



Australian Government

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# SERVICES AUSTRALIA SECURITY RISK MANAGEMENT REVIEW

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by Graham Ashton AM APM

July 2023



The Australian Government acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live on. We pay our respects to all Elders, past and present, of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations.

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# Executive summary

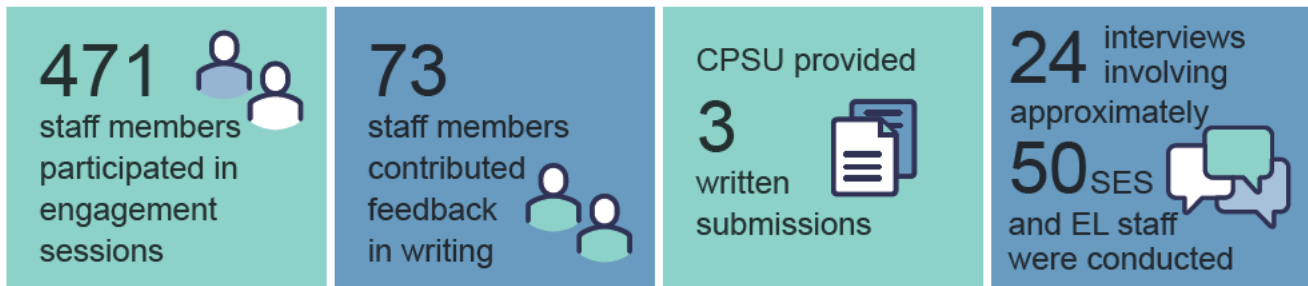
Services Australia's (the agency's) purpose is to support Australians by efficiently delivering high-quality, accessible services and payments on behalf of the government. Australians need the agency and its staff during times in their life when they may be most vulnerable or in crisis. Accordingly, many customers also present with complex vulnerabilities that can impact their engagement with agency staff. This highlights the need to prioritise the security and safety of staff, particularly when working in isolated locations and service centres.

The agency commissioned a security risk management review in the immediate aftermath of a serious physical attack on a staff member at its service centre at Airport West, Victoria. This terrible incident, whereby the staff member is still recovering, is the subject of a Comcare investigation. Accordingly, this review is informed by this incident, but does seek to undertake a wider examination of security and risk systems at the agency. This examination was undertaken and informed by the terms of reference provided by the agency.

This review found that an impressive customer service culture exists within the agency. This 'service first' ethos extends throughout the agency and is certainly visible within the agency's service centres. It is important from a safety point-of-view though, that this service culture does not impede on security and safety practices. During the review, examples were provided that suggest this is currently a risk. The agency should ensure that it can maintain a safety culture to match their service culture.

Effective leadership plays a critical role in maintaining staff safety at service centres. The importance of recognising this was a consistent theme throughout staff engagement. Accordingly, this review has made recommendations on a number of improvements, which will better support leadership within these centres.

An important feature of this review was the level of staff engagement undertaken. Service centres were visited, staff and executive leaders interviewed, policies reviewed and a series of staff engagement sessions were held. Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) officials were also provided an opportunity to nominate delegates to take part in a dedicated CPSU engagement session. Staff engagement sessions were undertaken with representation invited from every service centre, as well as with service centre executive leaders, national managers and the CPSU delegates. Staff who attended the engagement sessions were provided with the opportunity to submit any feedback for consideration directly via email.



In total, 471 staff members participated in these sessions and 73 staff members contributed feedback in writing.

Eight service centres were visited, which provided an opportunity to view the physical security measures, the application of WH&S controls as they relate to customer aggression, and to engage with service centre staff.

The CPSU also provided 3 written submissions to the review, CPSU Initial Submission: Services Australia Security Risk Management Review, CPSU Submission on behalf of NDIA Workers in Co-located Service Centres: Services Australia Security Risk Management Review and CPSU Further Submission: Services Australia Security Risk Management Review. These submissions included a combined 18 recommendations.

Twenty-four interviews involving approximately 50 staff were also conducted, with SES and executive level (EL) staff who are responsible for functions relevant to the review.

All agency staff engaged in the review in a positive and constructive manner driven by a genuine interest to improve the safety of staff, and were responsive to requests for further information requested of them.

As might be expected, a range of views were expressed, both positively and negatively, about security and safety within the agency. Some themes were evident though, and are dealt with in this report. These themes are not covered in detail in this executive summary for security reasons. It should be stated here though, that some staff do feel they are unsafe at work and their security and safety is not prioritised. Some also feel that their concerns about their safety is minimised by their leaders. The agency must work to alleviate these concerns.

It should be seen positively that agency staff are strong users of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), as it demonstrates a confidence in that service. It is important though that EAP data is used to its maximum degree to understand staff needs and identify associated trends it might need to address. This review found that, when combined with staffing data, injury data and customer aggression incident reporting, opportunities exist for the agency to improve its understanding and use of anonymised EAP data to inform staff-focused supports.

Many of the security and safety gaps identified in this review are followed by recommendations as to their treatment. To achieve this, the Security Branch within the agency will require a lift in its capability. This review details what additional roles and functions will be need to be undertaken by the Security Branch. They are critical to success in lifting the safety and security of staff to the required level.

Customers exhibiting aggression are always going to present a challenge to the agency given their vulnerabilities. The principal service delivery model for dealing with customer aggression at Services Australia is known as the Managed Service Plan (MSP). The use of the MSP model was reviewed and found to be fit for purpose. That said, the rate of customer aggression incidents caused by customers already on MSPs are high and accordingly, changes have been recommended to strengthen the model.

To protect agency staff further, an examination of available legislation that presently protects staff was conducted. There are opportunities to make better use of existing legislation such as Commonwealth trespass laws; however, the review does recommend some legislative change, primarily the introduction of workplace protection orders in Commonwealth workplaces. This would remove the need for staff to take out orders individually.

From a safety viewpoint, the physical layout of service centres are of considerable concern to staff. The current design of contemporary service centres, which are being gradually rolled out nationwide are well received from an aesthetic aspect as they create a positive and welcoming atmosphere for customers. Staff concerns though are that the design is too customer focused and presents considerable safety risks to staff. Service centre design forms part of a safety ecosystem along with security design, technology features and emergency response policies. At service centres who are at risk of high levels of customer aggression, the current design option known as the 'lobby' design was found to be most fit for purpose. This option will require several modifications recommended in this review to ensure the 'lobby' design provides a more cohesive protection for staff in collaboration with policy and security features.

During this review, opportunities were identified to enhance some of the information and communications technology (ICT) systems managed by the agency to provide greater visibility of risks to the safety of staff, and create easier pathways to obtain important risk-related information. The agency recently commenced work on several internal ICT initiatives that address staff wellbeing. These should continue to receive priority attention.

There is also a strong focus in the agency on respecting the privacy of its customers' data. This is understandable and very important when considering the personal nature of this information. That said, fears of contravening privacy legislation has acted at times as a dampening effect on safety measures within the agency. This was also determined to be the case by an internal PhD candidate who had examined customer aggression in detail. It is important that staff are aware of their privacy obligations, but also of the safety exemptions within the existing privacy legislation to deal with situations where safety-related information needs to be shared.

Finally, I would like to thank the internal review team for their dedication and support in ensuring this report was completed within its timeframe, and all agency staff who participated in this review with professionalism and enthusiasm.

Graham Ashton AM APM

Reviewer



# Key recommendations

1. The agency's Work Health and Safety Strategy 2021–26 should be amended to reflect a zero tolerance for workplace injury, and the requirement to eliminate risks to health and safety of workers and other persons so far as is reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks, they must be minimised as far as is reasonably practicable and demonstrate commitment to staff safety.
2. The agency's Work Health and Safety Strategy 2021–26 should also be amended to ensure mechanisms are available in the workplace that prioritise staff safety and staff empowerment to provide feedback (as detailed on page 16 of the report).
3. Individual senior executive service (SES) performance agreements should contain at least 1 practical commitment regarding staff safety and wellbeing. This commitment should be drawn from the key wellbeing documents such as the strategy, EAP data, and/or the people performance scorecard.
4. Urgent communication should occur to leadership at service centres regarding their decision-making authorities, and role clarity on issues affecting staff safety.
5. Allocation of leadership roles in service centres should be based on a matrix that takes both staff ratios and centre risk profiles into account. This should include the number of customer aggression incidents being experienced by the centre, and the number of MSP customers.
6. Upgraded security systems and enhanced security features (as detailed on page 21 of the report) should be incorporated into the standard security design of all service centres.
7. The design principles and security features of the lobby design, including the additional features identified in the report, should become standard features in all service centres at risk of high levels of customer aggression. This includes an expansion of the online booking system and the customer self-check-in kiosk. In other service centres, features of the lobby design should be implemented commensurate with the level of risk (noting the need for modification depending on the size and layout of individual service centres).
8. Emergency response procedures – aggression (ERPAs) should be exercised regularly to ensure staff familiarity with them. This exercise should include the security guards and co-located staff at the service centre.
9. Service centres at risk of high levels of customer aggression should appoint a role known as security officer (SO). This role would ideally be augmented to the duties of an existing staff member in the same manner as a health and safety representative (HSR) officer currently is.
10. Urgent advice should be provided by the Security Branch to the services firm defining the role expectation of the second guard. The second guard, where required, should be engaged under the permanent guarding arrangements.
11. The agency should ensure that the services firm are providing security guards that are trained and equipped to perform the role and functions described in the agency security guard standard operating procedures.
12. Service centres regarded as being at risk of high levels of customer aggression should be attended by 2 security guards at all times.
13. The Security Branch should undertake a quality assurance process regarding guarding quality and engage with staff to inform the process.
14. The agency should ensure that the new security officer role at service centres engages in the quality assurance process with the Security Branch regarding security guard issues.



15. The agency should work with the services firm to conduct a refreshed approach to market for security guard services for the agency.
16. The existing Commonwealth Trespass provisions should be better used by the agency as a response to threats or actual customer aggression.
17. The current *ACT Workplace Protection Order* provisions should be adopted for use by the Commonwealth as a staff protection mechanism nationwide.
18. Consideration should be given to the creation of a national penalty provision and associated state and territory supportive amendments for the assault of a Commonwealth frontline worker.
19. In addition to the publicity required to inform the community of the recommended legislative amendments, consideration should be given to a publicity campaign to encourage the community to respect Commonwealth frontline workers for the necessary and difficult work they do.
20. The functions of the agency's Security Branch should be enhanced so it can respond immediately to customer aggression incidents as they occur, engage with law enforcement agencies and manage business as usual (BAU) security and safety requests (as detailed on page 34 of the report).
21. The agency should incorporate a light blue polo shirt option as part of its staff uniform wardrobe offering.
22. Staff representatives should be included on any uniform design committees considering any future corporate wardrobe changes.
23. The Electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card functionality should be enhanced, to reduce the need for customers to attend a service centre in person each time they are eligible for an immediate payment that needs to be paid via an EBT card.
24. When undertaking policy development and program design the agency should take a customer-centric approach and this will be enhanced, by including a staff safety assurance lens.
25. The allocation of social workers within service centres should take into account the importance of their support role within service centres, particularly for service centres that experience high levels of customer vulnerability and customer aggression incidents.
26. The agency should implement a range of solutions to assist leadership execute their responsibilities for staff safety within service centres. This includes enhanced emergency response guidelines, security support, training and debriefing frameworks and customer signage (as detailed on page 38 of the report).
27. The agency should enhance staff protections, personal duress systems and remote monitoring (as detailed on page 39 of the report) in small and geographically dispersed service centres.
28. The draft protocol agreement between the agency and partner agencies should be progressed with co-located agencies with a view to formalising the arrangements within the agreement.
29. The agency should ensure that staff working in service centres from co-located agencies are included in emergency management planning and exercises.
30. SOs recommended for service centres should ensure staff from co-located agencies understand and are consulted on the safety responses used in the relevant centre.

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31. The 'Advanced customer aggression training' or a similar model should be used or developed for enterprise-wide use and be made available to all service centre staff.

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  32. The current percentage of staff that have undertaken the 'Customer aggression emergency response training' is 49%. Given the importance of this foundational training, the percentage completion rate should be lifted is a priority.

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  33. The agency should ensure that the first aid training offering is sufficiently augmented to include training in mental health first aid. Mental health first aid training should be provided to all staff in service centres. This should be broadly implemented in line with the agency's current mental health capability framework.

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  34. The 'Customer aggression reporting dashboard' should be finalised into production as soon as possible, and receive continued support from Technology and Digital Programs to ensure completion.

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  35. Customer aggression incident information should be integrated across systems that record customer interactions to provide an agency enterprise view of customer aggression information.

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  36. The agency should lift its engagement with law enforcement agencies to enable better risk intelligence gathering and evaluation of customers subject to a MSP.

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  37. MSPs that are not centrally managed by Personalised Services should be managed at a service centre other than the service centre normally frequented by the customer.

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  38. The agency should consider technical options that better enable the storage and transfer of images of customer subject to MSPs who have committed or threatened serious aggression, between centres.

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  39. Service centre leadership handover documents should include details of MSP customers that could attend the centre and include a photograph of that MSP customer.

