

# Work level standards overview

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## Purpose

The NSW Public Service Senior Executive Work Level Standards (WLS) have been developed to assist Departments and agencies in determining the appropriate band for Public Service senior executive roles under the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 (GSE Act). The WLS indicate, in broad terms, the expected work to be performed at each of the senior executive bands across the NSW Public Service, except for the Department Secretaries Band.

## Legal Context and Applicability

Under section 37(1) of the GSE Act, a Public Service senior executive is to be employed in a band that the employer of the executive considers appropriate for the role of the executive. Section 37(2) provides that in determining the number of Public Service senior executives and the appropriate band in which they are employed, the employer is to apply the applicable work level standards and have regard to any guidance provided by the Public Service Commissioner.

The NSW Senior Executive WLS apply to all senior executive roles in the NSW Public Service other than Departmental Secretaries.

## Background

The GSE Act creates a single executive structure across the Public Service, with common employment arrangements, including standard written contracts of employment.

The executive structure is comprised of the following four broad bands:

- Department Secretaries Band – Department Secretaries
- Senior Executive Band 3 – Deputy Secretaries and Agency Heads
- Senior Executive Band 2 – Executive Directors and Agency Heads
- Senior Executive Band 1 – Directors

These role titles are to be used across the sector to improve consistency and create a clearer shared understanding of the nature of roles found in each band. Exceptions might be needed in rare cases, for example if the role is commonly referred to by another title, for example Chief Finance Officer or Chief Information Officer.

The Statutory and Other Offices Remuneration Tribunal (SOORT) determines the remuneration ranges for each Senior Executive band.

Department Secretaries determine their cluster's executive establishment. The WLS are the main classifying tool for determining the band for Senior Executive roles.

Role evaluation is then used to place the role within the band in terms of work value and, on that basis, set its remuneration range.

Senior executives are employed in the relevant band and then assigned to a role that falls within that band.

GSE Act senior executive arrangements operate as a devolved model in which Secretaries/separate agency heads# determine their executive establishment without reference to centrally set executive notional limits. However, reporting on executive and non-executive numbers is required along with other Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

## Who is this for?

The intended audience for the work level standards are the HR specialists within Departments/agencies who are responsible for classifying and evaluating senior executive roles. The WLS are also a useful resource for non-HR staff as they indicate the Government's expectations of the type of work to be performed by senior executives in each band level.

A summary of the WLS will separately be developed by the PSC for non-HR staff, including senior executives and line managers.

## Overview of the Work Level Standards

The WLS represent a hierarchy of descriptive standards which define the type of work that would be expected at each of the three bands across the Public Service. The WLS are meant to be the primary tool for classifying a new senior executive role and determining its appropriate band in the NSW Public Service.

As indicated above, senior executives are employed at the relevant band and then assigned to the role. Over time, senior executives can be assigned to other roles within the band, both within their cluster and across clusters (subject to consultation with the senior executive and head of the other agency). This mobility promotes breadth of experience, which will increase and broaden individual capability.

The WLS facilitate intra and cross cluster mobility by ensuring that there is consistent classification of senior executive roles across the NSW Public Service. Sector wide use of the new NSW Public Sector Capability Framework for defining both the senior executive role and senior executive officer capabilities will also facilitate this senior executive mobility.

These WLS are structured to provide differentiation between the three bands below the Department Secretaries, with the WLS for each band described under the following six factors: Expertise, Accountability, Dimensions, Key Relationships, Role Context and Environment, Judgement and Independence.

The WLS are intended to be viewed in their entirety when considering where a role should be appropriately located. To assist this process, Distinguishing Characteristics have been identified for each senior executive band, which seek to capture the fundamental characteristics of each band.

### WLS and the five work contribution streams

The diversity of roles that comprise the NSW Public Service is significant. Senior executive roles may include the direction of program or project based service delivery functions, development or implementation of public policy, contract management, development and implementation of compliance and enforcement programs, or the provision of expert advice which ensures the integrity of decision making and planning processes of government.

At the band 2 and 3 levels, senior executives may also head an executive agency related to a Department. Although any single senior executive role may incorporate several of these functions, roles are typically established on the basis of a more significant contribution in one of these areas.

In line with this, the WLS are considered in the context of the following five work contribution streams: Service/Operational Delivery, Professional/Specialist, Policy, Regulatory/ Compliance and Agency Head.

When considering a specific senior executive role, it is useful to identify its natural alignment to a particular work contribution stream in order to ensure that the most value can be gained from the content of the WLS and interpretation of descriptors.

