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Coalition Outlines Public Service Priorities

July 29, 2025

– Categories: Finance



At the Australian Financial Review Government Services Summit on 29 July, the Shadow Minister for Government Services delivered a clear message about the Coalition's renewed stance on the Australian Public Service (APS). In his first formal address since assuming the portfolio, the Shadow Minister used the opportunity to reflect on the Coalition's previous missteps while signalling a more balanced and consultative approach to public sector policy moving forward.

The speech acknowledged the shortcomings of the Coalition's messaging at the last federal election, particularly regarding proposed reductions to APS staffing and remote work policies. These positions were not well received, particularly in Canberra, and have prompted a reassessment of the Coalition's direction. The Shadow Minister affirmed that every policy is now under review, echoing Opposition Leader Sussan Ley's commitment to reevaluating the party's stance. He also stressed the need for balance, consultation and a recognition of the important role public servants play in delivering national outcomes.



Drawing on his experience as Deputy Chair of the Senate Select Committee on COVID-19, the Shadow Minister praised the dedication and professionalism of Australia's public servants during the pandemic. He described their contribution during the national crisis as "exceptional work in extraordinary circumstances," highlighting how government decisions directly impacted the lives of Australians. This perspective appears to be shaping the Coalition's evolving approach, which now places greater emphasis on respecting the efforts and value of the APS rather than merely treating it as a cost to be trimmed.

Looking ahead, the Coalition appears to be preparing for the next election with a more measured public service platform, aiming to strike the right tone and ensure policies align with both economic priorities and public expectations. The Shadow Minister's remarks at the summit reflected a recognition of past errors, a commitment to improvement, and a broader awareness of the public's response to government service reforms. As policy reviews continue, the Coalition's ability to rebuild trust with the public service may be key to shaping a credible and responsible alternative to the current government's record. The speech marked a

strategic reset, one rooted in realism, reflection and a firm understanding of the importance of public institutions.