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  40. The MSP letter should be amended to include a stronger warning that attendance at a centre is a breach of the trespass provisions and that actions may be taken should attendance occur. Service of these notices should be conducted in a manner that legally satisfies 'service' in its legal meaning in the relevant state or territory.

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  41. The agency should seek authority to allow Personalised Services Service Officers (PSSOs) and one main contacts (OMCs) to dispense with proof of record ownership identity questions where it is an operational necessity to do so, in order to prioritise staff safety.

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  42. The agency should develop a relationship with state and territory parole boards, with a view to enabling servicing restriction notices to be included as part of a MSP prisoner's parole conditions.

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  43. The customer incident management system (CIMS) database should provide an opportunity for service centres to share urgent risk information, including photos, quickly between service centres when customers on MSPs are actively presenting themselves at centres. This should also provide visibility to the Security Branch at an enterprise level.

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  44. The CIMS filter that currently restricts the display of customer aggression incidents to the previous 12 months should be removed to enable staff to see a longer history of incidents.

# Background

On 24 May 2023, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Minister for Government Services announced a security risk management review for the agency to be led by former Chief Police Commissioner of Victoria Police, Graham Ashton, AM APM.<sup>1</sup>

## Services Australia security risk management review terms of reference

Matters to be considered include:

- Adequacy of the physical security measures.
- Whether improvements need to be made to MSPs.
- The adequacy and operations of the state criminal laws to maximise protections of staff, customers and the public including but not limited to the use of penalties and restraining orders or alike.

In relation to the face-to-face service centres, the reviewer was asked to:

1. Examine the security and procedural measures that provide a safe environment for the agency's employees, customers and members of the public.
2. Examine the effectiveness of the work health and safety system, regarding the effectiveness of controls in respect of customer related violence.
3. Examine the agency's approach to detecting, responding and managing service delivery to customers who demonstrate threatening, aggressive and/or violent behaviours.
4. Consult with staff and union representatives about the adequacy of arrangements to provide a safe and secure work environment.

The review was initiated following an incident involving the serious assault of a staff member that occurred at the agency's Airport West Service Centre on 23 May 2023. The individual circumstances of the incident is the subject of a Comcare Investigation and criminal proceedings, as well as internal consideration by the agency. As such, the individual circumstances of the incident are not the focus of this review, however have informed the consideration of issues raised.

## The agency

Services Australia (the agency) is an executive agency within the Social Services portfolio with responsibility for supporting individuals, families, businesses and communities by efficiently delivering high-quality, accessible services and payments on behalf of government.<sup>2</sup>

The agency designs, delivers, coordinates and monitors government services and payments relating to social security, child support, students, families, aged care and health programs. Its vision is 'to make government services simple so people can get on with their lives'.<sup>3</sup>

During the course of an individual's life, most Australians will rely on a payment or service delivered by Services Australia. In 2021–22, Services Australia had 26.4 million Medicare customers, 11.4 million Centrelink customers and 1.2 million Child Support customers.<sup>4</sup>

Services Australia provides services and payments to Australians through online transactions, over the telephone and in service centres. This review, as per the terms of reference, is primarily concerned with service centres.

<sup>1</sup> The Hon Bill Shorten MP, **Review to protect front line staff** [media release], Ministers for the Department of Social Services, 24 May 2023

<sup>2</sup> Services Australia, **Services Australia Annual Report 2021–22**, Services Australia, 2022

<sup>3</sup> Services Australia, **Services Australia Annual Report 2021–22**, Services Australia, 2022

<sup>4</sup> Services Australia, **Services Australia Annual Report 2021–22**, Services Australia, 2022

The agency has 318 service centres across Australia. As at 30 June 2023, the Face to Face Services Division comprises of 6,470 staff, with the majority of them working in service centres. They are complemented by specialist staff such as social workers, assessors, and out-posted staff. In some locations, other government agencies are co-located in service centres, including the National Disability Insurance Agency. During 2022–23, 9.9 million contacts occurred through service centres.<sup>5</sup>

The review found that the agency has a very strong service ethos, which results in a customer service culture, led from the SES of the organisation, and which is a credit to the agency and its staff. There is a genuine commitment to ensuring that the customer receives a timely, quality service, and that level of commitment would be the envy of any large organisation; public sector or government. This review has considered the extent to which this culture of service excellence is matched by a culture of safety excellence and this is expanded on later in the report.

## Customer-related violence

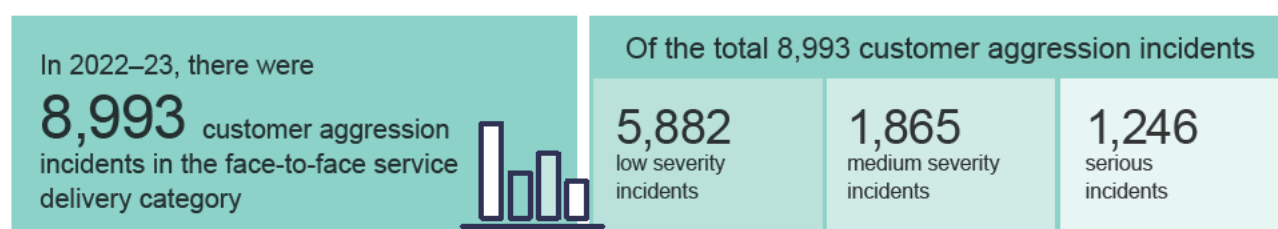
The agency has obligations pursuant to the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* to secure the health and safety of workers and workplaces, by protecting workers and other persons against harm to their health, safety and welfare through the elimination or minimisation of risks arising from work.<sup>6</sup>

In doing so, regard must be had to the principle that workers and other persons should be given the highest level of protection against harm to their health, safety and welfare from hazards and risks arising from work as is reasonably practicable.<sup>7</sup>

One of the work health and safety (WH&S) risks experienced by the agency's staff is occupational violence, defined as 'any incident where a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of their work'.<sup>8</sup> Occupational violence, specifically customer aggression for the purposes of this review, presents a risk to both the physical and psychosocial safety of staff.

Agency staff, including staff within service centres, play a critical role in providing services and payments to Australians, and in particular to people facing significant vulnerability. The vast majority of the 9.3 million customer interactions that occur annually within service centres, including by people facing significant vulnerability, occur without incident.

In 2022–23, there were 8,993 customer aggression incidents in the face-to-face service delivery category, representing 0.09% of total customer contacts. Of the total 8,993 customer aggression incidents in the face-to-face category, 5,882 incidents were recorded as low severity, 1,865 as medium severity and 1,246 as serious incidents.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Source: Services Australia administrative data

<sup>6</sup> Work *Health and Safety Act 2011*, part 1, division 2–3

<sup>7</sup> Work *Health and Safety Act 2011*, part 1, division 2–3

<sup>8</sup> Comcare, *Violence and aggression*, Comcare, 2022

<sup>9</sup> Source: Services Australia administrative data

Service centre staff are at risk of customer aggression because they deal with people who are at times in crisis and distress, and who are relying on the social security safety net to have their basic financial and material needs met. There is a range of drivers of customer aggression as experienced in service centres. Service centre staff may be required to inform a customer when they do not meet eligibility for a service or payment and this can lead to customer frustration. Some customers have psychological or other types of conditions that may result in violent behaviour, or demonstrate drug and alcohol-fuelled aggression. At times, customers are limited in the servicing channel they can use, due to lack of access to technology or difficulty in navigating digital and telephone channels specific to their circumstances. Some customers are isolated or excluded from broader services and community supports, and agency staff are often required to assist them with access to the basics of life that most people would take for granted, for example identification documents and bank accounts, so that they can access agency payments and services.

The agency has a specific team, the Customer Aggression Prevention Team<sup>10</sup> that has the responsibility for the reduction of occupational violence and aggression by implementing policies, systems and resources to prevent incidents, record these, and support workers when they do occur.

This includes the use of MSPs to provide tailored services proactively or in response to incidents of customer aggression and counterproductive behaviour. MSPs can include support options for the customer as well as full or partial restriction of the customer's access to one or more service delivery channels. Service restrictions are proportionate to the severity of customer behaviour and the level of risk posed to staff safety. The agency is required to ensure ongoing access to payments and services is provided for customers who are subject to a MSP.<sup>11</sup>

Customer aggression can result in a decrease in a staff member's ability to perform their role, and lead to adverse affects on their health and mental wellbeing, including workplace stress or injury. This can manifest into:

- poor performance and productivity
- a fear of the workplace
- disengagement
- absenteeism
- poor workplace culture
- resignation and a high turnover of staff.

The agency supports staff following a workplace critical incident or traumatic event, which includes encouraging staff to seek professional help if required, through the EAP, and organising a critical incident debrief for incidents that are more serious.

The EAP annualised utilisation rate by agency staff is 12.9% as at June 2023, and is consistent with the industry standard and is significantly higher than the 4.5% annualised utilisation rate for all EAP customers. Mental health is the top presenting issue, representing 63.6% of all presentations and in 2022–23, there were 94 new cases related to critical incidents.<sup>12</sup>

**12.9%**

EAP annualised utilisation rate by agency staff as at June 2023

Significantly higher than all EAP customers at **4.5%**

Mental health is the top presenting issue, representing **63.6%** of all presentations

**94** new cases were related to critical incidents in 2022–23

<sup>10</sup> Services Australia, **Customer Aggression Prevention Team** [intranet page], Services Australia, n.d.

<sup>11</sup> Services Australia, **Customer aggression – Managed Service Plan (MSP) – Operational Blueprint 104-07050000**, Services Australia, n.d.

<sup>12</sup> Source: Services Australia administrative data



## Conduct of the review

The staff member injured on 23 May 2023 was keen to contribute to the review, despite managing her physical and psychological recovery. The review is grateful of her involvement in light of these personal circumstances.

Staff at the Airport West Service Centre provided their feedback to the review at a meeting that occurred in the week following the incident, as well as through the staff engagement referred to below. The review acknowledges the staff of Airport West Service Centre for meeting and providing their insights so early in the review at a time when many were still, understandably, experiencing and expressing the initial affects of the incident.

Comprehensive staff engagement, including with the CPSU as staff representatives, occurred to inform this review. Staff engagement sessions were undertaken with representation invited from every service centre, as well as with service centre executive leaders, national managers, and agency delegates nominated by the CPSU. Staff who attended the engagement sessions were provided with the opportunity to submit any feedback for consideration directly via email.

In total, 471 staff members participated in these sessions and 73 staff members contributed feedback in writing.

Eight service centres were visited, which provided an opportunity to view the physical security measures, the application of WH&S controls as they relate to customer aggression, and to engage with service centre staff.

The CPSU also provided 3 written submissions to the review, CPSU Initial Submission: Services Australia Security Risk Management Review, CPSU Submission on behalf of NDIA Workers in Co-located Service Centres: Services Australia Security Risk Management Review and CPSU Further Submission: Services Australia Security Risk Management Review. These submissions included a combined 18 recommendations and are outlined further in the section related to terms of reference 4 of the review.

Twenty-four interviews involving approximately 50 staff were also conducted, with SES and EL staff who are responsible for functions relevant to the review.

All agency staff engaged in the review in a positive and constructive manner driven by a genuine interest to improve the safety of staff and were responsive to requests for further information requested of them.

# Introduction

## Achieving a safety culture within Services Australia

As outlined in the background section of this report, the agency has clarity around its service delivery obligations and a singular focus in its service delivery. Accordingly, the organisation has a very strong service culture. This has been evident throughout the review, particularly in service centres where there is an overriding ethos to ensure the customer is serviced effectively. This 'service excellence' is admirable and can certainly be described as a 'cultural norm' within the agency.

As might be expected, there are clear drivers that reinforce this culture and influence behaviours. For example, the Services Australia Operations Centre (SAOC) monitors and measures customer service metrics to a very detailed level and the leader of this capability has direct and regular engagement with the SES of the agency. The SES cohort is accordingly up-to-date and literate regarding this data and in turn drive this performance culture top-down through the agency. This and other drivers play an important part in the agency getting its complex business completed in an efficient and continuous manner.

Whilst the positives of the agency's service culture are clearly evident, it is important to ensure that this culture does not impede on staff safety within the agency. In organisations of the scale of the agency, safety risks can emerge if the prioritisation of safety does not match in equal measure its service ethos. There are signs of this risk emerging within the agency.

As an example, the review heard that some staff may develop a tolerance level for verbally abusive customer behaviour, with the goal of meeting the customers presenting needs and achieving service. This level of tolerance can vary depending on the regularity of it occurring and can lead to an under-reporting of poor customer behaviour. It has been described as **safety being a trade-off for the sake of service delivery**. Regarding customer aggression reporting, it is important from an intelligence perspective that instances of poor customer behaviour are reported and understood, given the known links between unchallenged verbal abuse and escalating behaviour resulting in physical abuse.

A further example can be found in service centre workplace design. Contemporary workplace design has been a significant priority project for the agency and a rollout of the new design concepts in service centres around Australia is continuing. This project appears comprehensive, professionally-run and complex, both in its planning and rollout. During the review, a number of service centres were visited and various iterations of the 'contemporary service centre' design concept were examined. A document review was also conducted on material provided, regarding the planning phase of this project. It is clear that the primary objective of the new design for service centres was strongly focused on the customer experience and service delivery.

