



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 288

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Public Service, Hon Jo-Anne Hersey MLA:

People Matter Survey Response

- 1. The 2025 People Matter survey shows around a third of NT public servants — nearly 3,000 people — experienced bullying, harassment, or racism in the past year, generating more than 9,500 reports, with no improvement since 2023. How does the Department explain the absence of improvement over two years?**

When comparing the results of the questions in the survey relating to negative behaviours there are a number of questions that show improvement, including that 80% of employees believe that bullying and sexual harassment is not tolerated in their organisation. This is an improvement of 15 per cent since 2021, and 3 per cent since the 2023 survey.

There was also a 2 per cent decrease in the proportion of employees who indicated that they had experienced bullying in the workplace in the last 12 months and a 1 per cent decrease in the proportion of employees who indicated they had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the past 12 months.

- 2. Most of those who reported were not satisfied with how their report was handled. What changes has the Government implemented to make reporting safer, easier and more effective?**

The NTPS has well-established processes for employees to raise and resolve employment-related concerns, with guidance available through the OneNTG Employee Complaint Procedure.

Ongoing improvements to effectively respond to formal complaints remains a priority for the sector.

- 3. There were 39 reports of alleged sexual harassment involving senior executives. What action has been taken in response, and how many of these matters resulted in disciplinary action or removal from senior roles?**

All matters that are raised through a formal process are taken seriously with processes in place for agencies, supported by the Department of Corporate and Digital Development and/or the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment to respond.

As the survey is anonymous, these responses cannot be linked to individual employees, employee level, formal complaints or specific incidents. The figure therefore cannot be used to determine how many matters were raised, investigated, substantiated or resulted in disciplinary action.

- a. How many of those matters resulted in a finding, in disciplinary action, and in removal from a senior role?**

Refer to response to question 3.

- b. Where a figure is too small to report, please provide the total number of matters finalised and the total resulting in any adverse finding.**

Refer to response to question 3.

- c. In which system are complaints involving senior executives recorded, and in what format?**

There is no single system in which employee complaints are recorded.

Employees in the Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) have access to a range of avenues through which to raise and pursue employment-related concerns.

These include raising complaints directly with their manager via the agency's internal complaint handling processes; the Commissioner for Public Employment's grievance review and appeal functions under Part 9 of the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993*; the Anti-Discrimination Commission; the Office of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption and other relevant integrity bodies; under the *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)*.

- 4. Corrections, Housing, NT Health, and Fire and Emergency Services all recorded unsafe behaviour rates above 46 per cent and are among the departments with the highest burnout rates.**

- a. What specific plans does each of those departments have to address these figures?**

Agency Chief Executive Officers are responsible for developing and implementing agency specific People Matter Survey Action Plans in consultation with their agency workforce.

b. What are the measurable targets for improvement by the next survey?

Agency Chief Executive Officers are responsible for monitoring progress through agency-level measures, local reporting mechanisms and future People Matter Surveys.

5. Only 51 per cent of public servants believed recruitment and promotion decisions in their workplace were based on merit.

a. To what does the Minister attribute this level of confidence?

Employee confidence in merit-based recruitment and promotion continues to increase. In 2021, it was 47 per cent; 49 per cent in 2023 and 51 per cent in 2025.

This improvement coincides with strengthened merit selection training, guidance materials and recruitment integrity safeguards, providing a strong foundation for further building employee confidence in fair, transparent and merit-based recruitment practices.

While not every recruitment outcome will meet the expectations of all employees, this does not mean that decisions were not made on merit.

b. What systemic changes have been made to recruitment and promotion processes in response?

The NTPS has strong integrity safeguards across recruitment to support transparent, merit-based and accountable employment practices.

The NTPS Recruitment and Selection Policy is regularly reviewed and in 2025-26 was improved to:

- strengthen the proactive identification and management of conflicts of interest;
- strengthen expectations around pre-employment screening; and
- provide clearer guidance on referee checks, including for applicants listed on the Applicant of Potential Risk Register.

Merit selection training is a core integrity control. There was an increase of 1,507 NTPS employees who completed face-to-face or online Merit Selection training in 2025-26.

c. How is the Government ensuring transparency and consistency in decision-making across departments?

The NTPS supports transparency and consistency through sector wide standards and requirements. These include the NTPS Code of Conduct, the Recruitment and Selection Policy, Merit Selection training and mandatory Creating Respectful Workplaces eLearning.

Agency Chief Executive Officers are responsible for applying these requirements within their agencies through appropriate governance, delegations, decision-making processes and communication.

d. What measurable improvement is expected before the next survey?

Survey results reflect employee perceptions and workplace experiences at a point in time. Even modest improvements in confidence are positive, as they suggest employees are seeing greater fairness, transparency and consistency in recruitment and promotion practices across the NTPS.

6. The Government's published response to the 2025 survey was one page, and included measures such as self-care toolkits and AI-assisted administration. Given the scale and consistency of reported bullying, harassment and racism, why does the response emphasise individual coping strategies rather than organisational accountability and systemic change?

The NTPS whole of sector response plan delivers sector wide action across leadership, wellbeing and workplace culture.

Chief Executive Officers are responsible for implementing local actions in response to their People Matter Survey results.

7. What accountability framework applies where departments record persistently high levels of bullying, harassment, and racism across successive surveys without material improvement?

Under the *Work Health and Safety Act* and Positive Duty legislation, Chief Executives are responsible for creating safe and inclusive workplaces.

The survey acts as a useful opportunity to seek feedback from employees to determine whether actions that have been taken have

resulted in improvement or they need to be reviewed and potential new strategies considered.

- 8. Several aims of the NT Police Force's Aboriginal Employment and Leadership Strategy are similar to the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (OCPE). How has the OCPE supported the development of the Police Force's strategy?**

Individual agencies develop and implement workforce strategies that respond to their operational context and workforce needs.

- 9. What support is being provided to public servants affected by the conduct reported in the survey?**

The People Matter Survey is anonymous and is not a complaints mechanism. Individual survey responses cannot be linked to employees, investigated as complaints or used to provide direct support to respondents.

Employees who experience or witness inappropriate workplace behaviour are encouraged to raise the matter separately through their employing agency under the OneNTG Employee Complaint Procedure.

All matters that are raised through a formal process are taken seriously with processes in place for agencies, supported by the Department of Corporate and Digital Development and/or the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment to respond.