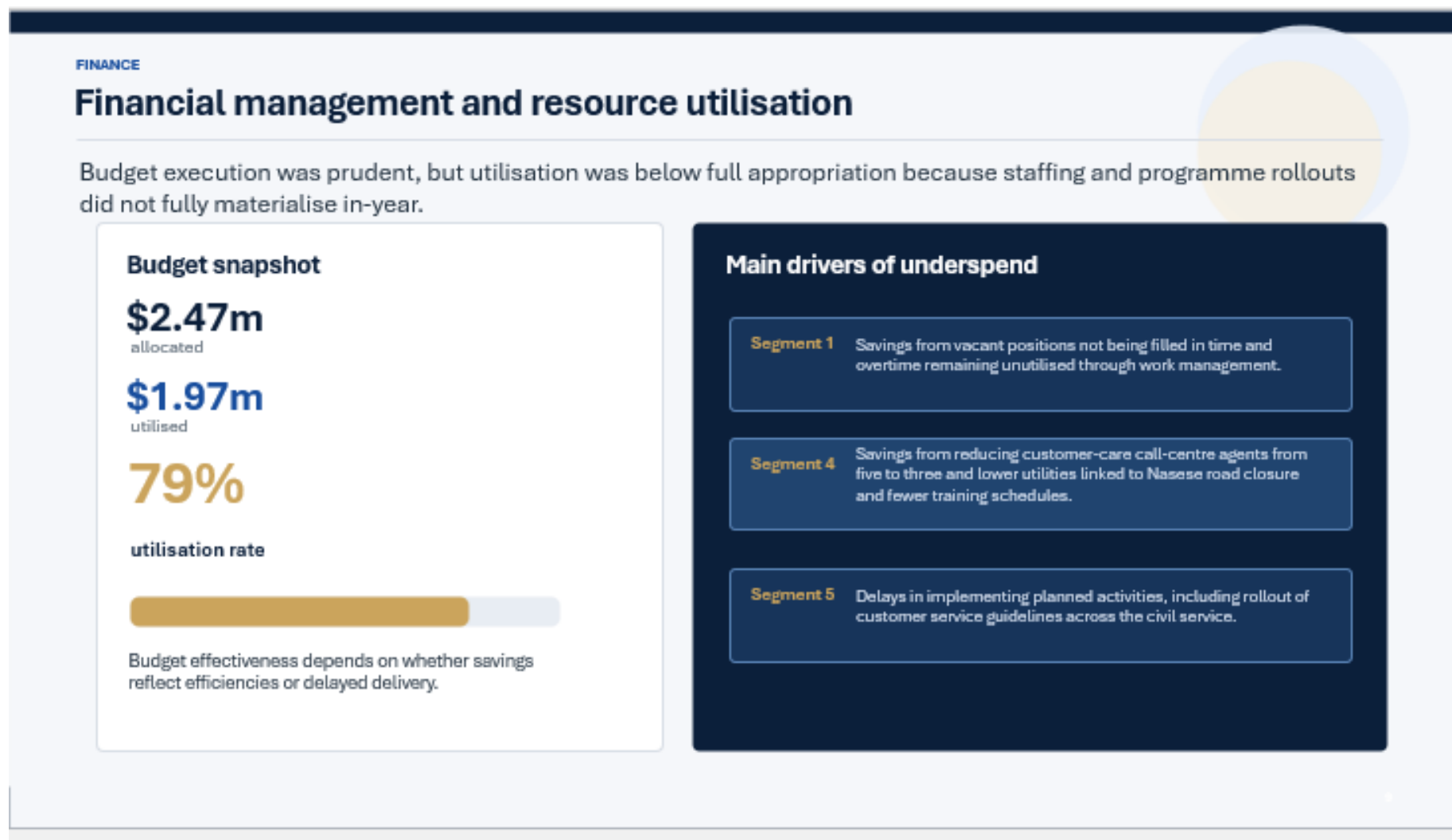












CONCLUSION

Risks, forward priorities and parliamentary focus

The next phase of reform should move from activity tracking toward stronger evidence of impact, better workforce resilience and more disciplined execution.

Key risks to manage

- Capacity limitations, uneven capability and weak succession planning in some ministries.
- Ongoing recruitment and retention pressure in specialist roles.
- Funding constraints that may slow reform, training and systems investment.
- Governance risks from inconsistent compliance, weak accountability or delayed implementation.