'Tolerance level for customer behaviour differs between service centres. So, customers may think that behaviour is okay if they have got away with it. There should be an agreed-upon baseline' – **Service Centre Manager**



In some service centres visited with earlier versions of the contemporary design and certainly in the service centres with the older designs pre dating the contemporary design, a staff hypervigilance is visible regarding the safety risks posed by some customers. Sustained hypervigilance can have very serious effects on staff wellbeing and mental health. There are some safety benefits inherent in the contemporary service centre design and positive feedback has been received from staff regarding these changes, however the **staff safety objective appears secondary to the service objectives**. This review examines these design features and makes some recommendations to improve the contemporary service centre design through a safety lens, whilst still seeking to maintain the strong focus on customer experience and service delivery.

As a final example, it is positive that the agency currently has some excellent ICT initiatives underway that support staff safety. These include a dashboard to understand customer aggression incidents better and the recent rollout of the 'Our Safety'<sup>13</sup> WH&S information management, a system for incidents, injury and hazard reporting. It is important that these types of initiatives receive continued support and are used by the agency in ensuring a continuous improvement process for staff safety is achieved.

The review did hear however, that the ICT investment priority of the agency is in its large customer-facing technologies and associated measurement tools, leaving ICT development on internal programs relevant to staff safety to be developed within business units with comparatively low resourcing support. Whilst this focus is understandable, there could be a better balance struck given the need to develop further a strong capability to understand and deal with threats to staff safety and security.

To reinforce the need for an improved safety culture, many staff engaged by this review have repeatedly expressed a view that the agency prioritises service over safety. In this context, staff can see initiatives designed to improve staff safety in a negative light. This was evident during the staff engagement sessions conducted by the review team.

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If safety excellence is led from the SES and leaders of the agency with the same emphasis as service excellence, the development of an improved safety culture within the agency is very achievable.

As a starting point, an examination of the agency's risk tolerance to staff safety authorised by the agency sends the first signal around safety culture. The agency tolerance level of safety is represented in Table 1.

13 Services Australia, *Our Safety, the new WH&S reporting system is now live* [intranet page], Services Australia, 31 August 2022.

14 Services Australia, *Customer aggression – Managed Service Plan (MSP) – Operational Blueprint 104-07050000*, Services Australia, n.d.

**Table 1: Services Australia's risk appetite and tolerance (WH&S critical risk control plan 2021–2025)**

Enterprise risk category	Risk tolerance statement	Risk tolerance ranges
Safe working and service environment	We are committed to providing a safe workplace for all employees, visitors and contractors that is free, so far as reasonably practicable, from physical or psychological harm. We proactively reduce risks to the security, safety and wellbeing of our staff and customers and <b>do not tolerate</b> a failure to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to reduce the possibility of death or serious injury.	
	However, we recognise the need to operate in environments that may require us to tolerate <b>medium</b> risks to the safety and wellbeing of our staff. We undertake these activities only with appropriate management plans, safe guards, strategies and approvals in place.	

Whilst acceptance of a level of risk is reasonable in many areas of risk management, in respect to safety, the optimal risk tolerance level should be zero. The narrative required is **‘when it comes to staff safety our tolerance to injury is zero. Should an injury occur despite our best efforts, then we will respond quickly and appropriately and learn from the occurrence’**. In its current form, the narrative staff hear is that the agency understands that some injuries will occur by nature of our duties. In fact, this very narrative was provided to the reviewer by a manager during the review.

This ‘zero tolerance’ narrative for workplace injury is commonplace in organisations that seek to drive safety culture through the workplace. It provides a starting point to creating an improved narrative that informs staff that their safety is a priority and drives leaders to adopt an improved safety posture when planning and delivering agency services.

This review has made numerous recommendations that in totality will improve the safety culture within the agency. Such changes however, will only be sustainable if they are led with purpose and strong intent from the SES and leadership of the agency.

# Terms of reference 1

Examine the security and procedural measures that provide a safe environment for the agency's employees, customers, and members of the public.

## Key safety policy

The Work Health and Safety Policy<sup>15</sup> is the primary document that provides policy settings for workplace health and safety. The policy includes the following principles:

- The agency will build simple systems, tools and resources so that staff can get on with doing their work safely.
- The agency will create helpful and safe workplaces that are safe by design.
- We will create a positive, trusting work environment of thriving people working together to improve staff safety.
- The agency will be transparent about WH&S risks. We will work together to manage them in a proactive way.<sup>16</sup>

The Work Health and Safety Strategy 2021–2026<sup>17</sup> (the strategy) outlines a number of initiatives across the domains of systems, workplaces and people that deliver on the principles of the policy.

It is important that these documents guide the SES in shaping culture and leadership that prioritise the safety of staff. It is also important that the SES cohort is accountable for performance against the policy and strategy, in the same manner as they are for service performance. SES and leadership performance plans should include tangible commitments regarding staff safety and wellbeing.

Staff should be encouraged to engage with their leaders and HSRs to allow appropriate safety conversations to happen as standard practice (e.g. through agenda items at team meetings). The engagement sessions demonstrated that at times staff feel that they need to be heard on a range of operational matters that may affect their safety. Staff consultation on safety matters empowers staff to contribute to and progress the agency's strategy.

The phrasing used in the strategy should be consistent with *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)*, that seeks to eliminate risks to the health and safety of workers and other persons, so far as is reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks, they must be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.<sup>18</sup>

The agency records its WH&S incidents in its new 'Our Safety' platform. This program went live in August 2022 and provides a much more sophisticated level of WH&S intelligence and data than what was held previously. The system is still in its rollout phase and has a number of modules requiring implementation. Despite the new system, customer aggression information may still be recorded in a number of other agency systems, however where an injury results from an incident, this is captured in 'Our Safety'. Further integration of agency systems is required to get a holistic view of customer aggression. The agency needs to continue to invest in and develop its 'Our Safety' platform as its primary WH&S database to enable it to be the driver of assurance of its safety culture.

15 Services Australia, *Work Health and Safety Policy*, Services Australia, 2022

16 Services Australia, *Work Health and Safety Policy*, Services Australia, 2022

17 Services Australia, *Work health and safety strategy 2021–26*, Services Australia, 2022

18 *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, part 2, division 1

### Recommendation 1

The agency's Work Health and Safety Strategy 2021–26 should be amended to reflect a zero tolerance for workplace injury, and the requirement to eliminate risks to health and safety of workers and other persons so far as is reasonably practicable. If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks, they must be minimised as far as is reasonably practicable and demonstrate commitment to staff safety.

### Recommendation 2

The agency's Work Health and Safety Strategy 2021–26 should also be amended to ensure mechanisms are available in the workplace that prioritise staff safety and staff empowerment to provide feedback (as detailed on page 16 of the report).

## Leadership

In high performing organisations, safety as part of general well-being should be embedded as a key element of leadership. To achieve this, managers should be familiar with key organisational safety and wellbeing metrics and reports such as the people performance scorecard, injury rates and trends as well as anonymised EAP data that provides drivers of leadership conversations, and where necessary, interventions. The SES should be accountable for safety and wellbeing measures to be included in their individual SES performance agreements. Individual SES should have tangible commitments regarding aspects of staff safety and wellbeing. These commitments should include practical and measurable actions.

This review has found **confusion exists at the service centre level regarding managerial decision-making**. This creates a key risk for leadership effectiveness and reduces the confidence levels of managers and team leaders. This lack of clarity is quite broad and extends from temporary centre closure authority and staff performing security duties, to the right to exclude high-risk customers. Given the changes that were made to leadership roles during the pandemic and later BAU reset, it is very timely that detailed communication is provided to managers and team leaders regarding their decision-making authority on issues affecting staff safety.

This review has found that handover procedures when there are leadership changes or temporary performance arrangements in local leadership teams vary between sites and are locally developed and managed. This creates a risk that critical safety and security information is not communicated effectively or comprehensively when there is a change of leadership arrangement at a service centre. This issue can be addressed by the development of a service centre handover checklist, in consultation with service centre leadership, and implemented consistently across the network.

Table 2 lists security and safety topics that should be included in a handover checklist.

**Table 2: Handover checklist**

Theme	Action items
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening and closing procedures</li> <li>• Emergency responses procedures – aggression (ERPAs)</li> <li>• Operation of closed-circuit television (CCTV), remote door override and duress alarms</li> <li>• Security guards</li> <li>• Emergency plan</li> <li>• Security Branch contact</li> </ul>
WH&S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation of the WH&amp;S committee, representatives and site reports</li> <li>• Occupants of HSR, harassment contact officer and first aid officer</li> <li>• Co-located agency key service officers for WH&amp;S</li> </ul>
Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers on MSPs</li> <li>• OMCs and PSSOs for customers on MSPs</li> <li>• Any known active serious customer aggression threats being managed</li> </ul>
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local police contact</li> <li>• Local job service provider (JSP) contact</li> <li>• Key contacts for other critical community stakeholders</li> </ul>

A further issue that affected leadership during the review was the ratio of leadership to staff within service centres. In service centres that carry a significant volume of challenging customers, leaders play a critical role in responding to customer aggression. Staff rely on and draw confidence from leadership experience when customer aggression incidents occur. This is exacerbated by the fact that the advanced level of customer aggression training discussed later in this report is routinely only provided to staff in leadership positions.

Under the current staff allocation model, leadership is allocated to a service centre based on staff numbers. The number of leaders at each service centre is based on the headcount of service officers, noting that the minimum number is 1 service centre manager.

In general, service officers report to team leaders (TLs) and TLs report to service centre managers. Service centre managers have fewer direct reports on average, noting specific responsibilities for pastoral care, property, community stakeholder engagement, contact with MP/senator offices and so on.

Variations in the ratio may be requested by national managers (NMs) via a business case to the general manager (GMs). Variations from the endorsed structure are approved for a specified time period only, and a review of variations is undertaken each month.

It is important that decisions regarding staff allocation take into account the additional leadership responsibilities for staff safety. Allocation of leadership roles in service centres should be based on a matrix that takes both staff ratios and centre risk profiles into account. This should include the number of customer aggression incidents being experienced by the service centre, as well as the number of customers managed on an MSP.

Table 3<sup>19</sup> provides the current formula for allocation of leadership within service centres. It is necessary to augment this formula with the factors outlined above.

<sup>19</sup> Source: Face to Face Services Division, Services Australia

**Table 3: Leadership within service centres**

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**Recommendation 3**

Individual SES performance agreements should contain at least 1 practical commitment regarding staff safety and wellbeing. This commitment should be drawn from the key wellbeing documents such as the strategy, EAP data, and/or the people performance scorecard.

**Recommendation 4**

Urgent communication should occur to leadership at service centres regarding their decision-making authorities, and role clarity on issues affecting staff safety.

**Recommendation 5**

Allocation of leadership roles in service centres should be based on a matrix that takes both staff ratios and centre risk profiles into account. This should include the number of customer aggression incidents being experienced by the centre, and the number of MSP customers.

## Security features in service centres

The agency incorporates a range of security features that are standard in all service centres. These features include security systems and physical design elements that help to reduce the risk of customer aggression.

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### Recommendation 6

Upgraded security systems and enhanced security features (as detailed on page 21 of the report) should be incorporated into the standard security design of all service centres.

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21 Services Australia, *Physical Security Infrastructure* [intranet page], Services Australia, 2023

## Service centre design

The design of service centres is critical to staff safety. It is important that the physical design of service centres takes into account the risk posed by customer aggression as the overall design combines with security policy settings to create a positive safety ecosystem.

In 2019, the agency embarked on a project to transform service centres with the primary goal of improving the customer experience and creating a welcoming atmosphere for customers. The previous service centre design was seen as dull and unwelcoming, with an overt application of security-based design controls, such as timber slat screens to discourage customers from entering certain areas and easily identified secure interview desks for serving customers with challenging behaviours.<sup>22</sup>

The agency has indicated that the design of contemporary service centres blends a trauma-informed approach, which creates an environment where customers feel safe and supported, with crime prevention through environmental design, which uses aspects of the layout and design to discourage a range of activities including violence. The incorporation of these concepts influences the physical design, space and layout, and social psychology concepts such as behaviour of people in relation to colour, lighting, temperature and queuing.<sup>23</sup>

As part of improving the customer experience, the agency has also introduced a new service delivery model, 'Ways of Operating' (WoO), which is a customer-centred approach aimed at removing pain points that may cause frustration. Queues and long wait times were identified as a cause of customer frustration, and the agency introduced booked appointments to help alleviate this. Booked appointments reduce queues and wait times, and enable customers to attend a service centre at a time that suits them. However, the online booking of appointments is only available in the Centrelink program, and subsequently large numbers of customers are still required to attend a service centre to book an appointment.

**The contemporary design model has been well received by staff** in that it creates a better working atmosphere and supports the new WoO approach. From a safety standpoint, it also assists by reducing the potential for customer frustration, through its colour choices and modern welcoming atmosphere. The new model also allows some minor augmentation to suit specific service centres, but the focus is to maintain individual layouts consistent with the overall design principles.<sup>24</sup>

It is important that service centre design takes into account a model best placed to minimise the risk of customer aggression and eliminate and mitigate risks to staff safety. The agency's contemporary design model, with minor enhancements, will help address security concerns, as well as strike a balance between the desired service excellence and staff safety.

