

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN STATE BUDGET IMPACT SURVEY

Report 1: Impact on delivery of Government services

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April 2011

*Report prepared for:
Public Service Association of South Australia*



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Informing Decisions

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KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

- 3,380 members of the PSA of South Australia took part in the survey.
 - Respondents were a representative cross-section of PSA members.
 - They were currently working an average of 2.7 hours overtime per week, with 85% of all overtime being unpaid.
- More than half the respondents reported that their work unit and/or their agency were inadequately staffed prior to the announcements in the 2010-11 State Budget.
- In more than 80% of cases duties were reallocated amongst existing staff, after staff cutbacks from work units.
- PSA members believe that the negative impact of staff cuts after the 2009-10 State Budget on Government delivery of community services will be amplified as a result of the 2010-11 Budget.
 - This finding is consistent across all Portfolio areas.
- As a result of the 2009-10 State Budget:
 - 66.0% reported negative impacts on their ability to meet client or community needs
 - 64.9% reported negative impacts on the level of service delivery to the community
 - 54.4% reported negative impacts on their ability to meet SA Strategic Plan targets
 - 54.1% reported negative impacts on the quality of service delivery from their work unit
 - 51.1% reported negative impacts on the maintenance of publicly funded infrastructure
- After the 2010-11 State Budget:
 - 79.0% expected negative impacts on their ability to meet client or community needs
 - 78.2% expected negative impacts on the level of service delivery to the community
 - 70.8% expected negative impacts on their ability to meet SA Strategic Plan targets
 - 69.1% expected negative impacts on the quality of service delivery from their work unit
 - 68.6% expected negative impacts on the maintenance of publicly funded infrastructure

1 INTRODUCTION

The *South Australian Budget Impact Survey* was developed collaboratively with the Public Service Association (PSA) of South Australia. It consisted of a number of multiple and free response questions exploring the perceived impact of the South Australian Budget for 2010-11 on the delivery of State Government services to the community, and the impact on the work quality, workload and work satisfaction of employees.

This report focuses on the perspectives of PSA members on the impact of the State Budget on the delivery of Government Services. A companion report considers the effects of the State Budget on staff.

2 METHODOLOGY

The survey was tested with a working group of PSA members to ensure questions and response options were appropriate, and the online survey was free of technical problems. Minor revisions were made to the survey as a result of feedback from this process. On 1 December 2010, approximately 13,000 PSA members from South Australian Government funded agencies received an invitation to participate in the survey, with a web-link to the *Survey Monkey* site. Two emails were subsequently sent, thanking those who had already participated and reminding those yet to complete the survey. The survey closed on 22 December 2010.

3 SURVEY FINDINGS

3.1 RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

In total, 3,380 members of the PSA of South Australia¹ took part in the survey, representing approximately 26% of those invited. The gender distribution of survey respondents, eligible PSA members and the entire public sector is similar, with approximately one-third males and two-thirds females (see Appendix A).

The average age for survey respondents was 48.1 years, very similar to the average age of eligible PSA members (47.8 years). The negative skew of respondents by age group is consistent with the age profile of eligible PSA members (see Appendix A). However, the total South Australian Public Sector shows a younger (and flatter) profile. Only 20.3% of survey respondents (and 22.3% of eligible PSA members) were less than 40 years old, compared to 35.8% of the Public Sector as a whole (noting the Public Sector includes a high number of teachers, nurses and police who are likely to be members of other unions).

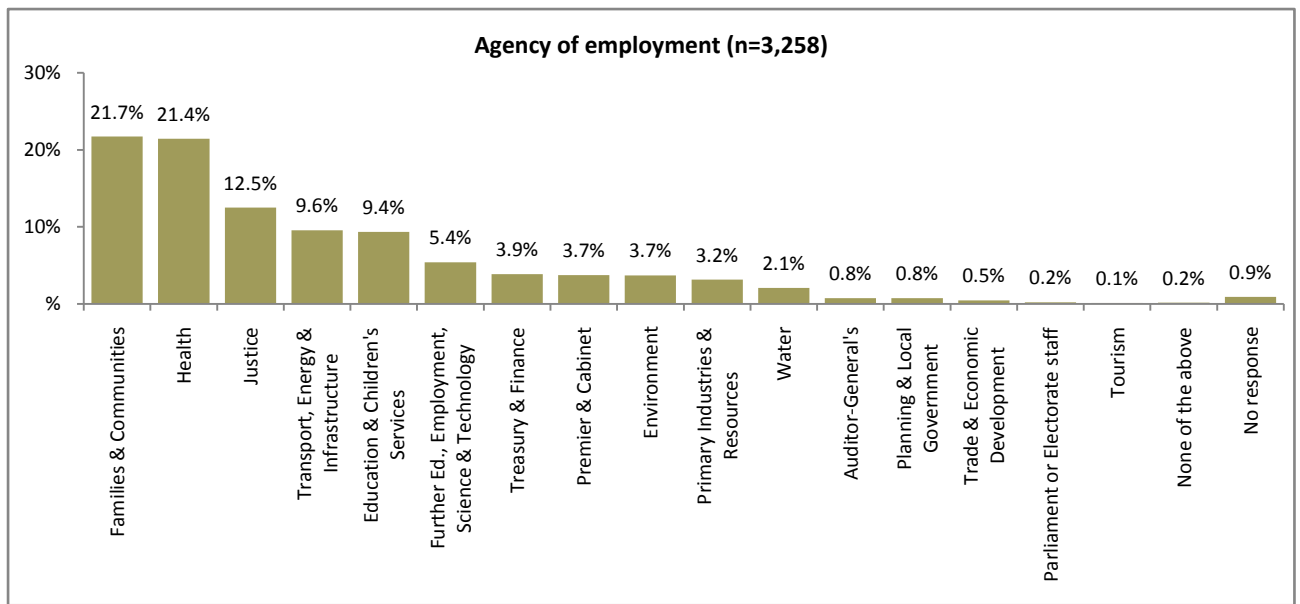
Most respondents (80.9%) reported working primarily in Metropolitan Adelaide, with 16.5% reporting working mainly in regional areas. Only 0.4% were unable to specify one main location and reported working across both regional and metropolitan areas. The remaining 2.1% failed to provide a response.

3.2 WORKPLACE

Almost all survey respondents worked in a Government agency, department or health service. The proportion of respondents usually working in each Government Agency (or Department) is shown in Figure 1. The highest proportion of respondents came from the Departments of Families and Communities and Health, with 21.7% and 21.4%, respectively.

¹ Tables and figures include all respondents, except where otherwise indicated in a table note.