Top priorities for the next period

Fill critical vacancies

Modernise HR policy

Improve PM quality

Expand digital HR systems

Build leadership

Reinforce ethics

Suggested committee focus

- Ask for service-wide performance and disciplinary datasets, not only ministry-level activity counts.
- Track whether functional review and digital reform produce measurable service improvements.
- Test whether vacancy reduction and capability development are improving delivery outcomes for citizens.

Thank you

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

Additional Information

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

Ministry of Civil Service – Annual Report 2022–2023

Questions and Answer

Prepared for the 2022–2023 financial year.

A. STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM

1. What are the Ministry's key reform priorities for strengthening the civil service, and what measurable progress was achieved during the reporting period?

Answer:

The Ministry's reform priorities include strengthening workforce planning, improving performance management, modernising HR policies, digitising people-management systems, and building leadership capability across the civil service. During the reporting period, progress would typically be measured through implementation of policy reviews, rollout of revised HR guidelines, strengthening of reporting and compliance mechanisms, increased uptake of training, and improvements in turnaround times for core HR processes. The Ministry collaborated with other Ministries and development partners to roll out the business process improvement community of practice programme to remove red tapes, bureaucracy and blockages in civil service delivery. Policy revisions were completed for the retirement age and permanent contract in the civil service. An amendment was made to allow for the re-engagement of civil servants aged 60 and above to retain their expertise and experience and to allow proper transition of knowledge and skill to the younger civil servants in areas of scarce skills. The Ministry provided 560 human resource policy clarifications to Government Ministries aimed at ensuring consistency and adherence to policy implementation in Ministries. The review of the 2011 General Orders was initiated, and consultations were held with all Government Ministries to discuss each clause and obtain feedback. Discussions were also held with Unions.

2. How does the Ministry assess the overall performance and efficiency of the civil service?

Answer:

The Ministry assesses performance and efficiency through a combination of organisational performance reports, annual workplan monitoring, individual staff work plan and performance review results, vacancy and turnover trends, audit findings, budget execution, delivery timeliness of service, compliance with HR policies, and feedback from ministries and departments. A stronger assessment framework links inputs and activities to service delivery outcomes, productivity, and public value rather than relying only on administrative completion rates. The Ministry also carried out the customer service assessment to monitor the implementation of the Customer Service Guidelines across the civil

service. The assessment was carried out in two phases within the reported financial year. The first phase involved an online self-assessment, and the second phase was a field assessment. A total of 29 Ministries were assessed using nine different criteria outlined in the customer service guidelines.

B. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND WORKFORCE PLANNING

1. Does the civil service currently have the right size and skill mix to deliver government priorities effectively?

Answer:

Overall size, the civil service number remains large at more than 28,000, which has seen an increase of about 24,000 in the financial year 2023 to 2024. The Ministry of Civil Service led a right sizing initiative in 2022-2023 across the civil service. The right-sizing exercise addressed structural realignments apart from assessing the large vacancy rate across the service. In the structural realignment, positions were re-allocated to Ministries with more urgent and pertinent staffing needs. The civil service together alongside other employment organisations continues to face the trend in shortage of certain critical skill sets. Emerging skill shortages in 2022-2023 were noticeably visible post COVID due to reopening of international labour markets and increase in outward migration especially to Australia and New Zealand. Sectors affected were the health (nurses), Engineering, Information Computer Technology (ICT) and technical roles.

The Ministry of Civil Service has developed a Strategic Workforce Planning Framework to guide Ministries on ensuring that they have the right people at the right time with the right skill set to deliver the government priorities effectively.

2. What are the trends in recruitment, retention, and vacancy rates?

Answer:

A summary of vacancies for the financial years (FY) is tabulated below:

FY	Filled	Vacant
22-23	22,253	2,413
23-24	22,489	2,883
24-25	25,816	2,970

The Ministry of Civil Service coordinates and advises Ministries to make greater use of existing merit pools to minimise recruitment costs and to streamline recruitment processes.

Retention strategies were introduced across the Civil Service to address significant workforce turnover. The following specific measures were introduced:

- Regularisation of Acting Appointments
- Step Increase within the salary band

- Transiting post holders to their re-evaluated position without undergoing the process of advertising
- Retaining alternate talent pool from merit lists

This trend suggests that while the Ministries continued to fill priority positions, challenges remained in fully resourcing all approved positions. These challenges include delays in recruitment processes, limited availability of qualified applicants, and broader labour market pressures. Retention remained relatively stable in existing roles, although vacancy rates point to ongoing difficulties in attracting and retaining staff in certain areas.