'...there is too much accessibility for customers who think they can wander through... there is also the privacy issue for [customer] information' – **Service Officer**

Of the current service centre design features in use by the agency, the optimal model from a staff safety viewpoint is known as the 'lobby design'. The lobby was developed to address the higher risks present in service centres with larger customer numbers or more complex customer demographics.<sup>25</sup> This design concept is currently in use at several sites that would be considered high-risk from the number of customer aggression incidents, including the Bankstown Service Centre, which was visited during the review.

22 Services Australia, *Physical Security Infrastructure* [intranet page], Services Australia, 2023

23 Services Australia, *Service Centre Design Handbook*, Services Australia, 2022

24 Services Australia, *Service Centre Models*, Services Australia, 2023

25 Services Australia, *Customer Lobby Blueprint Concept Evaluation* [report], Services Australia, n.d.

Currently the agency has limited the implementation of the lobby design to service centres with over 250 customer contacts per day.<sup>26</sup> It is critical that this restriction be removed and the design principles and security features of the lobby become standard features in all service centres at risk of high levels of customer aggression. In other service centres, features of the lobby design should be implemented commensurate with the level of risk (noting the need for modification depending on the size and layout of individual service centres).

The design principles for the lobby include:<sup>27</sup>

- a welcoming entrance which is bright, airy and non-threatening
- enhanced security for staff and customers by creating a safe space to greet and triage customers
- options to engage with high risk customers
- tailored streaming for customers including booked appointments and controlled movement of customers throughout the service centre.

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With some minor alterations, this lobby design is an optimal balance between the needs of the agency to achieve a modern look and feel to its service centres, and the need to protect staff and other customers from customer aggression. In addition to the security features outlined above for the lobby, the following features would enhance staff safety:

- A customer self-check-in kiosk inside the lobby main entrance doors to immediately engage customers in a positive process upon entry and alert staff as to the identity of customers, including those subject to a MSP, at the earliest opportunity.
- Service counters that create a natural safety barrier between staff and customers and allow staff the opportunity to withdraw safely from the counter if necessary.
- A barrier is created between the lobby and the seated service area where customers are assisted through appointments. This is assisted by a narrow egress point that can allow security guards to naturally protect in the event of an incident. s47E(d)

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<sup>26</sup> Services Australia, **New Service Environment/Service centre models**, [intranet page], Services Australia, n.d.

<sup>27</sup> Services Australia, *Security Sub-Group EC22-004581*, Services Australia, 28 February 2023

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## Emergency response procedures – aggression

The agency has ERPAs that outline the roles and responsibilities of staff in response to an actual or threatened customer aggression incident. Within each service centre, an Aggression Response Team (ART) comprised of staff in leadership positions manages the site's emergency response.

The ERPAs include the agency's aggressive behaviour response model (ABRM), and offer scenario-based guidance to respond to a range of aggression incident types, as well as general information relating to post-incident procedures, emergency contacts, and police responses.<sup>28</sup>

The ERPAs were reviewed and found to provide an adequate response to emergency events, and contain procedures covering s47E(d)

The design of centres, however, are critical in supporting the effective execution of these procedures. The design concepts of the lobby provide the maximum support for the enactments of s47E(d) procedures.

The above-named 'lobby design' and security feature changes all serve to create an environment that best allow ERPAs to be effectively implemented.

To assist the likelihood of successful ERPA execution, as well as ensure security and associated safety form a part of everyday settings at service centres, this review recommends the establishment of a security officer role at service centres at risk of high levels of customer aggression.

This role could be included as part of an existing centre role, as is currently the case of the HSR officer. The SO would work in collaboration with both the centre manager/team leaders and the HSR officer to ensure security is prioritised and understood in the centre.

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### Recommendation 7

The design principles and security features of the lobby design, including the additional features identified in the report, should become standard features in all service centres at risk of high levels of customer aggression. This includes an expansion of the online booking system and the customer self-check-in kiosk. In other service centres, features of the lobby design should be implemented commensurate with the level of risk (noting the need for modification depending on the size and layout of individual service centres).

### Recommendation 8

ERPAs should be exercised regularly to ensure staff familiarity with them. This exercise should include the security guards and co-located staff at the service centre.

<sup>28</sup> Services Australia, *Emergency Response Procedures – Aggression*, [intranet page] Services Australia, n.d.

## Recommendation 9

Service centres at risk of high levels of customer aggression should appoint a role known as security officer. This role would ideally be augmented to the duties of an existing staff member in the same manner as a HSR officer currently is.

## Security guards

Security guards are a key component of the agency's security strategy and provide an additional layer of security in service centres. Security guards act as a deterrent to reduce the likelihood of customers becoming aggressive towards staff and provide assistance in response to customer aggression incidents.

During the staff consultations conducted during the review, security guards were among the most raised topics of staff concern.

The range of issues raised included the:

- need for better role clarity
- number of guards in sites
- appropriateness of training that the guards receive
- effectiveness of the guards
- powers that guards have when they are presented with an aggressive customer.

The issue of security guards performing duties at service centres was one of the more complex issues considered during the review. The agency's security guarding functions are performed by various contracted providers engaged under whole-of-government contracts with a major national real estate and services firm. The contract engagement responsibilities for the agency reside in the Security Branch.

In November 2022, the agency commenced a review of security guard deployments, including the implementation of a principles-based framework that allows an objective assessment and comparison of relevant risks across all service centres based on consistent criteria to inform decisions of the allocation of guarding resources, including taking into account relevant local factors.<sup>29</sup> The assessment criteria included:

- customer aggression data
- customer demand
- service centre fit-out (for example, a lobby or other treatments that could reduce the need for a security guard)
- ongoing factors that could affect the safety and security of the service centre.

Currently, there is a mix of security guard deployments provided to the agency by the services firm. These include the provision of permanent guards (1 or 2 guards) at selected sites. At some sites, some second guards are provided under an ad hoc arrangement to provide a 2-guard model.<sup>30</sup> At the onset of the pandemic, the guarding role was changed to include a concierge function, which required security guards to control entry to the service centre and ask health-screening questions. At the conclusion of the pandemic response, the agency returned to a BAU model.

At this point however, **there seems to be a lack of clarity between the Security Branch and the services firm regarding the role of the security guards, and in particular the second ad hoc guard.**

<sup>29</sup> Services Australia, *Executive Committee Paper Security Arrangements EC 004446*, Services Australia, n.d.

<sup>30</sup> Source: Services Australia administrative data



When meeting with the review team, the services firm seemed of the view that the second guard was still performing an ad hoc COVID-19 role and was being provided under the ad hoc security contract. In reality, this is not the case. Urgent advice should be provided by the Security Branch to the services firm defining the role of the second guard as well as the service centres at risk of high levels of customer aggression they are required to perform these duties at. Where ongoing second guards are required, these second guards should be engaged as permanent guards and not as ad hoc guards.

**There also seems to be an expectation gap between the services firm and the agency with regards to the role and function of the security guard in the event of a customer aggression incident.**

The agency has acceptable standing operating procedures<sup>31</sup> covering the role and function of a security guard.<sup>32</sup> An excerpt of some of the relevant functions include:

- When requested, intervene and use negotiation techniques to defuse and resolve conflict.
- When requested, escort persons from the premises.
- If a customer unpredictably becomes physically aggressive and immediate action is necessary, the security guard should automatically assess and act on how they can best defend staff and customers from harm.
- With the direction of management, contact relevant emergency services.

The agency also reassures staff in the procedures that these guards are trained and qualified with the necessary skills to respond to security incidents, such as:

- violent and threatening behaviour
- intoxicated individuals
- conflicts between customers or staff
- destruction and theft of property.

Security guards working at service centres are required to sign a declaration stating they understand the procedures that cover what is expected of them.<sup>33</sup> **This review heard through feedback received that the standard of some security guards being provided to the agency are below the standard expected under their existing security guard procedures.**

This view was further reinforced by the services firm, who advised the reviewer that the security guards were performing an 'observe and report' function. In existing cases where security guards are meeting the required standard, it appears to be more through chance and the expertise of the individual guard, than through effective contract management.

During the review, Service NSW sites were visited and assessed as a comparator to the agency's sites. Service NSW guards are also provided by the same services firm. The customer base of Service NSW does present as a slightly lower risk cohort than the agency's customers; however, there are similarities. Regarding security guards, the Service NSW guards appeared visually to be more professionally outfitted and more fit-for-task than some of the agency guards observed during the review. This suggested it might be worthwhile for the agency's Security Branch to engage with their counterparts in Service NSW, to examine whether there are any opportunities for learnings regarding their management of security guards.

31 Services Australia, *Standard Operational Procedures for security guards deployed in service centres*, Services Australia, n.d.

32 Services Australia, *Standard Operational Procedures for security guards deployed in service centres*, Services Australia, n.d.

33 Services Australia, *Security Guard Induction Declaration*, Services Australia, n.d.



There were also issues raised by staff concerning the security guards' understanding of their common law powers within service centres, as well as the laws covering trespass. This is covered in the agency's security guard standard operating procedures but does not seem to be well understood by the security guards. This may be due to the high turnover of ad hoc guards within service centres.

The role of a security guard in a service centre experiencing customer aggression is critical to the success of some elements of the service centre design, as well as emergency procedures at that service centre. This is particularly the case in service centres at risk of high levels of customer aggression where 2 guards should be deployed. The current agency requirements and expectations of the guards is reasonable. These expectations should be made clear to the services firm and security guards being engaged by them. It is critical that security guards are trained and equipped to perform these functions. It was reported to the reviewer that an approach to market for security guards by the services firm had not been done for 'some years'. This would be a prudent time for this approach to market to be revisited.

#### **Recommendation 10**

Urgent advice should be provided by the Security Branch to the services firm defining the role expectation of the second guard. The second guard, where required, should be engaged under the permanent guarding arrangements.

#### **Recommendation 11**

The agency should ensure that the services firm are providing security guards that are trained and equipped to perform the role and functions described in the agency security guard standard operating procedures.

#### **Recommendation 12**

Service centres regarded as being at risk of high levels of customer aggression should be attended by 2 security guards at all times.

#### **Recommendation 13**

The Security Branch should undertake a quality assurance process regarding guarding quality and engage with staff to inform the process.

#### **Recommendation 14**

The agency should ensure that the new security officer role at service centres engages in the quality assurance process with the Security Branch regarding security guard issues.

#### **Recommendation 15**

The agency should work with the services firm to conduct a refreshed approach to market for security guard services for the agency.

## Legislation

It is important that the agency maximises protections within its legislative environment, to better protect workers and customers from customer-initiated violence and aggression. During the staff engagement sessions, a series of issues were consistently raised by staff regarding the legislative framework in which they are operating and its relationship to their feelings of safety. Many of the issues raised were valid, and this review seeks to address those concerns.

Improving the legislative framework would better protect staff within the agency and involves both better using existing legislative measures and advocating for legislation that better meet staff safety needs. These areas are discussed in more detail below.

## Trespass

Currently, there is sufficient legislation available to the agency to deal with customers who trespass on the agency's premises. The *Public Order (Protection of Persons and Property) Act 1971* (POPPA) Subsection 12(2) creates an offence if a person refuses or neglects, without reasonable excuse, to leave Commonwealth premises on being directed to do so by a police officer or a person authorised to give directions for the purpose of section 12 of the Act. Each service centre has leaders delegated to issue this direction.

- A person who:
  - Engages in unreasonable obstruction in relation to the passage of persons or vehicles into, out of, or on Commonwealth premises, or otherwise in relation to the use of Commonwealth premises, commits an offence, punishable on conviction by a fine of not more than 20 penalty units.
  - Being in or on Commonwealth premises, behaves in an offensive or disorderly manner commits an offence, punishable on conviction by a fine of not more than 20 penalty units.
  - Being in or on Commonwealth premises, refuses or neglects to leave those premises on being directed to do so by a constable, a protective service officer, or a person authorised in writing by a minister or the public authority under the Commonwealth occupying the premises to give directions for the purposes of this section, commits an offence, punishable on conviction by a fine of not more than 20 penalty units.

In respect of the trespass provisions, there are a number of actions the agency could take to better position it to activate trespass law. These include:

- MSP letters should clearly state that customers will be breaching trespass law if they enter agency premises.
- Where considered appropriate, service of the MSP letter should be conducted by a police officer, or at the least a process server, and in all cases conducted in a matter that is legally recognised as 'service'.

The agency will need to improve capability within the Security Branch to engage law enforcement services and track trespass prosecutions through the courts. This will support the ongoing assessment of risk of customers who have a matter before the courts arising from their behaviour on agency premises.

## Workplace protection orders

A legislative gap exists for Commonwealth employees within agency premises, in relation to threats of or actual customer aggression.

State and territory protection order schemes are not designed to protect Commonwealth workplaces, because:

- In most states and territories, protection orders are directed to protect individuals, rather than workplaces. While an order can prevent a customer from approaching or contacting a particular worker, the order cannot prevent the customer from attending other agency offices.
- In most states and territories, individuals need to personally bring an application in their own name. This is not usually recommended for workers due to the risk they may be personally targeted.
- State and territory courts only have the power to make orders protecting locations in the particular state or territory. This makes it especially difficult to protect offices in cross-border towns.
- A protection order obtained in 1 state or territory is not always recognised in another, creating enforcement issues.
- Due to the differences in regimes, there are significant inconsistencies in the agency's ability to protect workers and customers in some states and territories over others.<sup>34</sup>

The review heard that service centre staff were consistently concerned about seeking a restraining order personally against a threatening customer, which runs the risk of both identifying the staff member to the customer and potentially revealing their personal address. Staff expressed feeling that they were being left to their own devices in pursuing this protection mechanism. This is perhaps reinforced by the fact that the agency is unable to identify how many restraining orders are currently active. It will be therefore impossible for the agency to understand this issue from both a staff support need and strategic perspective.

