



Barbara Belcher's Red Tape Review

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Barbara Belcher's review of internal red tape had this to say about over-regulation. "The level and volume of internal regulation is growing. There appears to be a regulatory stance characterised by a default to regulation as a policy lever and an absence of a proportional approach to regulation." A stock-take commissioned by Finance found more than 8000 requirements of non-corporate Commonwealth entities expressed as "must", "should", "are required to" or "shall do", in more than 600 documents. What's worse, comparison with a similar, but non-validated exercise in 2009 demonstrated an increase in the volume of requirements.

PUSH FOR HIGHER CEILING

The Belcher review will set a few cats among pigeons. One tricky area might be her recommendation that Finance reinvigorate its push for a higher mandatory reporting threshold for public service procurement contracts. She said that if the \$10,000 threshold on Austender were raised to \$20,000 there would be a 28.4 per cent reduction in the number reported but only a 0.7 per cent drop in the total value. Raising it to \$80,000 would still meet Australia's international obligations, reduce almost 70 per cent of the compliance burden and reduce the total value by only 3.7 per cent.

FREER INFORMATION FLOW

There is also freedom of information [FOI] . Belcher recommends agencies impose the least burdensome mechanisms for responding to requests and consider more active publication of information, to decrease requests. The Attorney-General's Department [AGD] should consult agencies about consolidating the Information Publication Scheme with such initiatives as the digital transformation agenda. To reduce the administrative burden, AGD should reduce the frequency of mandatory reporting from quarterly to annually, seek government agreement to implement the Hawke review of FOI and consider issues raised about exemptions and scope of access.

FRAUD CONTROL REVAMP

Then there is fraud control policy. Belcher recommends the Attorney-General's Department remove some elements so agencies can take a risk-based approach, especially to fraud

prevention, training and reporting. Guidance should be reviewed and streamlined. AGD should cease its annual report on fraud compliance and work with the Australian Institute of Criminology to produce a single whole-of-government annual report and make the annual survey on fraud less burdensome. Overlaps between the fraud control framework, the Public Interest Disclosure Act and the public service code of conduct should be fixed and personal disclosure issues sorted.

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Read more: <http://www.afr.com/news/politics/national/government-business-barbara-belcher-review-says-too-many-musts-20151111-gkwf5w#ixzz3rLGbKf9a>