Overall, the Ministry's workforce trend during the period reflects continued recruitment activity alongside persistent vacancy pressures, highlighting the need for ongoing workforce planning and retention measures.

The Ministry is addressing these challenges by encouraging workforce planning in Ministries, expediting recruitment for priority positions, improving retention through staff development and supportive workplace practices, and regularly reviewing vacancies to ensure that critical posts are filled in a timely manner. This will help reduce vacancy pressures and improve the overall staffing stability and service delivery.

C. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. How effective is the current performance management system in holding civil servants accountable?

Answer:

The performance of civil servants is guided by the Performance Management Framework 2018, which was recently reviewed in August 2021. The Framework is serving its intended purpose, as ministries are actively engaged in holding staff accountable for their performance. However, as the guideline was only reviewed in 2021, ministries' commitment to full implementation and compliance continued to progress during the reporting period.

A review of the Performance Guideline was completed, and the revised guideline is currently with the Solicitor-General's Office for legal vetting. In addition, a Functional Review Commission has been established to carry out a functional review of the whole of Government, with the exercise currently being piloted in four ministries.

2. What percentage of civil servants met their performance targets during the reporting period?

Answer:

The Ministry does not currently have consolidated data for the whole of the Civil Service. However, this can be compiled and provided within the coming weeks.

D. TRAINING, CAPACITY BUILDING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. What investments have been made in training and upskilling civil servants?

Answer:

The Ministry has invested in delivering various training and upskilling programmes including induction training, supervisory and leadership development, policy and report-writing programmes, ethics and code-of-conduct awareness, ICT and digital literacy training, records management, financial management compliance training, and technical programmes delivered through ministries or partner institutions. The Ministry have invested staff time and appropriate funds in workshops, scholarships, attachments, mentoring, and online learning opportunities. Staff are approved to go on study leave without paying on overseas scholarships and their positions temporarily filled until they return. The Ministry supports and approves overseas training opportunities for staff to strengthen capability and professional development.

Training Calendar: The Ministry successfully conducted 90 Guideline Training sessions across the Central, Northern, and Western Divisions, reaching 1,855 civil servants. Notably, female participation was high, accounting for approximately 59% of attendees.

Partnerships: To address specialised "Core Skills Priority Needs," the Ministry coordinated 19 sessions with partner agencies (such as FICAC and the Ministry of Employment). This targeted approach ensured technical competency in critical areas like Anti-Corruption, Procurement, Employment Relations and Records Management.

International Technical Partnership: Through collaboration with Australia Awards, 13 specialised courses were delivered to 271 participants, focusing on high-level competencies including Strategic Management, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E), and Inclusive Leadership.

Leadership Courses: The Ministry prioritised executive growth through the Leadership Development Programme (LDP) and Senior Officers Leadership Forum (SOLF), training to 296 senior officials. Furthermore, upskilling was supported through the processing of 300 overseas short-course applications and the awarding of 31 scholarships.

2. How does the Ministry evaluate the impact of training programmes?

Answer:

For the Ministry of Civil Service, training impact can be seen in improved policy implementation, stronger workforce planning, enhanced service delivery, and better management of industrial relations matters. For example, training in HR policy, performance management, and dispute resolution has enabled officers to provide more accurate advice, manage cases more effectively, and support ministries with greater confidence and consistency. Similarly, ICT and systems training have improved reporting accuracy and reduced manual processing, while leadership and governance training has strengthened accountability, compliance, and team performance. These outcomes demonstrate that training contributes not only to individual capability development, but also to improved organisational effectiveness and service delivery.

For example, By partnering with specialised bodies (e.g., FICAC for Anti-Corruption), the Ministry ensures that the training provided meets the technical standards required for modern governance.

Examples of training impact in the Civil Service

Improved policy implementation

Training on HR policies and Guidelines, such as Disciplinary Guideline, GO, Terms & Condition of GWEs enables officers to apply policies more consistently and accurately. The impact is seen in fewer procedural errors, better quality advice to ministries, and improved compliance with civil service rules and regulations.

Stronger workforce planning and HR decision-making

Capacity-building programmes in workforce planning, performance management, and data analysis improve the Ministry's ability to identify staffing needs, analyse trends, and support evidence-based decision-making. This leads to more effective planning and better alignment of human resource strategies with government priorities.