The review heard from a leader located in the ACT that local state/territory legislation deals with this issue effectively. The *Personal Violence Act 2016 (ACT)*<sup>35</sup> provides a system of protection for those who fear or experience personal violence (other than from a family member) or workplace violence. It ensures that people living and working in the ACT have access to additional civil protections where necessary to ensure their safety, including within the workplace.

It would be optimal for the ACT provisions to be adapted for national use. Obviously, this extension would benefit all Commonwealth service delivery employees. It is a key staff safety prevention mechanism to better manage customers who present a threat to an agency staff member. In particular, it is an effective mechanism to deal with fixated persons and customers who do not respond to service restrictions through MSPs.

To give effect to this measure, the agency's Security Branch will need to be in a position to both support the service centre in obtaining an order, and monitor the order throughout its existence. Ideally, the Security Branch being at arms-length from the customer is well placed to manage this engagement.

<sup>34</sup> Australian Government, *Progress of Commonwealth Workplace Protection Orders Bill (EC23-002437)*, Australian Government n.d.

<sup>35</sup> Attorney-General – Justice and Community Safety Directorate, *Personal Violence Act 2016*, ACT Government, 24 May 2023

## Assault on Commonwealth frontline worker

In recent years, frontline workers have been subjected to ever worsening behaviour from members of the community amid what appears to be an environment less tolerant of inconvenience. Over recent years, the number of Australian states/territories assaults against frontline workers has been increasing. In response to this issue, jurisdictions have progressively enacted additional penalty provisions to apply to persons who assault frontline workers such as paramedics, police, and fire and rescue officers.

Whilst it is too early to properly gauge the effectiveness of this legislation, anecdotally, the fact that the provisions were well publicised when implemented, has acted as a deterrent on many occasions. Most importantly, it sends a strong signal to both the community and front line staff that they are valued and their safety is prioritised.

Similar to policing, the agency operates in an environment that could be described as an 'agency of last resort'. There is no other area of government within the Commonwealth that deals with a customer cohort that presents with such a high volume of complex behavioural risk factors. This fact emphasises the necessity for the agency to be customer focused and sophisticated in its service response, but equally emphasises that its approach to customer safety should be similarly sophisticated.

This review is recommending that consideration be given to creating a penalty provision for assaulting a Commonwealth frontline worker. This provision could cover Commonwealth employees engaged in service delivery roles within agency premises or out-posted in the community.

In its practical application, when a person is convicted of assaulting a staff member under current state or territory assault provisions, a Commonwealth penalty provision would exist that allows the judicial officer to apply an additional penalty provided for in the Commonwealth legislation. This would involve the creation of both the Commonwealth penalty provision and complementary amendment to state and territory sentencing acts to allow this additional penalty to be applied. This is a well-practiced process for seeking such amendments.

The importance of this penalty is two-fold, in that it provides a deterrent to offending if well publicised, and sends a strong internal signal to staff that their safety is valued by the Commonwealth, and the risk associated with their work is recognised in law.

### Recommendation 16

The existing Commonwealth Trespass provisions should be better used by the agency as a response to threats or actual customer aggression.

### Recommendation 17

The current *ACT Workplace Protection Order* provisions should be adopted for use by the Commonwealth as a staff protection mechanism nationwide.

### Recommendation 18

Consideration should be given to the creation of a national penalty provision and associated state and territory supportive amendments for the assault of a Commonwealth frontline worker.

### Recommendation 19

In addition to the publicity required to inform the community of the recommended legislative amendments, consideration should be given to a publicity campaign to encourage the community to respect Commonwealth frontline workers for the necessary and difficult work they do.

## Security Branch

The agency's Security Branch has a total of <sup>s47E(d)</sup> staff (see Appendix A), who perform a wide range of protective security functions across the agency (see Table 5). The Security Branch is responsible for putting in place necessary security governance, including security policies and procedures that assist the agency to protect its people, information and assets against security threats. They provide and apply security services and strategies to the agency's daily activities and support the agency to meet the requirements of the Australian Government Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF).<sup>36</sup>

**Table 5: Security Branch functions**

Security Governance and Information Security section	
<b>Security governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• manage the agency's security governance program providing advice and services aligned to the Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF)</li> <li>• develop and maintain the agency security plan</li> <li>• develop and maintain the protective security risk management plan</li> <li>• coordinate the development and maintenance of security policies and procedures</li> <li>• provide regular reporting of security maturity to the security governance committee</li> <li>• develop the annual report to Attorney-General's Department (AGD) on the agency's security maturity including advising AGD about significant security incidents</li> <li>• coordinate activities to respond to the insider threat.</li> </ul>
<b>Information security</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support the agency to maintain the confidentiality, integrity and availability of its official and classified information holdings</li> <li>• promote strategies in partnership with business to foster a positive security culture</li> <li>• deliver agency-wide security awareness training, security communications and security culture related resources</li> <li>• provide advice to the agency's business areas on the identification, assessment and appropriate security controls required for the handling of sensitive and security classified information.</li> </ul>
Personnel Security section	
<b>Eligibility and suitability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide guidance and support in applying measures that ensure staff and contractors are eligible and suitable to access agency and Australian Government resources</li> <li>• undertake eligibility and suitability assessments for staff and contractor engagements</li> </ul>
<b>Security clearances</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• manage the agency's security clearances.</li> </ul>

<sup>36</sup> Attorney-General Department, *Protective Security Policy Framework*, n.d.

### Physical Security Operations section

Respond to customer aggression and workplace violence, information loss, damage to property, and provide real-time threat management advice

s47E(d)

Provide security advice and support

s47E(d)

Undertake security reviews/assessments

s47E(d)

Assist with providing security training

s47E(d)

Security guard management

s47E(d)

### Physical Security Infrastructure section

Manage the agency's electronic security systems

s47E(d)

Manage the security components of capital works in all agency sites

s47E(d)

Deliver security services to the Canberra corporate offices

s47E(d)

Based on the work completed during this review, the Security Branch functions do not adequately reflect the scope of functions necessary to achieve outcomes required to meet staff safety needs. In order to meet agency requirements, the branch will need a capability lift.

The additional functions that need to be met by the Security Branch are:

## **Contract management**

The review has only had time to examine broadly the contract relationship between the agency and the services firm that provides its contracted security guards (referenced earlier in this report). However, regarding this contractual relationship, there is a clear gap between the agency's stated expectation and what is delivered by the services firm. The Security Branch requires additional contract management support to both monitor performance and achieve greater value against this contract. The current use of ad hoc security guards is costly and can be reduced by more effectively determining the number of permanent guards required.

## **Engagement with law enforcement**

The agency requires an effective relationship with Australia's state and territory policing agencies, which currently, in respect of managing and responding to customer aggression, occurs on an ad hoc basis.

s47E(d)

## **Establish a security operations response capability/centre**

There is a requirement to establish the Security Branch on an operations footing with the capability to respond in real time as security incidents occur. The functions to be performed by this capability include:

s47E(d)

## **Department of Corrections' (DoC) engagement**

The agency, through the Incarcerated Customer Servicing Team, supports customers in approximately 150 correctional facilities (including youth justice centres, prison work camps, transitional rehabilitation programs and mental health units) across Australia. Services to incarcerated customers support their access to entitlements, and compliance with obligations while incarcerated and after release.

Services offered are aligned with 3 stages of a customer's incarceration:

- On entry into custody – ensuring payment accuracy and minimising debt by suspending or cancelling payments and ensuring that child support assessments are correct.
- During custody – supporting customers who remain eligible for payments to access highly specialised drugs.
- Prior to release from custody – reconnecting customers to appropriate payments and services.

The agency is limited in its ability to effectively support all customers, due to customers being released without notice from remand upon attendance at a court hearings, and where there is limited corrections transitional support to ensure customers have identity documents and a bank account to enable access to payments upon release.



In addition to the role undertaken by the Incarcerated Customer Servicing Team, there is a need within the agency's Security Branch to maintain a liaison relationship with DoC, to mitigate a number of safety risks by ensuring the agency can effectively service prisoners prior to their release, limiting their need to attend service centres.

Under an enhanced Security Branch and DoC engagement, the agency could lobby correctional facilities to work earlier with high-risk incarcerated customers ahead of their release to ensure they provide consent for their release date to be shared with the agency. Doing this would ensure benefits can be re-started on release if necessary, and encourage DoC to liaise with financial institutions to re-open prisoner savings accounts prior to their release.

## State/territory parole boards engagement

The Security Branch could also improve liaison with state and territory parole boards to ensure, when considered necessary, requests are made for parole boards to impose conditions on customers that reinforce servicing restrictions included in MSPs as part of their pre-release parole conditions.

### Recommendation 20

The functions of the agency's Security Branch should be enhanced so it can respond immediately to customer aggression incidents as they occur, engage with law enforcement agencies and manage business as usual (BAU) security and safety requests (as detailed on page 34 of the report).

## Staff uniforms

To coincide with the implementation of the 'Ways of Operating' (WoO) accompanying the contemporary service centre design, the agency provided staff with a new uniform design. The corporate wardrobe provides a range of uniform options for staff incorporating the colour blue and includes Indigenous designs.

During the staff engagement sessions conducted during this review one of the most significant areas of concern regarding safety was the distinctive and easily recognisable uniform, which according to staff, makes them visible to customers when outside the service centre. Staff reported that this contributed to them feeling more unsafe when outside the centre during breaks and travelling to and from work. While there were few actual examples of staff being approached outside of the workplace because they were identified due their uniform, it was the potential for staff to be identified and approached in the community that caused the most concern. This issue was also raised by the CPSU during the review engagement. The most significant issues stemmed from the use of the bright blue polo shirt worn by a significant number of service centre staff. This issue was also raised during the contemporary design test phase, highlighting the fact it is not a new issue in and of itself.

'The uniforms. They have good and bad points. They make us easily recognisable as staff members when the customers attend a site, however conversely, make us highly visible in the communities in which we live, as well as making staff (and their family members, if the staff member is in uniform) easily identifiable targets' – **Service Officer**

Incorporating a staff uniform into the agency's service centres is understandable, as it clearly separates staff from customers and provides a professional corporate appearance. In organisations that have safety highly prioritised, and where behavioural expectations are communicated effectively to customers, the wearing of a uniform has a strong protective element that can prevent violent behaviour.

To help assuage staff concern on this issue and still maintain the agency's goals regarding a uniform appearance, the agency could assist staff by providing another option to the bright blue coloured polo shirt. In the current wardrobe palette, a light blue coloured polo shirt consistent in colour with the existing checked shirt options could be offered as an additional option to staff.

Staff consultation is extremely important when it comes to uniform design. Staff representatives should be included on any design committees when new uniforms are being considered.

### Recommendation 21

The agency should incorporate a light blue polo shirt option as part of its staff uniform wardrobe offering.

### Recommendation 22

Staff representatives should be included on any uniform design committees considering any future corporate wardrobe changes.

## Ensuring policy and program design responses reduce customer aggression opportunities

During the course of this review, it emerged that there is a need to ensure that policy and program responses take into account the possibility for customer aggression. For example, under the current policy settings, the benefit types that were consistently reported to have the most potential to generate customer frustration potentially leading to aggression were urgent and advanced payments. Of the 2,741 customers already being managed under a MSP as at 30 June 2023, 6,776 have applied for an urgent payment over the life of their MSP.<sup>37</sup>

An urgent payment is the early delivery of part of the customer's next entitlement. A customer who receives an early payment will have their next payment reduced. Customers are eligible for an urgent payment if they are in severe financial hardship due to exceptional and unforeseen circumstances and will not be put into further financial hardship by receiving the urgent payment. Customers are typically eligible for 2 urgent payments in each 12 month period (other than when extraordinary circumstances apply).<sup>38</sup>

A range of advance payments are available to a customer, dependent on the type of income support payment or benefit received. All advances are early delivery of a lump sum, paid into the customer's normal bank account and are considered as a 'loan of money' to be repaid in fortnightly instalments.<sup>39</sup>

Customers who present at service centres requesting an urgent payment are redirected to use self-service, or contact telephony either on their own device or on telephones located within service centres.<sup>40</sup> [s47E\(d\)](#)

Customers who present at service centres enquiring about an advance payment are directed to use self-service, unless they present with barriers and are requiring staff assistance to claim the payment.

<sup>37</sup> Services Australia administrative data

<sup>38</sup> Services Australia, *Urgent payments due to exceptional and unforeseen or extraordinary circumstances*, Services Australia, n.d.

<sup>39</sup> Services Australia, *Advance payments for pension customers*, Services Australia, n.d.

<sup>40</sup> Services Australia, *Urgent payments due to exceptional and unforeseen or extraordinary circumstances*, Services Australia, n.d.