Figure 1: Government Agency of usual work

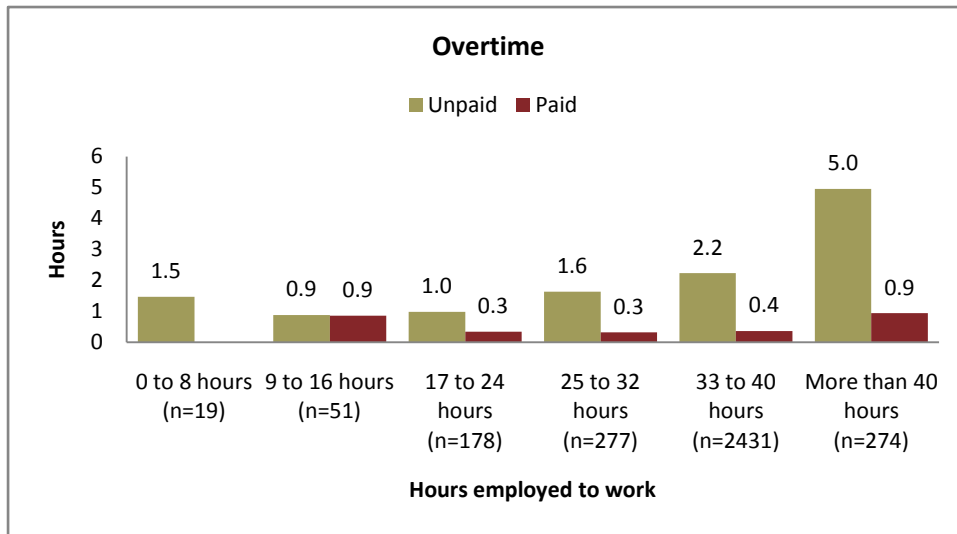


Of the 120 respondents who indicated they worked in a Government Business Enterprise or a Statutory Authority, most common responses were for the Legal Services Commission and WorkCover SA. Twenty-two enterprises or statutory authorities were listed in the 38 'other' responses. The distribution of respondents within the different areas of the Justice; Transport, Energy and Infrastructure; Families and Communities; Trade and Economic Development; and Environment portfolios are shown in Appendix B.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (62.3%) were classified as administrative services officers (ASO). Of the remainder, the most common employment classifications were operational services officers (OPS) and allied health professional (AHP) with 12.3% and 8.6% of respondents, respectively, in each classification (see Appendix B). Most respondents (87.2%) reported they had ongoing employment, while 6.7% reported they were on contract.

Respondents reported being employed for an average of 37.1 hours per week, and working an average of 2.7 hours overtime per week. Eighty-five percent of this overtime was unpaid. The distribution of paid and unpaid overtime, by the usual hours the member is employed for reveals that the time spent on paid overtime was relatively consistent for all categories, the amount of unpaid overtime was higher for those working longer hours, overall (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Average hours of paid and unpaid overtime by the average hours respondent is employed to work



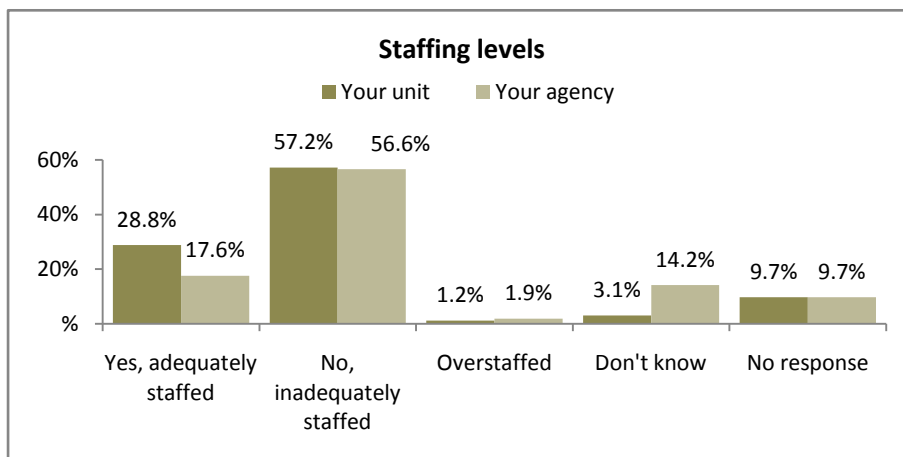
Administrative work was common for respondents, and also the most common area of work for the work areas of respondents. One-third of respondents (33.5%) reported usually being engaged in administrative work, while almost one-quarter worked in units predominantly engaged with administration (see Appendix B).

3.3 BUDGET IMPACT

3.3.1 LEVEL OF STAFF CUTBACKS

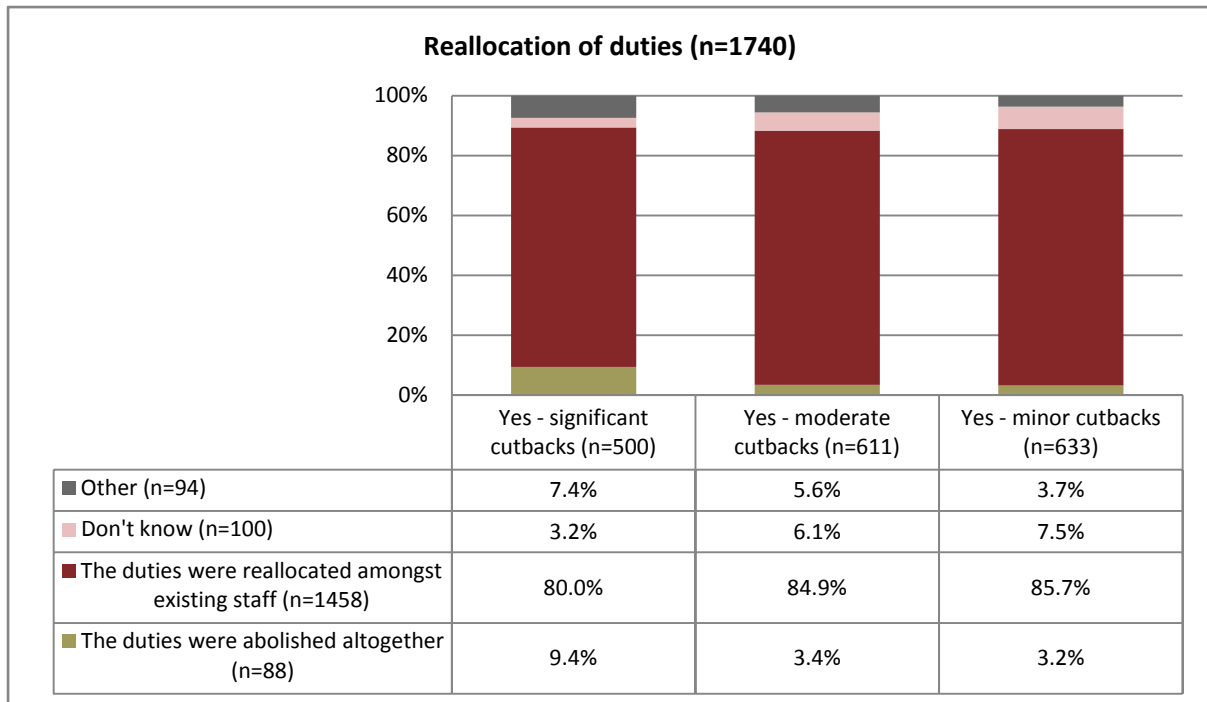
More than half the respondents reported that their work unit (57.2%) and/or their agency (56.6%) were inadequately staffed prior to the announcements in the 2010-11 State Budget (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Staffing levels for respondent's unit and agency prior to 2010-11 State Budget



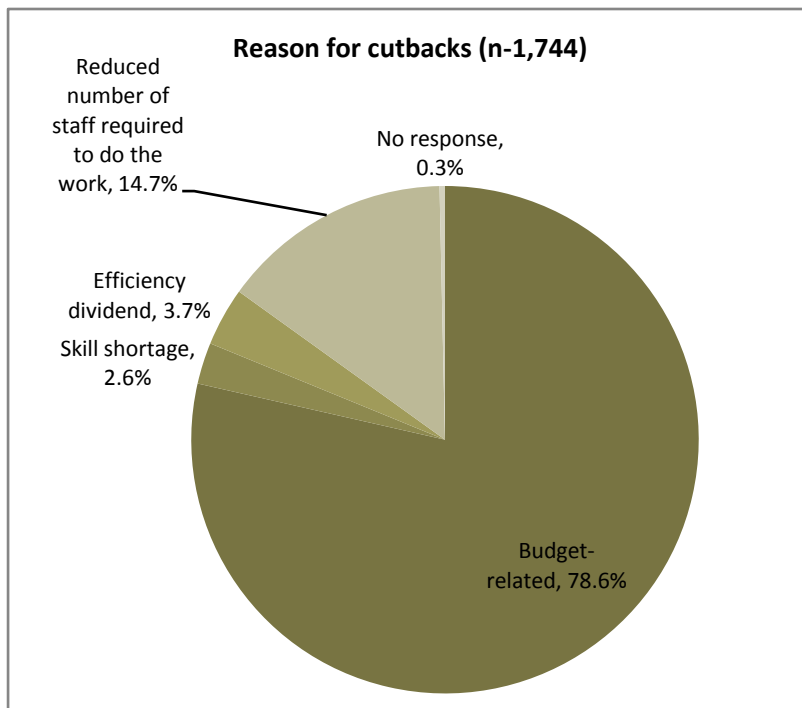
One-half of respondents (51.6%, n= 1744) indicated their work unit had experienced staff cutbacks in the preceding 12 months, with one-third of these being considered 'significant cutbacks'. Figure 4 shows that in more than 80% of cases duties were reallocated amongst existing staff after cutbacks from work units. This was slightly less common when cutbacks were considered 'significant', and if this was the case, duties tended to be abolished all together. Of those who reported cutbacks in the previous 12 months, three-quarters believed that these cutbacks were directly attributable to the Budget (see Figure 5).