Enhanced service delivery to ministries and stakeholders

Customer service and communication training help officers respond more professionally and efficiently to ministries, departments, and external stakeholders. The impact can be reflected in faster turnaround times, better stakeholder satisfaction, and improved working relationships across government.

Greater leadership and management capability

Leadership development programmes strengthen the ability of supervisors and managers to lead teams, manage performance, resolve workplace issues, and support staff development. This contributes to better team coordination, improved accountability, and stronger workplace culture.

Increased digital capability and efficiency

ICT and systems training enable staff to use digital platforms, HR systems, and reporting tools more effectively. This improves data accuracy, reduces manual processing, enhances reporting, and increases operational efficiency.

E. PUBLIC SERVICE ETHICS, DISCIPLINE AND GOVERNANCE

1. What mechanisms are in place to uphold integrity, discipline, and ethical conduct in the civil service?

Answer:

Typical mechanisms include public service values and code of conduct, Disciplinary Guideline, grievance processes, internal controls, delegated authority, audit oversight, leadership supervision, conflict-of-interest requirements, and awareness on ethics and professional behaviour. These are supported by administrative investigations, performance management, and where necessary, formal disciplinary action in line with Discipline Guideline, regulations, and General Orders.

The guidelines have been recently reviewed to accommodate changes in disciplinary dynamics and has since been submitted to the Solicitor-General's Office for legal vetting.

2. How many disciplinary cases were recorded, and what were the outcomes?

Answer:

We do not currently have consolidated data for the whole of the Civil Service. However, this can be compiled and provided within the coming weeks.

F. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION

1. What progress has been made in digitising public service systems and processes?

Answer:

From 2022–2023, the Ministry of Civil Service Annual Report outlined a steady shift toward the digitalization of core human resource and administrative functions, including:

- Continuous rollout of the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) throughout the Fiji Civil Service (95%) Establishment Module, creation of additional module.
- Rollout of the Civil Service Recruitment Portal (CSR Portal): Fully operational across ministries by early 2024, enabling online applications, aligning RD, and merit-based recruitment.
- Digitization of HR and Payroll Systems: Integration of employee data, leave, and performance management.
- Civil Service Customer Management System (CMS): A digital platform to capture concerns and queries raised by government Ministries the public to improve performance and service delivery quality civil service wide.

2. How has digital transformation improved efficiency and service delivery?

Answer:

Digital transformation typically improved efficiency by reducing paperwork, shortening processing time, strengthening record accuracy, improving access to information, enabling remote coordination, and supporting faster management reporting. These gains help ministries respond more quickly, improve consistency in decision-making, and reduce administrative bottlenecks.

The digital shift allowed 24/7 portal services via online and mobile platforms, reducing reliance on in-person visits and manual applications, particularly impactful for civil servants and citizens in rural and remote islands when using the Recruitment and Employee Portals.

The digital shift has also promoted policy harmonization and consistency, as recruitment data-sharing between ministries became more seamless with the reintroduction of Merit List/Pool sharing.

3. How is data being used to inform decision-making and policy?

Answer:

Data is increasingly used to inform workforce planning, monitor vacancies, track training participation, review performance trends, identify compliance risks, support budget planning, and target reform priorities. The use of administrative data is effective not only for reporting but also to guide policy review, resource allocation, and early intervention where performance or capacity gaps are emerging.

G. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND RESOURCE UTILISATION

1. How effectively has the Ministry utilised its allocated budget during the reporting period?

Answer:

The Ministry utilised its allocated budget in a prudent and responsible manner, consistent with the approved appropriation. Expenditure was focused on key areas including staff costs, operational requirements, reform initiatives, and capacity-building priorities. During the reporting period, the Ministry was allocated \$2.47 million, of which \$1.97 million or 79% was utilised.

Budget effectiveness is best demonstrated through a high implementation rate, adherence to financial controls, and evidence that expenditure supported planned outputs and service improvements.

2. What are the key drivers of any underspending or overspending?

Answer:

Total utilisation rate for the ministry for the financial year was 79%.

Seg 1 – Mainly due to the filling of vacant position which resulted in some allocated funds not being fully expended during the reporting period. Moreover, budget for overtime remained unutilised due to proper work management.

Seg 4 – Savings was due to the reduction of customer care call centre agent from five to three.

