



## Hopes for rain on the South Coast

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## Risk of rising populism in APS

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# The Canberra Times

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## Making spirits bright

When it came time to rostering for Christmas Day, tram driver Warren Parsons jumped at the chance to be at work.

Like many Canberrans who keep essential services going on a day most of us spend celebrating, Mr Parsons will try to make the day as festive as possible.

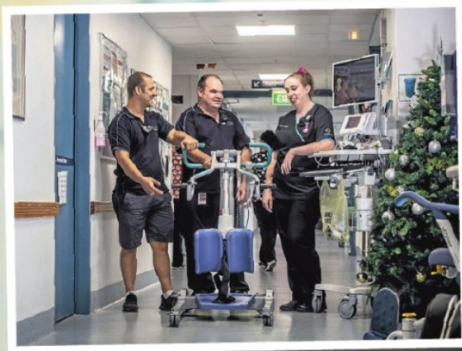
For him, being at work brings him closer to colleagues and strangers on a day where he might otherwise be alone.

"That's what I crave the most - to be around people," he said.

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Tram driver Warren Parsons, who is enthusiastic about working on Christmas Day, and, inset, hospital staff Tony Goreski, Jason Ford and Megan Charlton. Pictures: Karleen Minney



**PUBLIC SERVICE** Warnings the APS is being 'hollowed out' after spending on contractors skyrockets

# APS's billion-dollar bill

Adrian Rollins

COMMONWEALTH spending on consultants and contractors has skyrocketed to well in excess of \$1.2 billion a year as it increasingly draws on external expertise to undertake tasks once performed by public servants.

Figures compiled by the Thodey review show that in

the four years to 2016-17 government spending on labour contractors soared, more than doubling to reach \$738 million a year.

Expenditure on consultants jumped from \$386 million a year to \$545 million, an increase of more than 40 per cent.

Over the same period, spending on public servant

wages was flat. The review said the government's growing reliance on consultants and contractors had given rise to "credible" concerns that the capabilities of the Australian Public Service were in decline, including a "hollowing out" of strategic policy skills.

"These increases have occurred against the backdrop

of a significant increase in the size of the programs administered by the APS but almost no increase in departmental budgets," the review said.

"The data suggests that contractors and consultants are being used to meet the increased burden of program delivery - work traditionally done by APS employees - as

well as policy design and implementation."

The review's analysis has been refuted by Federal Finance Minister Mathias Cormann, who said claims of a significant jump in government spending on consultants was "simply untrue".

Senator Cormann said that spending on consultancies, as a proportion of total

contract notices by value, remained at around 1 per cent.

He said the total cost of government administration (including spending on consultants and contractors) as a proportion of overall expenditure had fallen in the past decade from 8.5 to 7 per cent, and would reach 5.4 per cent by 2022-23.

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