Figure 4: Reallocation of duties in work units experiencing cutbacks in previous 12 months



Note, 4 respondents provided no response regarding the allocation of duties, these are not included in the figure.

Figure 5: Main reason for staff cutbacks in the work unit



3.3.2 IMPACT OF STAFF CUTBACKS ON GOVERNMENT SERVICES

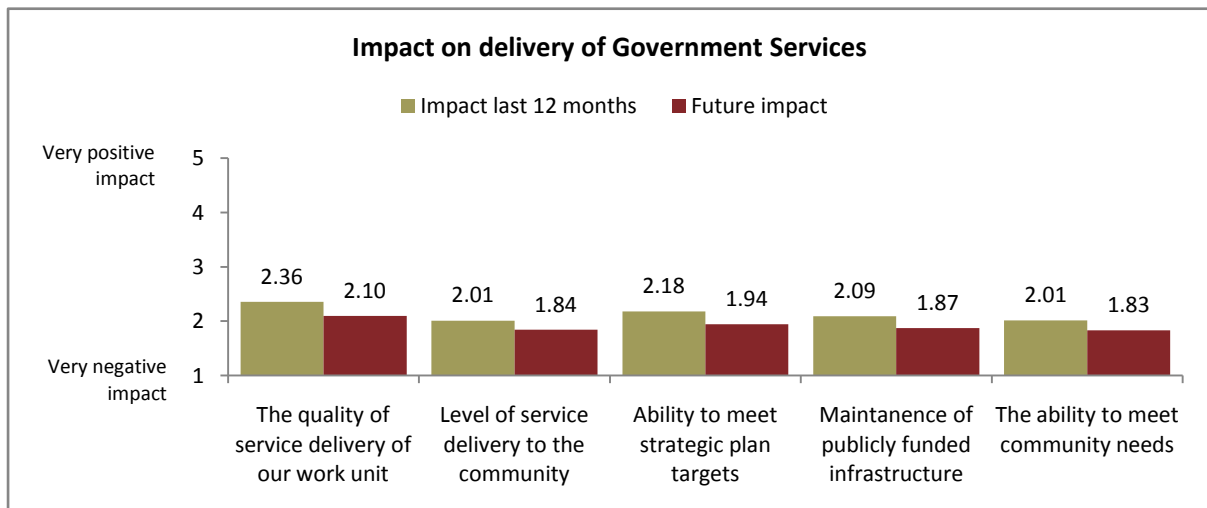
Respondents who indicated their work unit had experienced staff cutbacks as a result of the 2009-10 State Budget described the impact of these cutbacks on Government service delivery in the last 12 months. This is compared with the expected impact of 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks. Responses are rated on a scale of 1 'Very negative impact' through to 5 'Very positive impact'.

It is evident that cutbacks resulting from the 2009-10 State Budget were perceived as having a negative impact on the delivery of Government services across the board (see Figure 6). These cutbacks had particularly negative implications for the *level of service delivery to the community* and the *ability to meet community needs*. The further cutbacks announced in the 2010-11 Budget are expected to produce more extreme negative impacts. There were no significant differences on the delivery of Government services between responses for members who worked in metropolitan and those who worked in regional areas – all were uniformly negative.

It is clear that between 50% to 65% of respondents anticipated the same level of impact (for the listed Government services) as a result of the 2010-11 Budget, as they had experienced in the 12 months since the 2009-10 Budget – but this was not always consistent. For example, 56% of respondents who experienced a 'negative impact' on the *quality of service delivery of the work unit* after the 2009-10 Budget expected the same level of impact in 2010-11. However, 36% believed the 2010-11 cutbacks would be worse (ie have a 'very negative impact'), and 8% expected at least some level of improvement (7% felt the impact would be 'neither positive nor negative', with the remaining 1% expecting positive impacts).

The increase in negative expectations as a result of the 2010-11 Budget is likely to be a consequence of the magnifying effect of repeated cutbacks. This is particularly salient for those who recently experienced negative impacts from the 2009-10 Budget.

Figure 6: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the delivery of Government Services in the last 12 months and in the future



Figures 7 through 11 show comparisons of the impact of recent cutbacks alongside anticipated impacts of the current State Budget. It is noteworthy that whilst perceptions regarding the 'negative' impact remain fairly consistent, there is a marked increase in the proportions rating the impacts as 'very negative'.

Figure 7: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the *quality of service delivery of the work unit* in the last 12 months and in the future

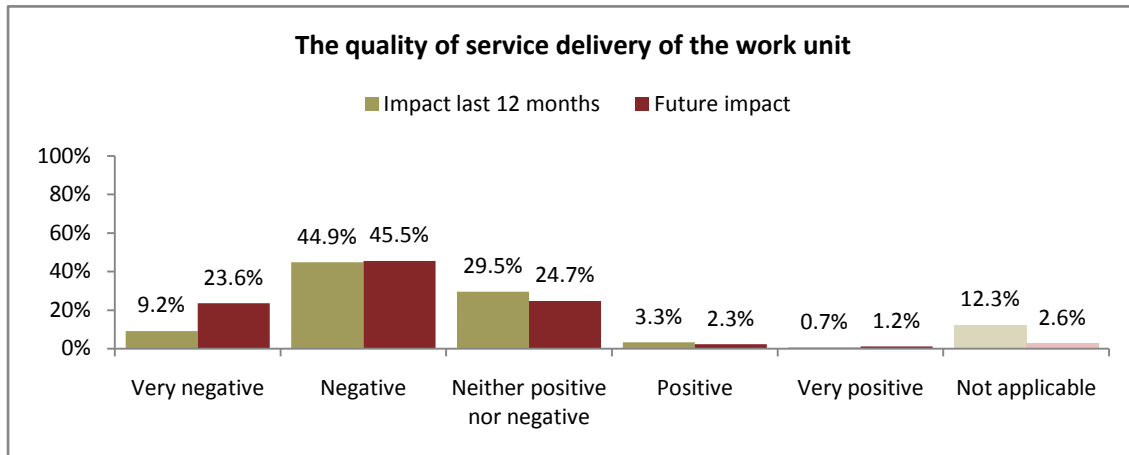


Figure 8: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the *level of service delivery to the community* in the last 12 months and in the future