Savings in water & sewage rates allocation were mainly due to the road closure (Nasese) which led to reduce in training schedules at CTD.

Seg 5 – Savings were due to the delay in implementing planned activities for rolling out the customer service guidelines across the civil service.

H. EMPLOYEE WELLBEING AND WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

1. What initiatives are in place to support employee wellbeing and morale?

Answer:

The Ministry has put in place several initiatives to support employee wellbeing and morale. These include leave management practices, staff welfare support, occupational health and safety measures, employee engagement activities, performance recognition, and access to counselling or referral services where available. Employee morale is further strengthened through fair treatment, effective communication, supportive leadership, and opportunities for training and career development.

The Ministry also promotes staff well-being through organised wellness programmes. As part of this effort, ministries allow staff every Wednesday from 3.30 p.m. to participate in sporting and wellness activities. This initiative supports physical health, stress management, teamwork, and employee engagement, thereby contributing to a healthier and more motivated workforce.

The Ministry will also introduce a Flexible Work Policy across the whole of the Civil Service in April 2026, aimed at strengthening work-life balance, and improving overall workforce productivity.

2. How does the Ministry address issues such as workplace stress, burnout, or job satisfaction?

Answer:

These issues are usually addressed through supervisory support, workload management, staff engagement, timely filling of vacancies, wellness awareness, grievance and counselling pathways, and efforts to improve communication and the work environment. A stronger approach is to regularly assess staff wellbeing through surveys, monitor high-pressure areas, and act early where risks of burnout or dissatisfaction are evident. The Ministry also undertakes wellness activities, staff gatherings, and team-building initiatives to strengthen team work, employee engagement, and workplace morale.

I. SERVICE DELIVERY AND PUBLIC IMPACT

1. How has the Ministry contributed to improving public service delivery outcomes?

Answer:

The Ministry has contributed to improving public service delivery outcomes by building a stronger and more capable Civil Service. This has been achieved through better human resource policy support to ministries, strengthened recruitment processes, coordinated training and development, improved performance oversight, and continued organisational reform. These initiatives help ensure that ministries are supported by capable staff, effective systems, and clearer accountability arrangements, which collectively contribute to more efficient, responsive, and higher-quality public service delivery. The Ministry had also developed the customer Service Guidelines to help ministries improve customer engagement and interaction.

2. What evidence exists that reforms are benefiting citizens?

Answer:

Evidence that reforms are benefiting citizens exists in the improved systems, workforce capability, and accountability mechanisms across the Civil Service, which support better public service delivery outcomes. Revision of Recruitment Guideline, training and introduction of Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service (FLIPS), Review of Performance Management Framework, and Review of HR policy such introduction of Flexible Working Hours contributed to a more capable, professional, and responsive public service.

These improvements are reflected in better administrative efficiency, stronger compliance with procedures, enhanced staff performance, and improved support provided by ministries and departments to the public. Although the Ministry's contribution is largely indirect, the practical benefit to citizens is realised through a stronger Civil Service that is better equipped to deliver timely, effective, and reliable government services.

The above stated improvements is reflected in the steady decline of complaints on Government services received at the Customer Service Call center from 21% of total calls in the 2022/2023 Financial Year to 16% in the 2023/24 Financial year.

J. RISKS, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PRIORITIES

1. What are the key risks facing the civil service (e.g., capacity, funding, governance)?

Answer:

The key risks facing the Civil Service include workforce capacity limitations, recruitment and retention pressures, funding constraints, and governance challenges. Capacity risks arise from shortages in specialist skills, uneven capability across ministries, ageing workforce segments, and weak succession planning in some areas.

Recruitment and retention pressures remain significant, particularly in relation to attracting and retaining qualified and experienced personnel. These challenges can contribute to vacancies in critical positions and place strain on existing workforce capacity.

Funding constraints may also limit the ability of ministries to recruit staff, invest in training and development, implement reforms, and strengthen systems and processes. At the same time, governance risks may arise where there is inconsistent compliance, weak accountability, uneven supervisory capability, or delays in implementing reforms and performance measures.

Together, these risks can affect the pace and quality of public sector reform and may reduce the Civil Service's ability to deliver services efficiently and effectively.

2. What are the Ministry's top priorities for the next reporting period?

Answer:

Typical priorities would include strengthening workforce planning, filling critical vacancies, reviewing and modernising HR policies, improving performance management quality, expanding digital HR systems, building leadership and skills capability, and reinforcing ethics, discipline, and accountability. The Ministry may also prioritise evidence-based reform and stronger inter-ministerial coordination.