<sup>41</sup> Services Australia, *Urgent payment request to be assessed at the service centre or by a processing team*, Services Australia, n.d.

It has been reported that on occasion, customers can be on the phone seeking an urgent or advance payment for lengthy periods of time, reportedly up to 2 hours in some cases, after which their request might be declined. In 2022–23, the average speed of answer for urgent payments was 9.57 minutes. Extended wait times, combined with a customer not being eligible for an urgent or advance payment, can lead to some customers taking their frustrations out on staff within the service centre. This aggression risk was raised on a number of occasions by staff during this review. If call wait times exceed acceptable parameters, communication should occur with service centres so that they can manage customer expectations and seek to minimise customer aggression.

From a policy design and program implementation point of view, it is important to understand the circumstances of people seeking urgent or advance payments. These customers will be dealing with an issue or set of circumstances that has created the need for the payment, on top of what is likely to be a set of pre-existing vulnerabilities presenting in the customer's life. This creates a set of risks in managing that customer's needs, that require a sophisticated response to ensure a safety risk within a service centre is not created by that customer.

During the review, the Community Partnership Specialist Officer (CPSO) co-located with the s47F(1) was visited and interviewed regarding the role. s47F(1) were also consulted. It is clear that the CPSO plays a valued and important role in providing a wrap-around service for vulnerable customers. This co-located service is preventing the need for customers to attend service centres, and therefore has a commensurate benefit in reducing incidents of customer aggression.

A hierarchy of payment methods are considered when paying an urgent payment or other immediate payment such as crisis payments or hardship advances to the customer. Having funds deposited directly into a nominated account is the preferred way, as it is more secure and safer for customers. The alternative is the EBT card, which allows immediate access to cash via the ATM network. EBTs are for one-off use and are issued to customers to meet their immediate needs.<sup>42</sup>

The review heard that the current process if the customer needs to be paid via an EBT card is to attend a service centre to collect the card in person.

During the 2022–23 financial year, 3,762 immediate and crisis payments were paid to customers on an active MSP. Of those 152 were via an EBT card.<sup>43</sup>

The review heard, through staff engagement, that problems re-opening closed bank accounts and more broadly, customers having difficulty nominating an account for their payments, was a driver of customer aggression. One of the only options available these customers is to seek payment via EBT card, which requires attending a service centre to be physically provided with the card.

This review is not positioned to provide detailed advice regarding policy and program design. Moreover, it seeks to highlight the importance of a customer-centric service delivery design model including a staff safety assurance lens during its development.

### Recommendation 23

The EBT card functionality should be enhanced, to reduce the need for customers to attend a service centre in person each time they are eligible for an immediate payment that needs to be paid via an EBT card.

### Recommendation 24

When undertaking policy development and program design the agency should take a customer-centric approach and this will be enhanced, by including a staff safety assurance lens.

<sup>42</sup> Services Australia, *Immediate payment by payment method Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card*, Services Australia, n.d.

<sup>43</sup> Source: Services Australia administrative data



## The role of social workers within Services Australia

Social workers play an important role in the agency. As of 31 May 2023, the agency employed 654 social workers, with 422 of these located across 219 service centres.<sup>44</sup> They provide 2 roles for the agency's customers and staff:

- Delivery of social work services – professional support for people experiencing vulnerability.
- Support for service delivery – enabling agency staff and external stakeholders to improve outcomes for people experiencing vulnerability.<sup>45</sup>

The 'support for service delivery' role includes working alongside service centre leadership teams to ensure staff are supported following a critical incident.

During this review, it was found that social workers play an important role in providing welfare and pastoral care for staff. They are well regarded by service centre staff for their attention to their welfare, particularly after serious incidents within a service centre.

Social workers can also play an important role in reducing customer aggression, by attending to customers presenting with the greatest vulnerability. This is particularly important in centres that have the most risk of customer aggression. When considering the allocation of social workers within service centres, it is important to take into account their staff support role within service centres.

### Recommendation 25

The allocation of social workers within service centres should take into account the importance of their support role within service centres, particularly for service centres that experience high levels of customer vulnerability and customer aggression incidents.

## Assisting leadership within service centres

To assist those staff who execute leadership responsibilities within service centres further, there a range of issues that require attention and improvements that can be made. These matters are detailed below:

- Emergency procedures must be exercised within service centres regularly. The Security Branch should undertake quality assurance of these mandated exercises.
- A SO role can be introduced within service centres to assist local leadership.
- Debriefs of workplace aggression incidents must be mandatory. Leadership must be provided with formal guidance in the running of debriefs.
- Training for leadership should include developing an understanding of 'micro-aggressions' and their relationship to reporting incidents of aggression.
- Messaging about respecting staff on customer facing screens in service centres creates expectations for acceptable behaviour.

'Support of staff after an incident could be improved. Should be an independent person who the office can get support from. Make it mandatory to talk to someone. People often do not feel comfortable raising issues with their fellow workers'  
– **Service Officer**

### Recommendation 26

The agency should implement a range of solutions to assist leadership execute their responsibilities for staff safety within service centres. This includes enhanced emergency response guidelines, security support, training and debriefing frameworks and customer signage (as detailed on page 38 of the report).

<sup>44</sup> Source: Services Australia administrative data

<sup>45</sup> Services Australia, *Social Work Servicing Strategy 2021–25*, Services Australia, 2021

## Small and geographically dispersed service centres

In delivering services to the Australian community, the agency has a number of small and geographically dispersed service centres, including remote service centres. [s47E\(d\)](#)

### Recommendation 27

The agency should enhance staff protections, personal duress systems and remote monitoring (as detailed on page 39 of the report) in small and geographically dispersed service centres.

## Co-located agencies

[s47E\(d\)](#)

Currently, the [s47E\(d\)](#)

Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) all have staff located within various service centres, providing a more holistic one-stop-shop service to customers.<sup>46</sup>

[s47E\(d\)](#)

The review was provided with a draft protocol agreement between the agency and partner agencies, developed by the agency, which outlines jointly considered servicing arrangements, including in instances of customer aggression and where the agency or partner agency has implemented service channel restrictions for a customer. The approach outlined in the draft protocol agreement would seem to address the concerns raised by staff if implemented. Close and formalised relationships between the agency and partners are required at the service centre level to implement arrangements consistent with the draft protocol agreement to mitigate this risk.

It is also important that staff from co-located agencies are included in the emergency response arrangements at service centres and their staff are included in emergency exercises.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Services Australia, *Design and Partnerships/Shared premises* [intranet page], Services Australia, 25 November 2022

<sup>47</sup> Services Australia, *Emergency Response Procedures – Aggression* (pages 7 & 37), Services Australia, n.d

As part of the engagement with this review, the CPSU has also provided a submission regarding concerns raised by representatives of co-located NDIA staff, regarding their safety at service centres.<sup>48</sup> A summary of these concerns is:

- NDIA staff felt a disconnection with safety management systems, risk management procedures and emergency response planning, when working in co-located workplaces.
- NDIA staff are not included in decision-making processes, despite these decisions affecting their health and safety at work.
- NDIA staff in co-located workplaces acknowledged safety culture is markedly different to that of their colleagues working in NDIA controlled workplaces. The NDIA's health and safety ethos of local empowerment, local design and implementation, and local decision-making did not extend to them.

### **Recommendation 28**

The draft protocol agreement between the agency and partner agencies should be progressed with co-located agencies with a view to formalising the arrangements within the agreement.

### **Recommendation 29**

The agency should ensure that staff working in service centres from co-located agencies are included in emergency management planning and exercises.

### **Recommendation 30**

SOs recommended for service centres should ensure staff from co-located agencies understand and are consulted on the safety responses used in the relevant centre.

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<sup>48</sup> Community and Public Sector Union, *Submission on behalf of NDIA workers in co-located service centres*, CPSU, n.d.



## Terms of reference 2

Examine the effectiveness of the work health and safety system, regarding the effectiveness of controls in respect of customer related violence.

There is a range of data sets that provide insights into the affect of customer-related violence on agency staff. The recording and analysis of customer aggressions has been supported better by the introduction of the agency's 'Our Safety' platform. This system has better capabilities than its predecessor, and as enhancements are implemented, it will enable further improvements to interrogate trend data.

Agency customer aggression data for service centre staff indicates overall incidents have reduced since July 2018, with a gradual increase trend during 2022–23. However, with the declining number of service centre contacts, the rate of incidents per customer contact has remained steady at 0.09% of customer contacts.<sup>49</sup>

Of the 176 injuries related to customer aggression in 2022–23, the majority (166) were for psychological/mental stress as the mechanism of injury.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the proportion of customer incidents remaining relatively steady, there is a view that there may be an under-reporting of customer aggression incidents. The new 'Our Safety' system and staff unfamiliarity with it may also be a driver of reduced incident numbers. However, promotion of reporting incidents coupled with increasing confidence with the new system, should provide evidence of whether these are validated reasons for the number of customer aggression incidents reported.

From an EAP utilisation perspective, service centre staff are the highest user of EAP services within the agency. Over the last 12 months, the EAP reported 1,053 new cases from service centre staff, representing 30% of referrals from the agency.<sup>51</sup>

An online survey of staff experiences of service customer violence and aggression was completed by 3,636 agency frontline staff in 2021. The survey indicated that within the previous 2-year period, 51% of survey respondents had experienced service customer violence and aggression, with 48% indicating that they were concerned that they were at risk in the future.<sup>52</sup>

The attrition rate of service centre staff remains lower than that of other Customer Service Delivery Group staff, and the agency as a whole. Eleven per cent of the Face to Face Services Division have left the agency over the last 3 years, while just over 13% of staff left the agency for the same period. This is despite face-to-face staff contributing to around 17–18% of the total agency staffing numbers.<sup>53</sup>

### EAP services

It can be seen that face-to-face staff are strong users of the EAP service. Significant levels of EAP contact should be regarded as a positive, as it demonstrates a confidence by staff in the service provider. The fact that one of the most significant users of the EAP are Face to Face Services Division staff when compared to other employees, may indicate that staff are operating in a very dynamic environment.

49 Source: Services Australia administrative data

50 Source: Services Australia administrative data

51 Services Australia, *Breakdown of EAP utilisation, by business unit and state of residence, for May 2023 and the past 12 months*, Services Australia, n.d

52 Munns, S A, *Violence at Work: Reducing Assault and Abuse Experienced by Frontline Staff in Public Service Roles*. [Thesis for Doctor of Philosophy], Australian National University, 2023

53 Source: Services Australia administrative data

As mentioned previously, the majority of overall EAP access for its services is for personal matters rather than work-related issues. This is consistent, with personal matters accounting for between 76 to 86% of referrals over the last 12 months. Of the workplace issues that staff are receiving support for, most relate to workplace satisfaction, change in work roles and work trauma. Less than 3 staff each quarter contact EAP about customer-related issues.<sup>54</sup>

It is important that the agency maximises its use of EAP data in driving a safety culture throughout the organisation. This includes the People Division regularly circulating relevant anonymised trend data throughout the SES cohort, with the view to it acting as a driver for SES discussions with their managerial direct reports. This in turn will generate more detailed accountability and urgency regarding staff welfare needs. This of course is currently happening, but it is important to reinforce the necessity for this to occur, particularly in respect to service centres.

## Staff attrition levels at face-to-face service centres

The data regarding staff attrition levels in services centres are provided earlier in this section and indicate that whilst levels of attrition are climbing in the organisation, the levels within service centres are commensurate with that seen elsewhere in the agency. This is a positive sign, although it may be masked by the fact that one might expect a lower comparative level of attrition in service centres, given the high levels of staff satisfaction staff report experiencing, from being able to provide such direct support to the community. This is something that would be worthwhile understanding better.

**Table 6: Headcount of service centre leadership (APS5 to EL2) by length of tenure in classification and classification level (actual and/or substantive) as at 31/05/2023**

Length of tenure in classification	APS5		APS6		EL1		Total headcount of leaders	
	Actual – TPA	Substantive	Actual – TPA	Substantive	Actual – TPA	Substantive	Actual – TPA	Substantive
Less than 1 year	162	122	128	73	12	15	302	210
More than 1 year	80	137	108	111	16	25	204	273
<b>Total headcount of leaders</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>483</b>

What is apparent, however, is the fact there are high levels of acting and temporary leadership at service centres. Service centre leadership numbers are provided in detail in Table 6. This creates a risk around the experience levels of leadership in service centres and achieving high levels of training compliance. The data provided in Table 6 shows that most leadership staff in service centres have an average tenure below 12 months. This is particularly so in the APS5 cohort, which is the base leadership classification. It is recognised that this is a highly dynamic working environment, however, the agency should work to ensure turnover is kept at manageable levels and that risks around training compliance and skill maintenance are avoided as much as possible.

<sup>54</sup> Source: Services Australia administrative data

## Workplace injury data

An examination of workplace injury data provided by both the organisation and Comcare reveals that the vast majority of injuries reported in the service centre environment are mental health related, usually associated with stress. This is in contrast to the whole of agency data, which reveals that most injuries agency-wide are associated with trips and falls or trips and slips, with mental stress figuring in second position. This is a strong reflection of the nature of the work conducted in service centres and highlights the need for proactive mental health first aid as recommended in this report. It also highlights the need for a focus on mental health injury prevention in the service centres.