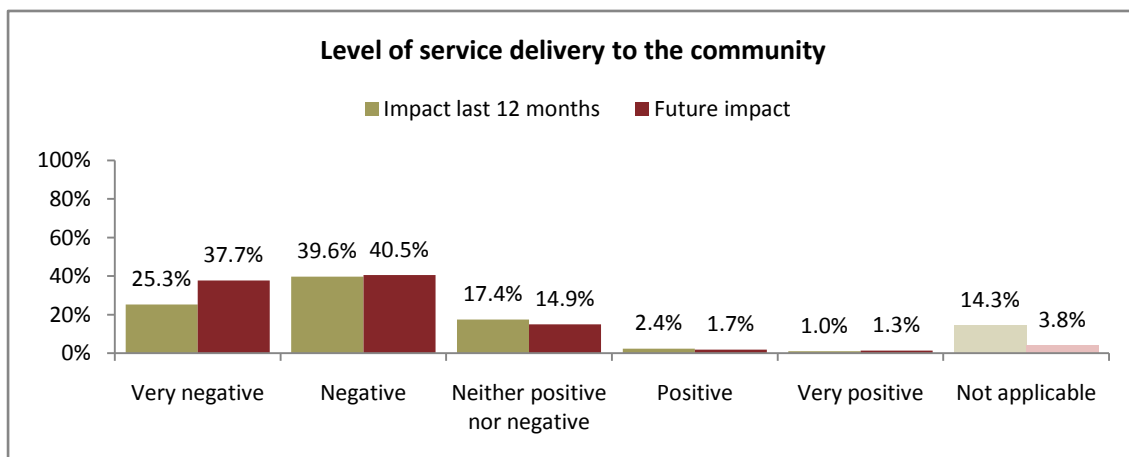


Figure 9: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the *ability to meet SA Strategic Plan targets* in the last 12 months and in the future

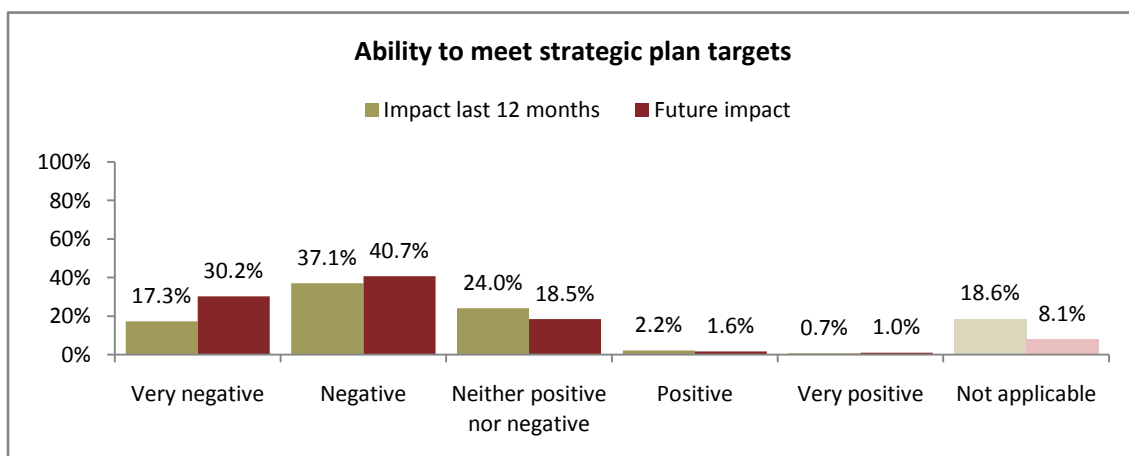


Figure 10: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the *maintenance of publicly funded infrastructure* in the last 12 months and in the future

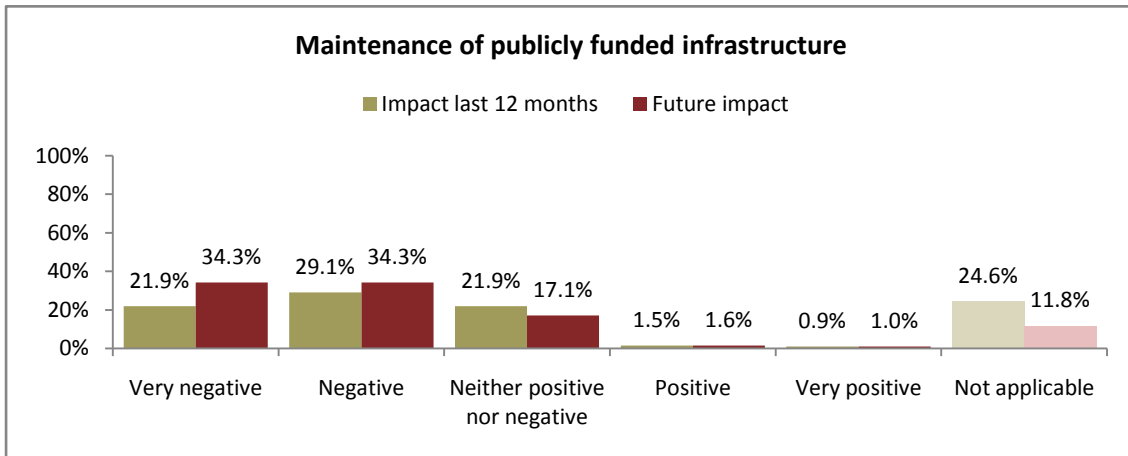
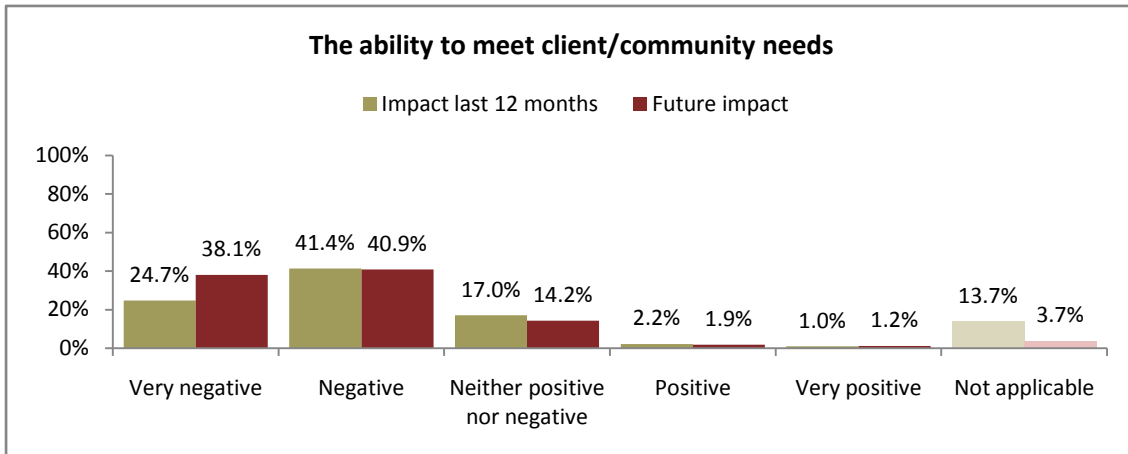


Figure 11: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the *ability to meet client/ community needs* in the last 12 months and in the future