3. Can the Ministry provide evidence of impact, not just activities, for its key initiatives?

Answer:

Establishment Unit – The Ministry has established this Unit to identify critical vacancies in finance, HR, ICT, or service delivery units and prioritise these for recruitment. Evidence of impact would be the number of key positions filled, improved continuity of operations, and reduced delays in service delivery.

Review of GO, GWEs Terms & Condition and Guidelines - Implement revised HR guidelines, circulars, or policy advice issued by the central agency. The impact would be seen in more consistent decision-making, better compliance with procedures, and fewer misunderstandings in the application of HR policies.

Training and capability development - Ministry nominated staff for training in leadership, policy analysis, finance, procurement, or customer service. The impact reflected in improved staff competence, better quality of work, stronger compliance, and greater confidence in carrying out responsibilities.

Digital HRMIS System - improve the use of HR systems for leave, establishment, payroll, or staff records. Evidence of impact would include improved data accuracy, faster processing times, easier access to workforce information, and better reporting for management decision-making.

Recruitment Portal – The Ministry has rolled out a centralized recruitment portal for job vacancies in the Civil Service to streamline recruitment processes, improve transparency, and widen access to employment opportunities. The portal allows applicants to apply online and supports Ministries in managing recruitment in a more efficient, timely, and standardised manner.

4. Which programmes or reforms have not achieved expected results, and why?

Answer:

Centralized Civil Service Recruitment Portal - A reasonable conclusion is that the reform had not yet achieved its full intended result by 2025 because implementation depended on ministry adoption, process alignment, and change management.

Performance Management Framework – The Framework was revised, and step movements were put on hold while performance was measured against the KPIs.

Functional review and public service restructuring agenda. Functional review has long been used in Fiji as a reform tool, but whole-of-government review is complex and typically phased.

5. What structural reforms are required to modernise the civil service?

Answer:

The Functional Review is being carried out to support the modernisation of the public service and to ensure that ministries and departments are appropriately structured, resourced, and aligned to deliver on government priorities. The review examines existing functions, roles, and organisational arrangements to identify opportunities for improvement in efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability.

Structural reforms under this modernisation agenda include improved workforce planning, updated job design and classification systems, stronger merit-based recruitment, streamlined HR delegations, strengthened performance and consequence management, integrated digital systems, leadership development, and clearer accountability for results across ministries. Modernisation also requires stronger use of data for decision-making and a renewed culture of service, ethics, professionalism, and continuous improvement throughout the Civil Service.

6. How does the Ministry ensure accountability across all government ministries?

Answer:

Accountability is generally promoted through policy frameworks, reporting requirements, performance management, audit and compliance mechanisms, guidance from central agencies, and monitoring of implementation by line ministries. To be effective, these arrangements require clear responsibilities, reliable data, regular oversight, and follow-up action where performance or compliance issues are identified. To ensure accountability, we work with the Public Service Commission in issuing revised guidelines, policy advice, memoranda, and circulars to support communication and the free flow of information in relation to policy interpretation.



MINISTRY OF CIVIL SERVICE

REQUEST FOR SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE MINISTRY

OF crv1L SERVICE 2022 - 2023 ANNUAL

REPORT

Questions:

1. Can the Ministry of Civil Service clarify its role in the allocation of pay and allowances, including how pay allocations are determined, approved, and guided across sector Ministries?

Ans: The Ministry of Civil Service plays a central oversight and advisory role in the administration of pay and allowances across the civil service. Our role is guided by the relevant provisions of the Constitution (123 and 126), the Civil Service Act 1999 (S8,11, and 15), and the Job Evaluation Civil Service Remuneration Guideline.

Remuneration of positions is determined through Job Evaluation. The job evaluation methodology license was purchased by Government in 2017 from Strategic Pay Limited, New Zealand, a recognized remuneration and evaluation specialist.

In 2017, a comprehensive service wide job evaluation exercise was undertaken covering all established positions across the Civil Service. All positions across the service were evaluated, ensuring that every role was assessed using one consistent methodology and the remuneration level of the position was based on the value of the position rather than the individual occupying the role.

The strategic pay methodology uses a structured ten (10) point factor evaluation to determine the relative value of positions that includes the education level required in the role, experience in number of years to be competent in the role, complexity, scope, problem solving, freedom to act,

Impact / results of decisions, interpersonal skills, authorities and people management.

