

Submission by the Senior Civil Service Association
on
The Role & Methodology of the Public Service Pay Commission

The SCSA welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the establishment of a Public Service Pay Commission.

The Association notes that the role envisaged for the Commission is to provide authoritative and evidenced based analysis on pay matters to assist officials in discharging their negotiation function. While the Association has always been recognised in pay determination matters as the body representing the views of the grades of Assistant Secretary and Deputy Secretary it is not a trade union and is not party to “negotiations” with our employer. This makes it all the more important that discussions and decisions in relation to the pay of the grades we represent are based on objective evidence and not driven by uninformed commentary & anecdote. We consider that a Commission with appropriate capacity and expertise has the potential to bring a balanced and informed perspective to decisions on pay determination at a senior level in our public service.

Minister Donohoe’s press release indicates that members of the Commission will be appointed through the Stateboards.ie system. It will be essential to ensure, notwithstanding any professional advice available to the Commission, that its membership has experience of pay determination processes including at senior levels in the private sector. As private sector comparators will inevitably be a key feature of the work of the Commission, knowledge and experience of the full package of benefits available to private sector comparators is important. Given the range of grades and levels within the public sector it might be appropriate to have different divisions or subcommittees of the Commission dealing with different levels.

The SCSA considers it essential that the Commission should be sufficiently resourced to engage reputable consultants with a high level of knowledge and expertise in pay determination and rates of pay in the private sector. The availability of data on private sector comparators should help inform debate in this area and bring greater transparency to the advisory process and ultimately to pay determination. In addition the SCSA considers that the process should allow for representative bodies such as the Association to submit evidence to the Commission and would welcome the opportunity to do so. Given the size of the public sector a significant level of resources will be needed to deal with the many grades involved. To be equitable the Commission should deal with all grades in a similar timeframe.

The SCSA welcomes the establishment of the proposed Commission. Our approach to pay has been to seek a fair determination process that has regard to reliable evidence on the benefits package available to comparable private sector jobs. Open recruitment has applied to the grades represented by the Association for some time. This has been seen as a desirable way of attracting the best talent from the public and private sector to the most senior public service posts. If this is to be meaningful the overall package available to the holders of those posts must reflect the comparable private sector packages. We believe that, if properly resourced, the Commission can make a significant contribution to this process.

The Association has noted some media comment referring to international comparisons. We are aware from previous considerations of this dimension that such comparisons are fraught with uncertainty and like for like comparisons are extremely difficult. Any assumptions and the basis of

any advice being developed by the Commission in this regard should be exchanged with staff representatives at an early stage so that there can be full exploration of the issues.

The Association would like to thank Minister Donohoe and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for the invitation to make this submission and would appreciate the opportunity for continued engagement in this process.

Senior Civil Service Association

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