3.3.3 IMPACT OF CUTBACKS ON PORTFOLIO AREAS

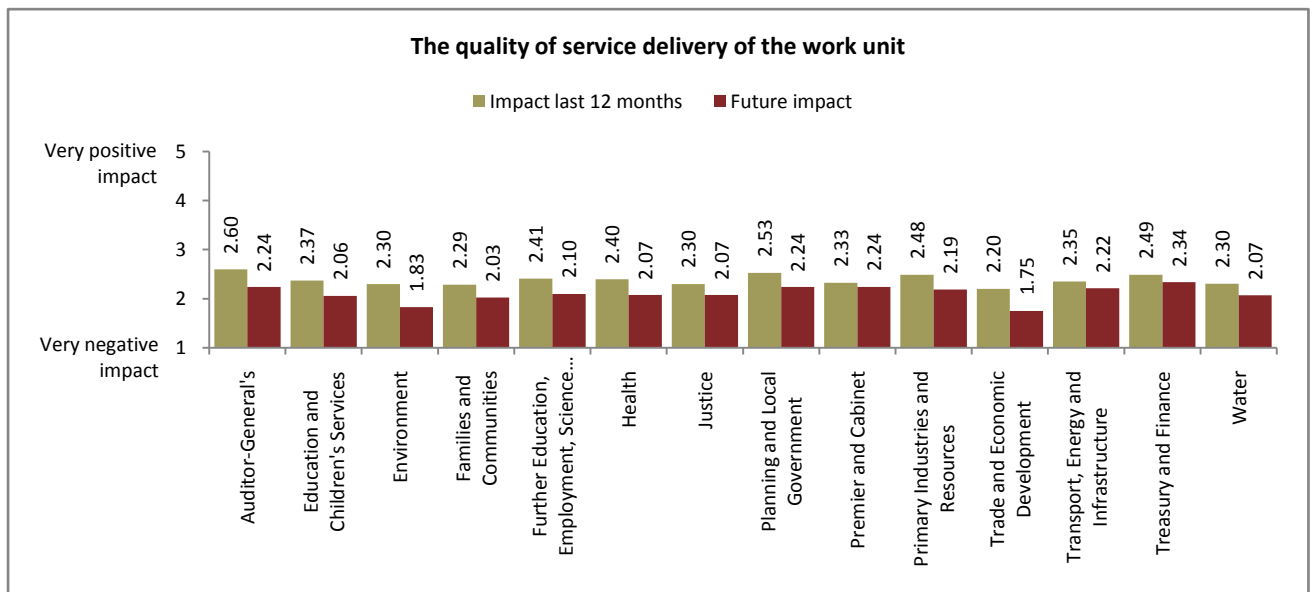
Figure 12 shows the impact of recent cutbacks on the quality of service delivery of the work unit across the Portfolio areas. Respondents from all Portfolio areas uniformly anticipated an increased level of negative impacts as a result of the 2010-11 State Budget. This was most marked in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, with a significant reduction in rating from 2.30 to 1.83.

Respondents provided examples of how the quality of service delivery will be impacted by cutbacks in their Portfolios:

Cutting 13.5 positions in the Family Day Care program will have a devastating impact on child care service provision. The positions are essential training, operational, child protection, finance and management roles.... It will mean a reduction in service provision as it will be very difficult to recruit, train and support home based educators.... (Department of Education and Children’s Services)

.... Deterioration of service delivery is already being experienced by the public, by vendors and contractors. Bills not being paid or not being paid on time, invoices lost, and Agencies managing their finances internally (keeping copies of everything) while required to use Shared Services - thereby duplicating work... (Auditor-Generals)

Figure 12: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the quality of service delivery of the work unit in the last 12 months and in the future for Portfolio areas



Note, due to low response rates, results are not shown for Parliament or Electorate staff or Tourism. Also note that while responses for Trade and Economic Development are presented they should be viewed with caution due to low Ns.

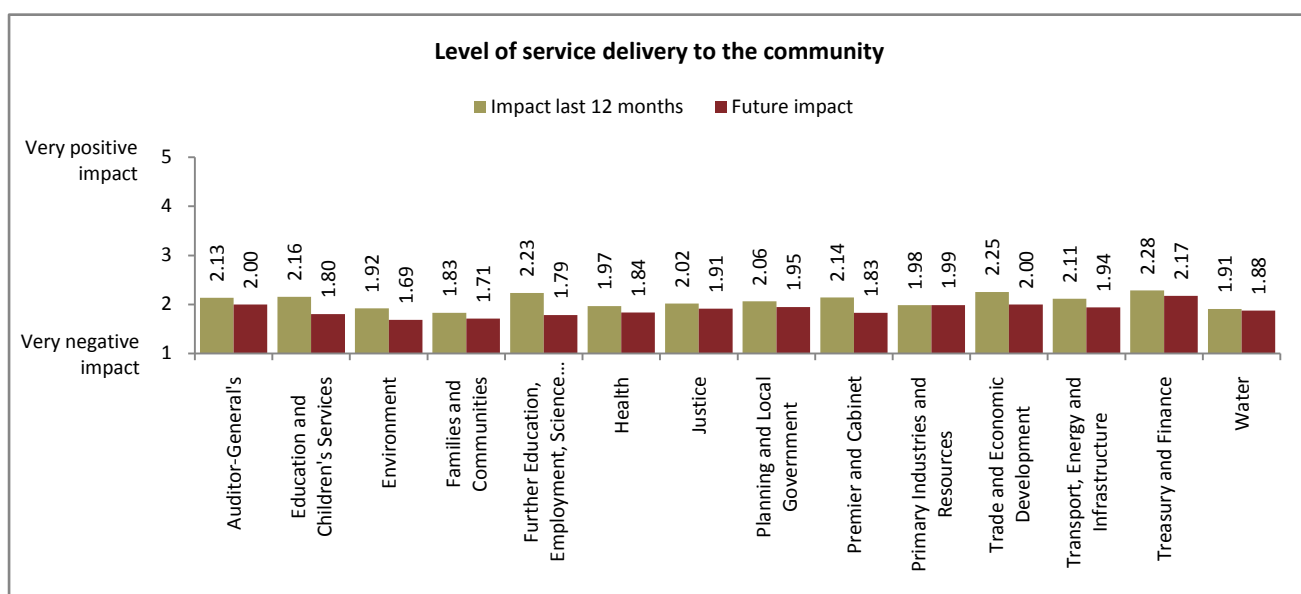
PSA members expected further negative impacts to the level of service delivery to the community as a result of the 2010-2011 State Budget cutbacks - despite starting from a low base due to the 2009-10 cutbacks (see Figure 13)². In this case, 25% of all respondents rated a 'very negative impact' after the 2009-10 State Budget, while 38% provided this rating for future impacts.

Respondents provided examples of how the level of service delivery to the community will be impacted by ongoing cutbacks in their Portfolios:

The ability of the state government to provide an efficient and equitable service to the community (community aged care) is being steadily eroded leaving a very depleted and demoralised work group to provide increasingly less services to an increasing number of people. This will lead to more unsafe and poorly serviced / managed situations in the community especially in the area of complex case management ... (Department for Families and Communities)

The ability to provide a competitive, quality, educational program on a shoestring budget that relies on the goodwill of the people delivering the program cannot go on endlessly. (Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology)

Figure 13: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the level of service delivery to the community in the last 12 months and in the future for Portfolio areas



Note, due to low response rates, results are not shown for Parliament or Electorate staff or Tourism. Also note that while responses for Trade and Economic Development are presented they should be viewed with caution due to low Ns.

² It should be noted that it is likely that the flatter profile, with smaller differences between the impacts experienced in the last 12 months and those expected in the future, were the result of a 'floor effect'. This occurs when responses accumulate at the bottom of a rating scale (ie respondents could not provide a value of less than 1).

The South Australian Government’s Strategic Plan provides a “blueprint for our prosperity and wellbeing, to deliver a society where health, equality, safety, enterprise and creativity underpin a quality of life that is the envy of the world.”³ Government Departments and staff are charged with meeting the targets outlined in the plan. However, PSA members believe that the staff cutbacks announced in the 2010-11 will further impact their ability to meet Strategic Plan targets (see Figure 14).

Lack of services to the community in general. Strategic Plans for increasing Education and Employment will not be able to be met with the lack of staff. (Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology)

Most of our work programs aligned with biodiversity conservation are deeply affected by the budget, this is fundamentally flawed in view of the corporate strategic plans objectives (Department of Environment and Natural Resources)

.... The reason the community is positively affected and maintenance budgets are negatively affected is that stations (in areas in decline and where services can be offered from a nearby station) will remain open. Budgets are stretched to maintain these facilities and opportunities to meet strategic targets e.g. reducing energy efficiency administrative costs cannot be realised. (Department of Justice)

Figure 14: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the ability to meet SA Strategic Plan targets in the last 12 months and in the future for Portfolio areas



Note, due to low response rates, results are not shown for Parliament or Electorate staff or Tourism. Also note that while responses for Trade and Economic Development are presented they should be viewed with caution due to low Ns.