Each factor is scored based on evidence contained within the position description and validated through assessment. The total score determines the relative weight of the position, which then maps to the approved salary band (A to O)

The 2017 job evaluation exercise incorporated all allowances with the following exceptions: location / remote / rural / maritime allowance, transfer allowance, housing allowance, travelling expenses, acting allowance, on call allowance, meal allowance, per diem allowance, sea going allowance overtime allowance, subsistence allowance, shift allowance, boarding allowance. All allowances that continued are to be paid in accordance with General Orders or the GWE Terms and Conditions as applicable.

The Ministry of Civil continues to provide technical support, policy advice and guidance to Ministries on position classification, job evaluation of newly created and re-evaluation of existing positions, and applicable approved allowances.

2. Which Ministry or authority is currently responsible for handling government rental properties and tenancy agreements?

Ans: Ministry of Civil Service in conjunction with Ministry of Public Works Department after the announcement by the Honorable Prime Minister.

3. What measures are being taken to ensure that rented government offices and Ministry buildings meet proper safety and workplace standards?

Ans: Ministry has commenced with auditing of office space and conducting regular inspections in respective divisions on administration and technical aspects to ensure that the premises are compliant for occupancy and operations/services are not disrupted.

Regular consultation with agencies and landlords for any office accommodation matters to be dealt on a timely manner in consideration of the letting agreement executed by both parties.

With the rental review and renewal of letting agreements being commenced on a holistic approach across the board for all compliant premises major undertaking has been requested from the landlords on major capital developments which was initially not part of the rented premises and these include; backup generator set, water tanks and upgrade of the premises to a state compliant to meet the regulatory authority requirements (Occupational Health and Safety Standards and National Fire Authority Standards) and upgraded certification from the engineers given the old rate was not sufficient to cater for the operational cost and

capital developments. This is being closely monitored by the Ministry of Civil Service and Public Works department.

Urgent complaints received on regular basis are dealt on case by case with respective landlords and Office Accommodation Unit takes the lead role to monitor and ensure that these are addressed within an appropriate timeframe.

Ministries and departments are encouraged to take proper care of the facilities and honor the tenants side responsibilities that are stipulated in the letting agreements whilst the landlords take care of their responsibilities.

3

With the review of current office accommodation policy and more emphasis will be focused on the landlord responsibilities, this will assist towards effective management and control of government rented premises.

On a separate note, the government is intending to centralize and decentralize agencies under Private Public Partnership (PPP) approach for conducive and modern premises. This will give the government more bargaining power in finding suitable office and compliant office space in respective divisions and negotiating on market rental rates on a turnkey solution which will boost the overall operations/services of the ministries and departments. The PPP approach will solve the problem of shortage of office space and notices will be given to landlords who do not meet the obligations as per the current Tenancy Agreement in place. Currently finding suitable office space is a biggest challenge given the shortage of compliant private leased office space.

4. Can the Ministry provide an updated data on how much has been spent on the renovation and maintenance of rented Ministry and Government buildings?

Ans: Government Quarters Renovation 2022/2023

The Government Quarters require renovation works due to their dilapidated condition, which is affecting the wellbeing of the occupants. The Office Accommodation and Government Housing Unit (OAGH) has carried out the necessary inspections and prepared the relevant Scope of Works. The breakdown of the Quarters renovated within the budget allocated for the 2022—2023 financial year is provided below.

Major Renovation	55
Minor Renovation	34
Cluster Renovation Works	2

Office Refurbishment

Office refurbishment and fit-out works for Ministries and Departments are carried out to improve working conditions and ensure offices are suitable for staff use. These works generally include office fit-out and structural improvements to enhance functionality and support efficient service delivery.

The aim is to create a safe, functional, and comfortable working environment that supports the efficient delivery of government services. These works are undertaken based on assessed needs, available budget, and existing office conditions.

Utilization for 2022/2023 FY

	Utilization for 2022/2023 FY
Upgrade and Enhancement - Quarters	\$2,819,579
Upgrade and Enhancement — Office Building	\$444,318

5. Which Ministry or Department is responsible for providing and managing office accommodation for Government Ministries and agencies?

Ans: Under the new mandate Ministry of Civil Service and Ministry of Public Works Department is managing office accommodation in consideration of the due processes and current office accommodation policy on hand.

