



Queensland's Public Sector

Queensland's public sector is comprised of ministerial departments, statutory agencies and various government owned enterprises. Within this sector, the term "public service" refers to those employees who are covered by the *Public Service Act 1996*. However, the term "crown employee" is also used as a wider definition for all employees within the public sector including public servants.

Originally after Queensland's separation in 1859, a Civil Service was established by Executive Council minute. Legislative recognition occurred in 1863 with passage of the Civil Service Act which provided for classified personnel and an appeal system. In 1863, the British title "Civil Service" was changed to "Public Service". After an extensive review by J D Story, a unified public service was created by the *Public Service Act 1922*. However, certain categories were still excluded such as railway workers, police, judges, industrial commissioners, parliamentary officers and staff.

No other extensive review was conducted into the Queensland public service until the Savage Committee Report in 1987, which produced 90 reform recommendations including the devolution of departmental responsibility away from central control. More dramatic reforms of the public sector occurred with the election of the Goss Labor Government in 1989. Initially, the original 27 departments were reduced to an amalgamation of 18. A Public Sector Management Commission (PSMC) was established in 1990 as a reforming agency which conducted wide-ranging departmental reviews, established a Senior Executive Service, created a number of public sector standards,

introduced equal employment opportunity policies and placed a greater emphasis on training within the public sector. As well, an Office of Cabinet, was created, as part of the Premier's Department, to assist in the coordination of policies and programs emanating from all government departments and agencies.

In 1996, the Borbidge/Sheldon National/Liberal Government passed the Public Service Act which abolished the PSMC and replaced it with an Office of the Public Service. This Office had responsibility for employment, training, the Senior Executive Service and policy advice on matters pertinent to the Queensland public service. Subsequent governments retain a similar format.

Ultimate responsibility for the public sector lies with the Ministers heading the departments, who are themselves responsible to the Parliament. The



Public servants undertaking training.



Chief Executive Officers are responsible to the Minister for the overall administration of their departments, which provide a diverse range of government services to Queensland's citizens. As well, crown employees have a responsibility to discharge the policies of the government in a professional and impartial manner in line with the Westminster requirements for neutrality.

Ministers' offices are staffed separately by personnel who provide political advice regarding government policies, whereas

public servants, in theory, should provide the Minister with nonpartisan advice reflecting honest assessments. Because of the complexities of modern governments, public servants have become increasingly involved with parliamentary processes, via the preparation of briefs on policy matters for Ministerial Statements, Question Time and other scrutinising procedures. Similarly, departmental officers are involved with the preparation of and advice on legislation as well as the departmental estimates.