³ <http://www.saplan.org.au/plan-2010>

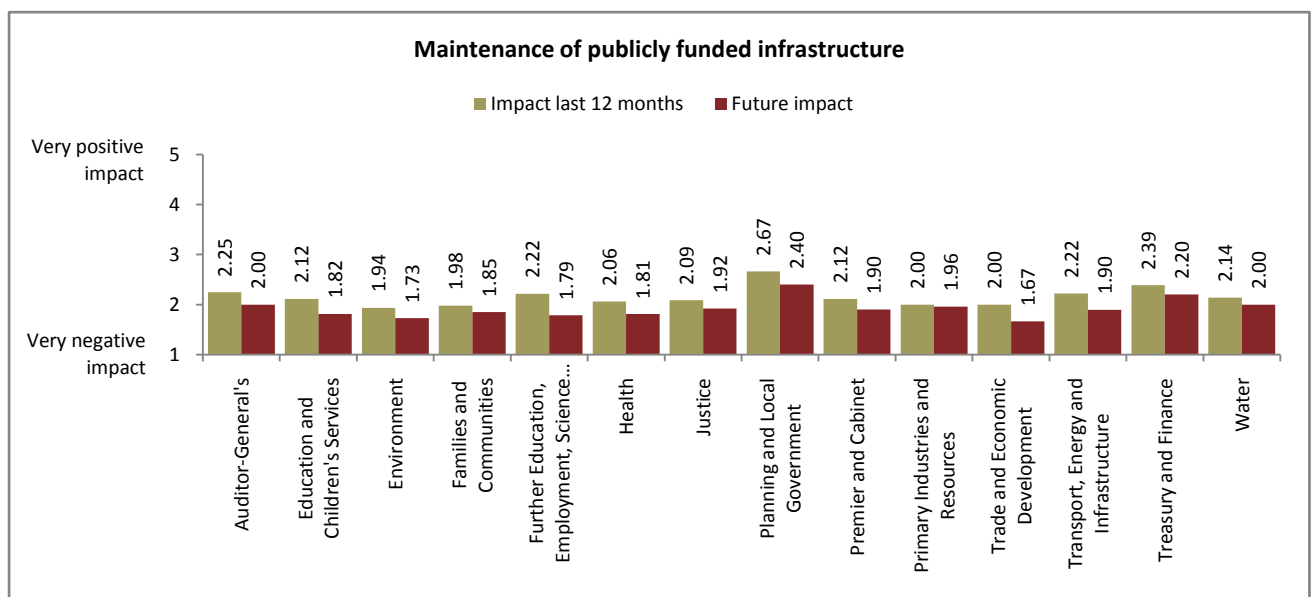
Respondents from all Portfolio areas expressed the belief that the maintenance of publicly funded infrastructure would be further negatively impacted by the cutbacks outlined in the 2010-11 State Budget (see Figure 15). Respondents did not consider these to be abstract nor intangible, and commented on how short-term budgetary gains produce substantial and long-term problems for the state.

While capital project funding is at a very high level, operating budget for maintenance of existing infrastructure is reducing causing significant degradation of infrastructure (roads are rougher, it takes longer to repair jetties, bridges etc) (Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure)

The government must remember that cutting prison infrastructure will place more crims on the street that in the long turn will negate any savings from budget cuts due to resources being used to apprehend them and the social impact on the community ... (Department of Justice)

.... Cutbacks to monitoring networks will mean that future research will be severely hampered by data gaps. By not maintaining the existing infrastructure this will cause additional future expense when it is realised that these monitoring networks are a valuable resource that are required for good and meaningful research. (Department for Water)

Figure 15: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the maintenance of publicly funded infrastructure in the last 12 months and in the future for Portfolio areas



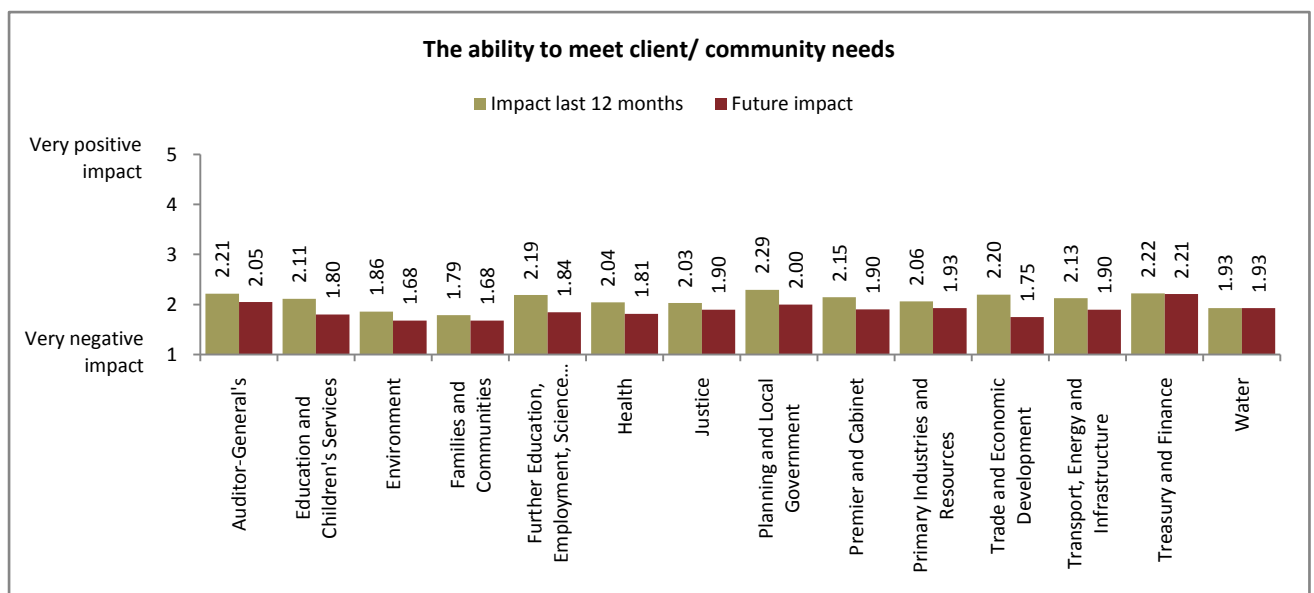
Note, due to low response rates, results are not shown for Parliament or Electorate staff or Tourism. Also note that while responses for Trade and Economic Development are presented they should be viewed with caution due to low Ns.

Portfolio areas work with and respond to client and community needs in different ways. Whilst all Portfolios report that they have experienced negative impacts from the 2009-10 State Budget and are expecting further negative impacts from the 2010-11 Budget, staff from the Department for Families and Communities and the Department of Health expected particularly poor outcomes from staff cutbacks to programs.

