

The NSW Government Regionalisation Strategy

Context setting and planning for success

The NSW Government has launched a principles-based regionalisation policy to increase the number of public sector roles outside metropolitan areas. The NSW Government Regionalisation Strategy was developed following growing evidence in support of locating government services in regional areas to coincide with strong population growth over the next 20 years.

Throughout 2020, a small team from Regional NSW led the strategy development, which was announced in February 2021. The team was embedded in the NSW Public Service Commission, working with staff to leverage the Commission's data and workforce planning expertise. NSW Treasury experts helped refine the key aspects of the strategy, particularly the development of a regional hub approach.

A key element of the strategy is identifying opportunities for workforce distribution in regional areas over time. This has involved determining the locations with existing and diverse public service workforces, and labour markets with potential to grow to meet future requirements.

Regional leadership is an important enabler of long-term success for the strategy. So, another key focus is increasing the presence of leaders in regional NSW, which currently has a disproportionate number of employees compared to leaders. This will help promote regional decision making and policy making, and create career pathways for regional employees.

The strategy has four measurable outcomes:

- maintain or grow the size of the public service workforce in regional NSW (excluding Greater Sydney Metropolitan Area, and the Newcastle and Wollongong local government areas)
- where roles are identified as location agnostic, they are advertised as 'regional location encouraged'
- commit to a proportional increase in each cluster's public sector roles at Clerk Grade 11/12 (or equivalent) and higher in regional NSW by 2023
- protect the number of jobs in vulnerable regional economies (localities with fewer than 5,000 residents, as defined in section 218CA of the Local Government Act 1993).

Since the policy was released, all NSW public sector departments have set regionalisation targets for leaders. This will improve the balance between leaders and employees in the regions. To help achieve the targets, departments will proactively transfer leadership positions to regional locations when opportunities

arise. This could occur as metropolitan-based leaders vacate their role, or when new roles are created through structural change.

The enablers of flexible working, reliable technology and office hubs will contribute to the policy's success. To meet their targets, departments will need to draw up plans to regionalise leadership roles between now and 2023.

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