## Training

The time frame of this review has only allowed for a basic review and understanding of training capabilities at the agency as they relate to security and safety. Therefore, a training needs analysis has not been conducted.

Training was a key topic that featured in staff feedback. Staff identified gaps in their learning and offered suggestions and enhancements to increase the effectiveness of training. Staff also identified the need for specialised knowledge and skills to identify and monitor the behaviour of customers presenting with vulnerabilities, such as with mental health concerns and those under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Leaders discussed the value of being alerted early by staff for the potential of customer escalation and aggression.

The review has an understanding of the types of training products being offered to staff and has determined that they are appropriate for the learning needs of agency staff.

The training products offered to all staff are:

- Customer aggression emergency response
  - TRIMEVAC: Emergency response
- Recording customer aggression
  - CIMS: Introduction to customer incident management system (Centrelink)
  - CIRT: Introduction to the customer incident recording tool (Child Support/Medicare)
- Managed service plans
  - CIMS: Introduction to managed service plans
- Managing customer aggression
  - CIMS: Using SMS to help manage customer aggression
  - CIMS: Issuing a warning letter
  - Managing behaviour: Hearing loss
  - Work from home: Managing customer aggression and risk of suicide or self-harm
- Developing and implementing customer management strategies
- Develop a MSP
  - Managed service plan servicing strategies
  - CIMS: Record a MSP
  - CIMS: Review a MSP
  - CIMS: Approve a MSP
  - One main contact masterclass

The training products that are mandatory are:

- Managing aggressive behaviour program
  - Foundation level – communication skills
    - Communication foundations
    - Communicating with customers
    - Communicating decisions to customers

- Foundation level – managing aggressive behaviour
  - Managing aggressive behaviour overview
  - De-escalate with customers
  - Responding to customer aggression
- Consolidation level
  - Managing aggressive behaviour consolidation workshop
  - Maintaining safety with customers
- Leader level
  - Managing aggressive behaviour for leaders workshop

The advanced training products are:

- In person aggression
  - Advanced customer aggression training
- Phone based aggression
  - Advanced customer aggression – telephony

That said, there are areas in which the review has found that some these products could be enhanced. These areas are detailed below.

‘It would be great to ensure that all front-of-house leaders and even APS4 staff have regular de-escalation training and mental health training so that we are equipped to handle any aggression within the agency’  
– **Service Centre Manager**

## Advanced customer aggression training

One of the most important training products relevant to staff safety is the customer aggression training. There are 2 training delivery methods. First, there are online self-paced packages; most individual packages can be completed within 30–60 minutes. The advanced training is a 2-day program delivered face-to-face. The learning sensibly uses the ABRM as its core model. This is a strong model for developing a general understanding of when de-escalation is necessary. The ‘Advanced customer aggression training’ package has not been evaluated in detail, but it has received very positive feedback from staff who have undertaken it. It includes introducing role-plays to training scenarios and has a focus on aggression prevention and de-escalation. Overwhelmingly, staff expressed that an interactive and practical training element was essential for skill development, allowing them to test, practice and build confidence in their abilities to respond to customer aggression and de-escalation.

This advanced training is provided currently to service delivery leaders in service centres and staff in the Customer Aggression Response Team.

It is the recommendation of this review that this ‘Advanced customer aggression training’ or a similar model be developed for enterprise-wide use and be made available to all face-to-face staff who have regular personal contact with customers.

The mandatory training (‘Managing aggressive behaviour program’) completion rate is very high; however, the rate for the advanced training package as at 31 May 2023 is 49% of eligible staff. Concerns were raised in general by staff about the regularity of training being offered, particularly in instances where they missed a scheduled session and were not offered a prompt opportunity to ‘catch-up’.

## Emergency response procedures – aggression

The review has examined the detail of the ‘Customer aggression emergency response’ training module and finds it fit for purpose. It usefully explains the use of ERPA, the role of the ART, the use of the ABRM, and provides instruction on the use of the correct wording to engage the *Protection of People and Property Act 1971 (Cth)*. It is a useful introductory document for staff in service centres, in understanding the model of conflict de-escalations in use and a manner in which it used.

The current percentage of staff that have undertaken this training sits at 49%. Given the importance of this foundational training, this percentage should be higher.

## First aid training

Staff who nominate and are accepted to be first aid officers must undertake compulsory first aid training. This training is provided to staff in accordance with the required standard and delivered by contracted registered training organisations. It should be ensured that this training is refreshed over time, as the skills gained are perishable. In emergencies, staff rely on training they have been provided, and that can only occur if training is contemporary and practiced. This is particularly true of first aid training. Under current policy standards, first aid training is provided every 3 years and cardiopulmonary resuscitation training is strongly advised every 12 months.

The agency maintains its first aid officer information at a local level and is unable at an enterprise level to report completion rates. The agency is aiming to develop an agency-wide view through a proposed solution being progressed through its 'Our Safety' project.

## Mental health resources and training

Mental health support is important in workplaces where staff deal with high levels of stress or safety incidents.

In 2021, the agency commenced the implementation of a mental health capability framework (the framework) to protect and promote mental health. The implementation of the 'Phase 6 – Integrating mental health capability' products across the agency was in progress at the time of the review and is anticipated to take approximately 12 months.<sup>55</sup>

During phase 6, new resources are being integrated into team and staff activities that will continue to build and develop the agency's mental health capability including:

- Leader wellbeing conversations
- Leading through distress (for SES)
- Staff Distress Response Protocol (for managers and team leaders providing support to staff)

While some of these products were developed in anticipation of the release of the Royal Commission into the Robodebt Scheme, they have equal application regarding working in environments where critical incidents occur, such as service centres. This should be considered in the promotion and application of these products.

It is critical that service centre staff have the skills to recognise the signs of poor mental health in colleagues and have the right skills to respond to emerging incidents. The agency provides mental health first aid training that aims to provide staff with knowledge and skills to deliver initial mental health first aid to assist colleagues, customers and other workplace contacts who may develop a mental health problem or are experiencing a mental health crisis. The training, however, is not mandatory and the messaging relating to relevance to the role of staff does not appear to support broad participation.<sup>56</sup>

## Safety chat capability

The ongoing maintenance of skills in safety related training could be enhanced through the regular engagement of staff in online safety 'chat sessions'. The objective of these sessions is to keep safety active as a living issue, through the regular discussion sessions where issues can be raised, discussed and resolved. The engagement of service centre SO roles, as recommended in this review, would provide an optimal cohort to participate in these discussions, which could be facilitated by an enhanced Security Branch.

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55 Services Australia, *The APS mental health capability framework* [intranet page] Services Australia, 12 July 2023

56 Services Australia, *Mental health training* [intranet page], Services Australia, 12 July 2023



**Recommendation 31**

The 'Advanced customer aggression training' or a similar model should be used or developed for enterprise-wide use and be made available to all service centre staff.

**Recommendation 32**

The current percentage of staff that have undertaken the 'Customer aggression emergency response training' is 49%. Given the importance of this foundational training, the percentage completion rate should be lifted is a priority.

**Recommendation 33**

The agency should ensure that the first aid training offering is sufficiently augmented to include training in mental health first aid. Mental health first aid training should be provided to all staff in service centres. This should be broadly implemented in line with the agency's current mental health capability framework.



# Terms of reference 3

Examine the agency's approach to detecting, responding and managing service delivery to customers who demonstrate threatening, aggressive and/or violent behaviours.

## Managed service plans

Services Australia (the agency) may implement an MSP as an administrative action to tailor the services delivered to some customers. Authorised decision-makers approve MSP decisions.<sup>57</sup>

Reactive MSPs are implemented after a triggering event, when there is an ongoing risk to people's safety and agency property.

Proactive MSPs can be implemented without a triggering incident of customer aggression, to minimise risk of customer aggression or counterproductive behaviour, [s47E\(d\)](#)

MSPs are reviewed by local assessment panel (LAP) and ZAP structures.

[s47E\(d\)](#)

57 Services Australia, **Customer aggression – Managed Service Plan (MSP)**, Services Australia, n.d.

58 Services Australia, **Customer aggression – Managed Service Plan (MSP)**, Services Australia, n.d.

59 Services Australia, **Local Assessment Panels (LAPs) and Zone Assessment Panels (ZAPs) Structures**, Services Australia, n.d.

60 Services Australia, **Customer aggression – Managed Service Plan (MSP)**, Services Australia, n.d.

This review examined in detail the primary service delivery response to aggressive customers who present a risk to staff safety, known as MSPs. An examination of this process revealed that **the MSP model was an appropriate model of response given the need to balance the risks presented by the customer** with the need to maintain customers' access to payments and services provided by the agency.

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### Recommendation 34

The 'Customer aggression reporting dashboard' should be finalised into production as soon as possible, and receive continued support from Technology and Digital Programs to ensure completion.

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61 Source: Services Australia administrative data

s47E(d)

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- 62 Services Australia, ***Customer aggression – Managed Service Plan (MSP)***, Services Australia, n.d.  
63 Services Australia, ***Personalised Services***, Services Australia, n.d.

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64 Services Australia, ***Authentication – all member services*** [intranet page], Services Australia, 20 June 2023  
65 Services Australia, ***Authenticating a customer***, Services Australia, n.d.

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## Parole board engagement

As stated earlier in this report, a proactive engagement with state and territory parole boards will provide a useful opportunity for servicing restrictions to be reinforced, by getting them included as part of parole conditions.

### Recommendation 35

Customer aggression incident information should be integrated across systems that record customer interactions to provide an agency enterprise view of customer aggression information.

### Recommendation 36

The agency should lift its engagement with law enforcement agencies to enable better risk intelligence gathering and evaluation of customers subject to a MSP.

### Recommendation 37

MSPs that are not centrally managed by Personalised Services should be managed at a service centre other than the service centre normally frequented by the customer.

### Recommendation 38

The agency should consider technical options that better enable the storage and transfer of images of customer subject to MSPs who have committed or threatened serious aggression, between centres.

### Recommendation 39

Service centre leadership handover documents should include details of MSP customers that could attend the centre and include a photograph of that MSP customer.

### Recommendation 40

The MSP letter should be amended to include a stronger warning that attendance at a centre is a breach of the trespass provisions and that actions may be taken should attendance occur. Service of these notices should be conducted in a manner that legally satisfies 'service' in its legal meaning in the relevant state or territory.

**Recommendation 41**

The agency should seek authority to allow PSSOs and OMCs to dispense with proof of record ownership identity questions where it is an operational necessity to do so, in order to prioritise staff safety.

**Recommendation 42**

The agency should develop a relationship with state and territory parole boards, with a view to enabling servicing restriction notices to be included as part of a MSP prisoner's parole conditions.

**Recommendation 43**

The CIMS database should provide an opportunity for service centres to share urgent risk information, including photos, quickly between service centres when customers on MSPs are actively presenting themselves at centres. This should also provide visibility to the Security Branch at an enterprise level.

**Recommendation 44**

The CIMS filter that currently restricts the display of customer aggression incidents to the previous 12 months should be removed to enable staff to see a longer history of incidents.



# Terms of reference 4

Consult with staff and union representatives about the adequacy of arrangements to provide a safe and secure work environment.

## Staff engagement

This review acknowledges the importance of hearing the views of service centre staff, union representatives, leaders and SES.

Various opportunities were provided to staff and union representatives to contribute to the review and raise their concerns and issues associated with the terms of reference. Staff were forthcoming in raising issues important to them and eager to participate in the review. Refer to Appendix B on page 58 for primary themes raised by staff and union representatives.

## Staff engagement sessions

Six staff engagement sessions were undertaken with different audience cohorts. The staff engagement sessions were undertaken virtually via Microsoft Teams. Participants were invited to verbally respond to topics related to the review's key areas for consideration as outlined in the terms of reference. The reviewer provided the topics of interest in advance.

Notes of the discussion were taken by the review secretariat team. No staff names were recorded in the notes.

The reviewers' methodology for staff engagement is detailed in Table 8.

## Written submissions

Participants in the virtual staff engagement sessions were also invited to provide input for consideration in writing via email following the session, if they had additional information that was not discussed during the session. Seventy-three staff provided email submissions between 14 June 2023 and 10 July 2023.

## Service centre visits

The reviewer met with staff at Airport West Service Centre and engaged with staff on an informal basis during visits to service centres in Victoria (Yarra Service Centre, Darebin and Broadmeadows) and New South Wales (Redfern, Bankstown, Liverpool and Yass).