They are cutting the Anti Poverty Program for outside clients, therefore only working with Families SA clients.... This will have a very negative impact on the general community as the non government agencies will have to take on OUR work load and they already cannot meet all the community's needs. There are many people out there who are vulnerable to enter our system, the Antipoverty Team have done a lot of preventative work to prevent some families entering our department. (Department for Families and Communities)

Impact on the ability to respond to the community needs will lead to increase in isolation, health problems, challenging behaviours in children, increased child protection notifications etc. and no funds to continue with community early interventions that are adaptable to the community's specific needs. (Department of Health)

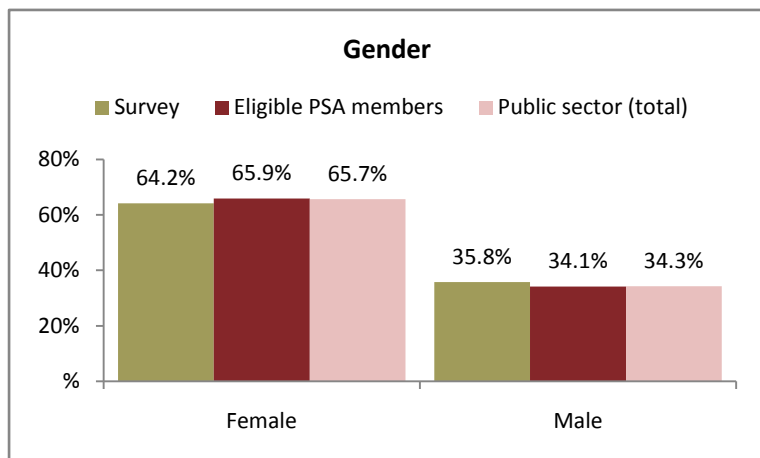
Figure 16: Impact of the 2009-10 and 2010-11 State Budget cutbacks on the ability to meet client/ community needs in the last 12 months and in the future for Portfolio areas



Note, due to low response rates, results are not shown for Parliament or Electorate staff or Tourism. Also note that while responses for Trade and Economic Development are presented they should be viewed with caution due to low Ns.

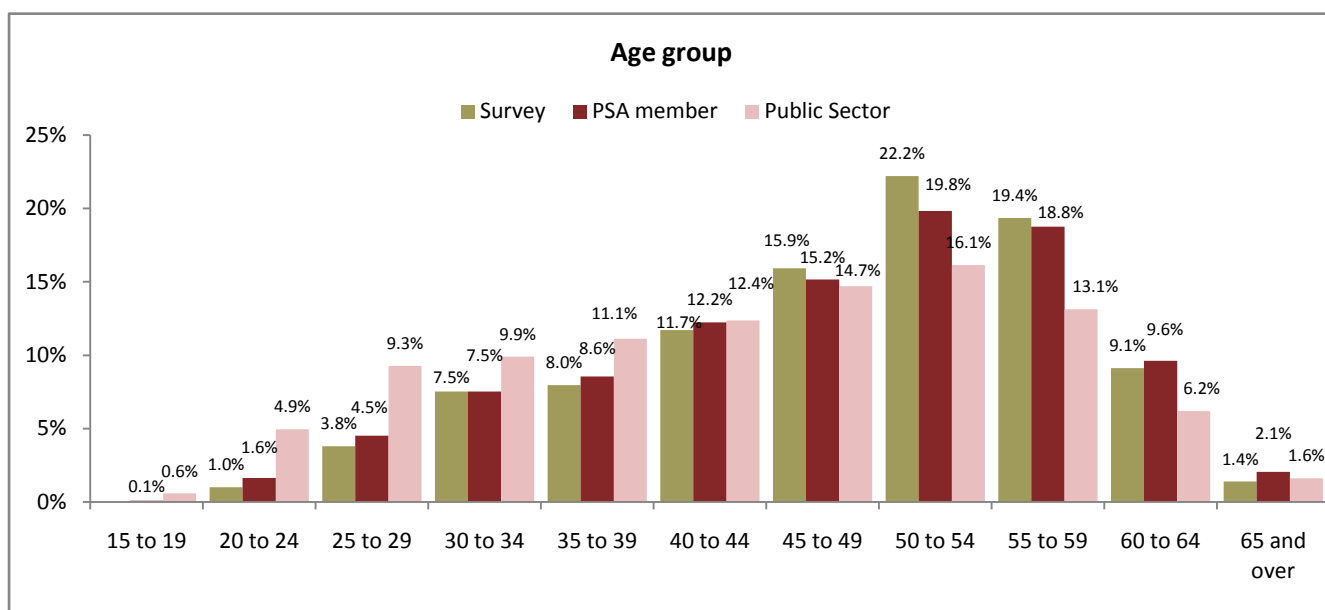
APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Figure A 1: Gender distribution of survey respondents compared to eligible PSA members and the total SA Public Sector



Source Public Sector data: Table 3.^{4,5}

Figure A 2: Age distribution of respondents compared to eligible PSA members and the total SA Public Sector



Source Public Sector data: Table 3.⁵

⁴ Proportions presented for demographic questions include eligible responses only.

⁵ Commissioner for Public Sector Employment. (2009). *South Australian Public Sector Workforce Information, June 2009*: Government of South Australia