To assist with this process, each of the work contribution streams are then considered in the context of the three bands, with the distinguishing characteristics for each band identified in the terms of Context, Scope and Impact. Also provided are indicative roles for each work contribution streams, at the particular band level.

The broad banded structure is intended to facilitate not only mobility within and across cluster but also across work streams. Although the WLS are structured by work contribution stream and band level, this is not meant to indicate that a senior executive's career progression will be within a particular work contribution stream.

## Standards, role evaluation and capability

As indicated above, the WLS are used to determine the appropriate band for a senior executive role.

There are no 'sub-bands' within the bands. Role evaluation is used to determine the work value of the role using an accredited job evaluation methodology which will take into account relative complexity, sensitivity and, size of each role's responsibilities.

The work value determines the role's placement and sets its remuneration range within the relevant band.

Upon initial employment, the remuneration point within the role's range is determined by merit factors related to the individual senior executive, including demonstrated experience and assessed level of capabilities. Labour market competitiveness can also be taken into account but only if based on verifiable evidence.

Once employed, the senior executive may progress within the role's remuneration range over time, based upon performance, assessed under the agency's formal Performance Development system.

The WLS have been designed to work in conjunction with the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework. The design of the Capability Framework is not intended to align capabilities to classifications or executive levels. The capabilities for a role should be based on the context of the role, key accountabilities, the job environment and organisational requirements and the level required for each capability and will vary according to these factors.

## How to use the standards

At the start of the role analysis process, agencies should form a high level view of the role's intended responsibilities and scope. They should then proceed to determine the band in which the role is to be located, firstly by reviewing the Distinguishing Characteristics, which summarise the main features for each band, then reviewing the six factors for each of the three bands – Expertise; Accountability; Dimensions; Key Relationships; Role Context and Environment; and Judgement and Independence.

As the WLS have been developed to apply to a range of roles within bands, it is possible that specific roles may have some characteristics of roles in a higher or lower band. The role will therefore need to be considered in its entirety (all six factors) when making a band determination.

Reference should also be made to the predominant work contribution stream to confirm the appropriate band for the role.

Department/agencies should look at equivalent or similar roles within their cluster and across the Public Service to ensure organisational consistency and guide the final determination as to the appropriate band. Advice may also be sought from the PSC. A band determination should then be made.

Once the band has been determined, a role description is developed. All senior executive role descriptions are to include the full list of capabilities and the level required for each in the role. All 16 core capabilities in the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework in the Personal Attributes, Relationships, Results and Business

Enablers groups apply to all public sector roles, including senior executive roles. In addition, four People Management capabilities apply to all roles responsible for managing others.

Where occupation specific capabilities are identified for specific senior executive roles, these are to be included in addition to the capabilities from the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework. The capabilities, together with other standard aspects such as the purpose of the role, key accountabilities, key challenges and role dimensions, will define each role or role type and provide a full description of the role as required for role evaluation within the band. The PSC has provided a template for agencies to use in developing role descriptions and will also develop generic role descriptions for common executive role types.

The next step is to undertake a role evaluation using an accredited role evaluation methodology to determine the placement within the band and its remuneration range.

Again, Departments/agencies should ensure consistency of role evaluation within the cluster and across the Public Service. The standard titles listed in 'Background' are to be adopted once the band determination and role evaluation process has been completed, not the other way round. The title of the role does not determine the band rather it is the WLS classification process which should determine this.

## Work level standards business process

### Step 1: Refer to Distinguishing Characteristics of the Role

- Refer to the Distinguishing Characteristics which capture the fundamental characteristics of each band to get an high level overview of the three bands

### Step 2: Refer to the 6 factors for the Band

- Refer then to the 6 factors for the band: Expertise, Accountability, Dimensions, Key Relationships, Role Context and Environment, and Judgement and Independence to guide the band determination

(p11)

### **Step 3: Refer to the 5 Work Contribution Streams**

- Refer finally to relevant Work Contribution Streams: Service/Operational Delivery, Professional/Specialist, Policy, Regulatory/Compliance and Agency Head to confirm the band (p19)

### **Step 4: Make Band Determination**

- After referring to the Distinguishing Characteristics for each band, the 6 factors for each band and the relevant Work Contribution Stream make the band determination

### **Step 5: Prepare Role Description**

- Include capabilities from the NSW Capability Framework & any occupation specific capabilities

### **Step 6: Undertake Role Evaluation to determine Remuneration**

- Use an accredited role evaluation methodology to determine the role's work value and placement within the band and its remuneration range
- The remuneration within the role's range is determined by merit factors related to the individual senior executive (and market considerations, if relevant)