**Table 8: Staff engagement methodology**

<b>Audience/date</b>	<b>Participant selection</b>	<b>Topics of interest before session</b>
<p>CPSU agency delegates, including CPSU officials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WH&amp;S Officer – Legal Industrial Unit</li> <li>• National WH&amp;S Organiser</li> <li>• HSRs</li> </ul> <p>Held on 14/06/2023 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm</p> <p>30 participants</p>	<p>CPSU sought nominations of agency staff from a range of business areas (including social workers) and geographical locations.</p>	<p><b>Theme 1 – Safety culture within Services Australia</b> Exploring views on how embedded the safety culture is within Services Australia. Identifying barriers to enhancing that culture and exploring constructive ideas to improving culture.</p> <p><b>Theme 2 – Physical security within face-to-face centres</b> Hearing views on the adequacy of physical security within service centres. Exploring ideas on initiatives to improve physical security.</p> <p><b>Theme 3 – Mental health</b> Understanding levels of positive mental health within service centres. Learning where there are pressure points being experienced on mental health and what might be achieved in reducing that pressure.</p> <p><b>Theme 4 – Customer aggression</b> Discussing the adequacy of current policy in managing aggressive customers including the use of MSP.</p>
<p>Service centre managers session</p> <p>Held on 14/06/2023 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm</p> <p>95 participants</p>	<p>Face to Face Services Division sought up to 10 service centre manager nominations from each service zone.</p> <p>Representatives were asked to consider topics on behalf of their zone/service centre, including non-Face to Face Services Division staff in customer-facing roles i.e. social workers, assessment services.</p>	<p><b>Theme 1 – Levels of empowerment</b> Understand the levels of empowerment within service centres when managing safety and security and hearing about initiatives to improve frontline decision-making.</p> <p><b>Theme 2 – Knowledge exchange</b> Learning how effective current systems are in ensuring leaders have sufficient information regarding any threats to safety within service centres.</p> <p><b>Theme 3 – Responding to safety and security incidents</b> Gaining an understanding of the adequacy of the Services Australia response once incidents have occurred. Covering all areas of post-incident management.</p>
<p>Service centre representatives session 1</p> <p>Held on 21/6/2023 10:30 am – 12:00 pm</p> <p>106 participants</p>	<p>Face to Face Services Division sought one representative from each service centre.</p> <p>Representatives were asked to consider topics on behalf of their zone/service centre, including non-Face to Face Services Division staff in customer facing roles i.e. social workers, assessment services.</p>	<p>What are the critical safety/security issues you feel are most important to be considered in this review?</p>
<p>Service centre representatives session 2</p> <p>Held on 21/6/2023 1:00 pm – 2.30 pm</p> <p>97 participants</p>	<p>Representatives were asked to consider topics on behalf of their zone/service centre, including non-Face to Face Services Division staff in customer facing roles i.e. social workers, assessment services.</p>	
<p>Service centre representatives session 3</p> <p>Held on 21/6/2023 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm</p> <p>90 participants</p>		
<p>Executive leadership – national managers (NMs) and EL2s – including Assessment Services and Social Work Services</p> <p>Held on 22/6/2023 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm</p> <p>53 participants</p>	<p>Face to Face Services Division nominated all the NMs and EL2s from the division. Four EL2s from Assessment Services and 4 EL2s from Social Work Services were also invited.</p>	<p><b>Topic 1 – What features would you expect to see present in an organisation with a strong safety culture?</b></p> <p><b>Topic 2 – How might Services Australia systems be enhanced or better utilised to support the safety of all staff?</b></p> <p><b>Topic 3 – Noting the Terms of Reference for the Services Australia security risk management review, what issues do you see as important for the review to explore?</b></p>

## CPSU

The reviewer contacted the National Secretary of the CPSU on the first day of the review and met with s47F(1) CPSU National Secretary and other CPSU officials in the first week of the review. A follow up in person meeting took place with the CPSU National Secretary at their office during week 3 of the review.

CPSU officials were invited to nominate agency staff for a dedicated CPSU virtual staff engagement session.

Three CPSU submissions were provided for the review's consideration. The third submission was received in the final stages of the review. The reviewer notes that the recommendations in relation to staffing levels are largely outside of the terms of reference for this review. However, the review has considered leadership ratios in service centres and has arrived at a corresponding recommendation. The CPSU's recommendations are outlined in Table 9, Table 10 and Table 11.

**Table 9: Submission 1: CPSU's initial submission to Services Australia, for the Security Risk Management Review (received by the reviewer on 9 June 2023)**

Recommendation	Details
1	Review of safe staffing levels across Services Australia.
2	Improved and consistent roles for service centre security guards.
3	Immediate advice to be provided to all workers on incident reporting.
4	Site-specific risk assessments, including immediate improvements to eliminate or reduce identified hazards.
5	A zero tolerance approach to inappropriate customer behaviours across all areas of the agency and changes to MSP procedures.
6	Immediately review systems, which are not interlinking.
7	Cease the Ways of Operating.
8	Review and improve mandatory training.
9	Establishing culture, process and procedure to prioritise workplace safety.
10	Reintroduction of a subtle corporate uniform.
11	Introduction of additional legal protections for Services Australia workers.

**Table 10: Submission 2: CPSU's submission on behalf of NDIA workers in co-located service centres (received by the reviewer on 10 July 2023)**

Recommendation	Details
1	Co-located agencies must have formal interagency safety – security and emergency response agreements, being shared duty holders under WH&S legislative framework.
2	Co-located agencies must conduct site-specific risk assessments to develop the workplace's safety plans that address security and emergency responses – for locally coordinated implementation, monitoring and review.
3	Co-located agencies systematically notify security and safety alerts to each other as shared duty holders, this must include serious risks or threats to staff safety from an individual customer or client.
4	Co-located agencies must implement and facilitate effective cross agency WH&S committees and consultation procedures for workers and their representatives in shared workplaces and service delivery undertakings.

**Table 11: Submission 3: CPSU's further submission to Services Australia, for Security Risk Management Review (received by the reviewer on 18 July 2023)**

Recommendation	Details
1	An immediate cessation of any plans to further reduce staffing levels and undertake an urgent review, in consultation with workers of workloads, and develop a psychosocial risk management framework to identify all psychosocial hazards and risks across the agency, including already identified hazards of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work demands</li> <li>• unsafe staffing</li> <li>• exposure to traumatic events and material</li> <li>• violence and aggression.</li> </ul>
2	Identify and implement reasonably practicable control measures to eliminate or minimise these hazards.
3	Provide workers with the necessary information, training, instruction and supervision in relation to improved safety systems as a result of an appropriately reviewed psychosocial risk management framework.

## Senior executive service and non-agency engagement

Meetings with approximately 50 SES and executive leaders were necessary for the reviewer to understand the strategic and policy context of the agency and appreciate staff concerns within that context. The reviewer explored the agency's policy, procedures and service delivery processes relevant to the review with the business owners responsible, to supplement the review of key agency documents.

Engagement was also undertaken with stakeholders external to the agency to collect information and explore partnerships relevant to the review's terms of reference.

Refer to Appendix C for the list of meetings with agency SES and EL staff and external agency stakeholders.

# Appendix A

## Security Branch organisational chart

Security Governance and Information Security	Personnel Security	Physical Security Operations	Physical Security Infrastructure
Director	Director	Director	Director

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# Appendix B

## Staff engagement – key themes

1	Security guards				
	Security guard role clarity	Numbers of guards in sites	Training guards receive	Effectiveness	Lacking confidence in powers
2	Managed support plans (MSPs)				
	Customer compliance with MSPs	Lack of consequences for breaches	Complexity of recording MSPs	Consider centralised management, particularly for remote or geographically isolated service centres	
3	Uniforms				
	Staff easily identifiable in public	Can't always cover up uniform and logo	Makes staff a potential target and uncomfortable wearing them in community, particularly in remote or geographically isolated communities		
4	Design of sites				
	Customers can 'roam' around service centres	Unease at service centre manager being located in BOH	Secure interview modules (SIMs) desks offer better protection		
5	Leadership				
	Most felt empowered to make safety decisions	Currently resourced by staff numbers, not risk	Feel pressure to return to service quickly after incident		
6	Incident debrief and access to support				
	Need better debrief framework	Rushed to get back to customers	Formal debriefing not always promoted and incident recording burdensome		
7	Customer aggression and de-escalation training				
	Advance customer aggression training should be more widely available		Training for service centre staff is too infrequent, not reinforced, nor designed to equip staff with de-escalation strategies		
8	Entry and exit of sites				
	s47E(d)		s47E(d)		
	s47E(d)		Inadequate and unsafe car parking options, particularly in high traffic areas like shopping centres		



# Appendix C

## SES engagement

### Meetings with SES and EL staff

Who was engaged with (name and title)	Date
Brenton Halliday, General Manager Face to Face Services	31/05/2023
Sielito Sielito, Acting National Manager Social Work Services	05/06/2023
Michael Nelson, General Manager Workplace Relations	05/06/2023
Karen Lee-Archer, National Manager People Solutions	
Lisa Charles, National Manager Workforce Modernisation	
Katrina Zander, National Manager Zone South and North Australia	05/06/2023
David Cooke, Legal General Counsel Corporate s47F(1), Legal Deputy General Counsel	05/06/2023
Lily Viertmann, General Manager Corporate and Cross Governance Services	05/06/2023
Robert McKellar, National Manager Security	
Louise Hamilton, Acting General Manager Child Support and Tailored Services	06/06/2023
Stuart Brazendale, National Manager Zone Tasmania and North West Victoria	06/06/2023
Goran Stojanovski, National Manager, People Support – Non-Service Delivery	06/06/2023
Julie Hockey, General Manager Face to Face Transformation	06/06/2023
Benjamin Morris, National Manager Face to Face Transformation Strategy and Governance	
Bo Robertson, General Manager Operations Management	06/06/2023
Symone Anderson, National Manager Digital Operations	
Jarrold Howard, Deputy Chief Executive Officer Customer Service Delivery	13/06/2023
Region 1 June Zone Aggression Panel	19/06/2023
Juliette Edwards, Acting General Manager Working Age and Pension Programs	22/06/2023
Pene Fatcher, Acting National Manager Jobseeker, Students and Concessions	
Brenton Halliday, General Manager Face to Face Services	22/06/2023
Rosanna Arena, Acting National Manager Zone Sydney Metropolitan s47F(1) Tailored Programs s47F(1) Zone Sydney Metropolitan	
Robert McKellar, National Manager Security s47F(1) Security	03/07/2023
Louise Hamilton, Acting General Manager Child Support and Tailored Services	03/07/2023
Charmaine Smith, Acting National Manager Multicultural and Tailored Services	
Amie Davies, Acting National Manager People Solutions s47F(1) People Solutions s47F(1) Multicultural and Tailored Services	
Amie Davies, Acting National Manager People Solutions s47F(1) People Solutions s47F(1) People Solutions	03/07/2023
s47F(1) People Solutions	04/07/2023

Who was engaged with (name and title)	Date
Michael Nelson, General Manager Workplace Relations Cate Saunders, General Manager People	04/07/2023
Bob Lyons, General Manager Staff Processing Systems Derek Byrnes, General Manager Technology Strategy Business and Architecture Craig Douglass, National Manager Care Provider Systems Sheree Thorne, National Manager ICT Innovation and Design Jim Medcraft-Smith, National Manager Enterprise Architecture s47F(1) Staff Enabling Systems Josh Smith, National Manager Customer Relationships s47F(1) Care Provider Systems s47F(1) Enterprise Architecture s47F(1) Enterprise Architecture	04/07/2023
s47F(1) Customer Financial Capability s47F(1) Customer Financial Capability	11/07/2023

### Meetings with stakeholders outside of the agency

Who was engaged with (agency, name of officer and title)	Date
<b>CPSU</b>	
s47F(1), National Secretary s47F(1) Acting Deputy National President s47F(1), Health and Safety Officer Legal Industrial Unit	01/06/2023
s47F(1), National Secretary	14/06/2023
<b>Service NSW</b>	
s47F(1), Operations Centre Response Controller	15/06/2023
<b>Salvation Army – Melbourne Project 614</b>	
s47F(1), Commanding Officer s47F(1), Senior Operations Manager	22/06/2023
<b>EAP</b>	23/06/2023
<b>Security Services Firm</b>	03/07/2023
<b>Australian Public Service Commission</b>	
s47F(1) Director	13/07/2023
<b>National Disability Insurance Scheme</b>	
s47F(1), Chief Operating Officer s47F(1), Director Agency Security Manager	19/07/2023

# Appendix D

## Glossary of abbreviations and acronyms

ABRM	Aggressive behaviour response model
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AGD	Attorney-General's Department
AM	Member of the Order
APM	Australian Police Medal
APS	Australian Public Service
ART	Aggression Response Team
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
BAU	Business as usual
BOH	Back-of-house
CCTV	Closed-circuit television
CIMS	Customer incident management system
CPSO	Community Partnership Specialist Officer
CPSU	Community and Public Sector Union
Cwth	Commonwealth
DCEO	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
DoC	Department of Corrections
DOTL	Door open too long
DVA	Department of Veteran's Affairs
EACS	Electronic access control system
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
EBT	Electronic Benefit Transfer
EL	Executive level
ERPA	Emergency response procedures – aggression
F2F	Face-to-face
FOH	Front-of-house
HSR	Health and safety representative
ICT	Information and communications technology
LAP	Local assessment panel
MP	Member of Parliament
MSP(s)	Managed service plan
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NM	National Manager
NSW	New South Wales
OMC(s)	One main contact
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
POI	Proof of Identity
POPPPA	<i>Public Order (Protection of Persons and Property) Act 1971</i>
PoRO	Proof of Record Ownership
PSPF	Protective Security Policy Framework
PSSO	Personalised Services Service Officer
SAOC	Services Australia Operations Centre
SES	Senior executive service
SIM(s)	Secure Interview Module(s)
SO	Security Officer
TPA	Temporary Performance Allowance
WH&S	Work Health and Safety
WoO	Ways of Operating
ZAP	Zone assessment panel