APPENDIX B: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS IN PORTFOLIO AREAS AND WORK CHARACTERISTICS

Figure A 3: Government Business Enterprise or Statutory Authority of usual work

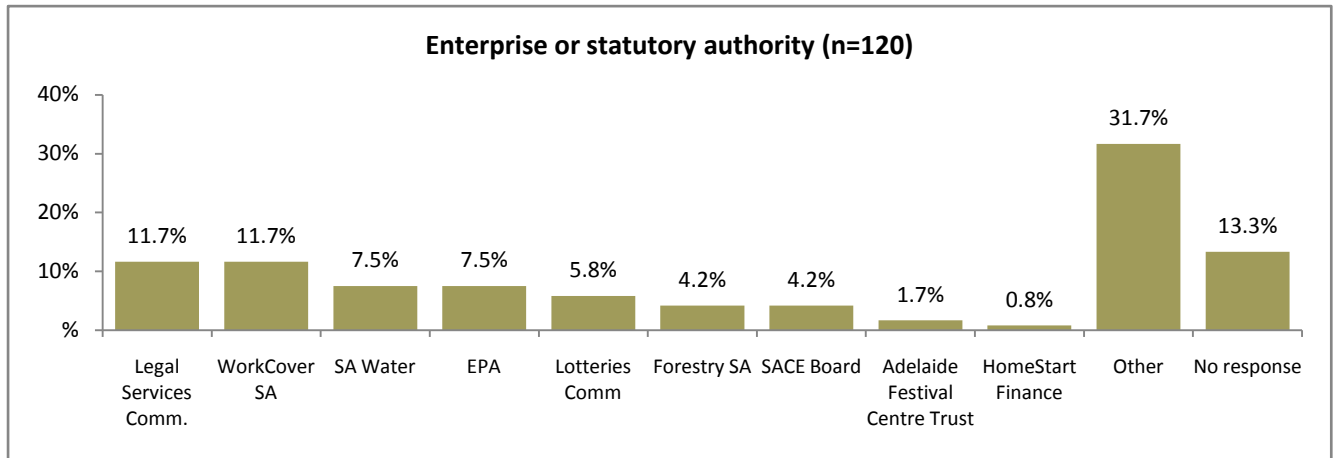


Figure A 4: Area of employment: Justice portfolio

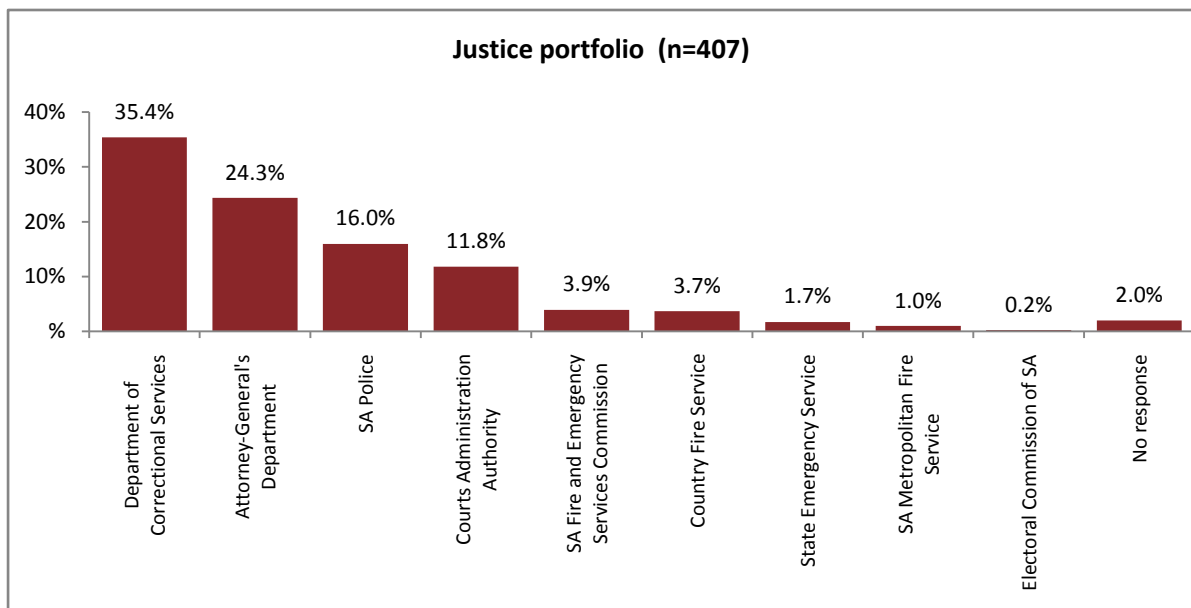


Figure A 5: Area of employment: Transport, Energy & Infrastructure portfolio

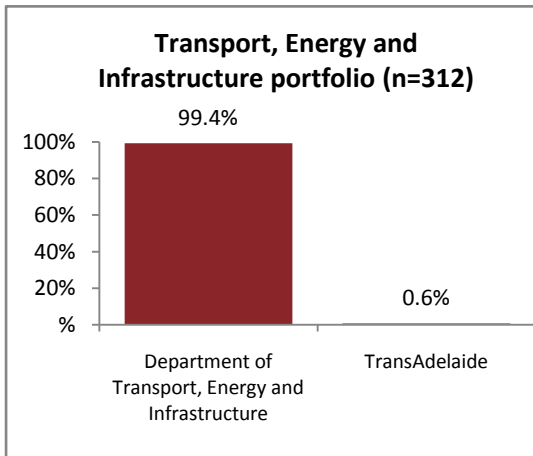


Figure A 6: Area of employment: Families & Communities portfolio

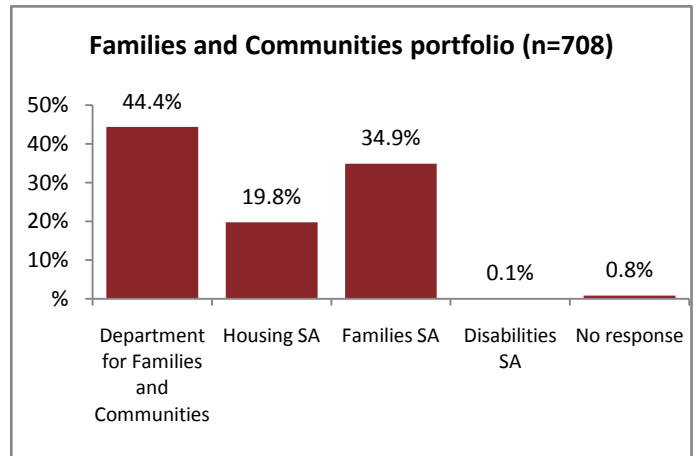


Figure A 7: Area of employment: Trade & Economic Development portfolio

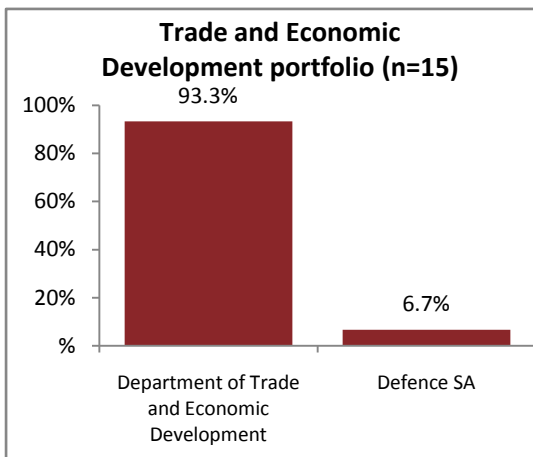


Figure A 8: Area of employment: Environment portfolio

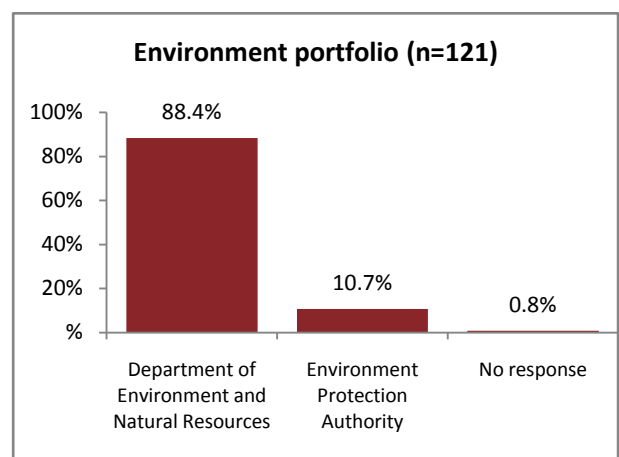


Figure A 9: Current employment classification

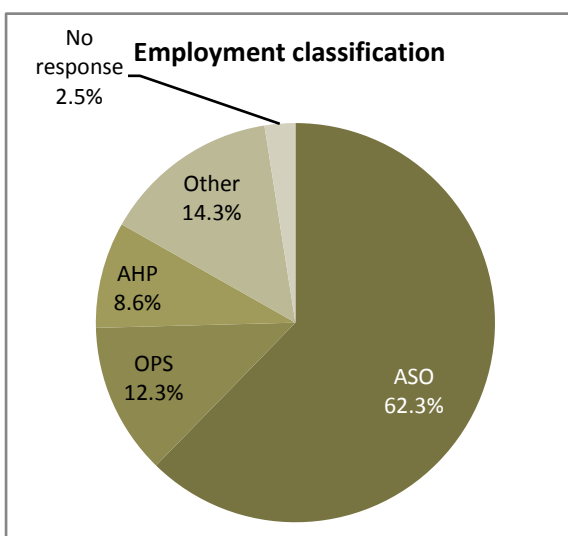


Figure A 10: Current employment status

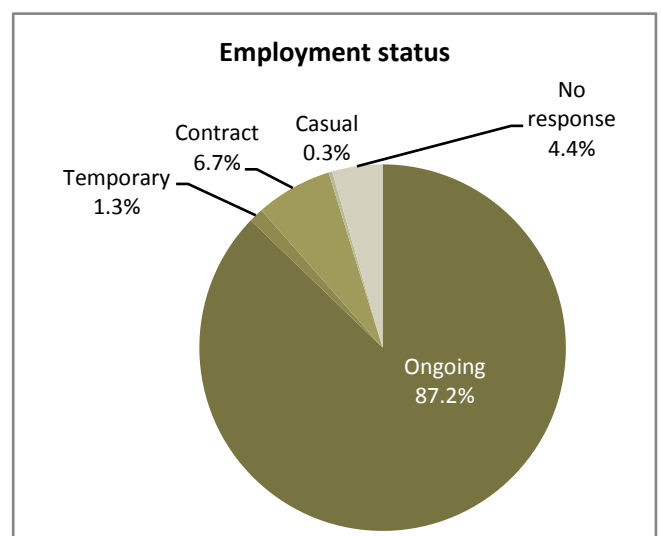


Figure A 11: Description of the usual nature of respondents work and the work usually undertaken by their work unit

