

UNITED
WORKERS UNION



NSW SCHOOL CLEANERS SAY:

END THIS FAILED PRIVATISATION

United Workers Union report on the contracting of school and whole-of-government cleaning services

FEBRUARY 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect the continuing spirit, culture, and contribution of Traditional Custodians on the lands where we work, and pay respects to Elders, past and present. We extend our respects to Traditional Custodians of all the places that United Workers Union members live and work around the country.

About United Workers Union

United Workers Union (UWU) is a powerful union with 150,000 workers across the country from more than 45 industries and all walks of life, standing together to make a difference. Our work reaches millions of people every single day of their lives. We feed you, educate you, provide care for you, keep your communities safe and get you the goods you need. Without us, everything stops. We are proud of the work we do – our paramedic members work around the clock to save lives; early childhood educators are shaping the future of the nation one child at a time; supermarket logistics members pack food for your local supermarket and farms workers put food on Australian dinner tables; hospitality members serve you a drink on your night off; aged care members provide quality care for our elderly and cleaning and security members ensure the spaces you work, travel and learn in are safe and clean.

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1. Introduction

It has been thirty years since government cleaning services, including in schools were outsourced in New South Wales. In late 2023, the Minns Labor Government, fulfilling an election commitment to school cleaners, commenced a review of the privatisation of school cleaning. This report is intended to mark the three decades cleaners have worked under this flawed model of contracting by highlighting the stories of cleaners from across NSW and showing the realities and costs of the current arrangements. It is also hoped that this report will help to inform the work of the School Cleaning Services Review Group, in which the United Workers Union is pleased to serve as a participating stakeholder.

The current cleaning model in New South Wales public schools and buildings is fundamentally broken. It fails to deliver value for taxpayers' money, ensure school cleanliness, or create decent, safe, family-sustaining jobs. Keeping our schools safe and clean should be a core responsibility of a world-class public education system. Unfortunately, the NSW system of privatised contracts undermines both cleaning and employment standards by incentivising companies to engage in a race-to-the-bottom to be awarded contracts, and then systematically cut costs in order to make a profit. Additionally, thirty years of outsourcing has deeply eroded the accountability between the contractors and all members of the school community.

It is unacceptable that hundreds of millions of dollars of public money continues to be spent on a system in which companies profit while precarious work is endemic, workplace injuries are rife, and the basic need of clean schools and building is not being satisfactorily delivered.

This report details the outcomes of the current model and shows who profits and who pays. It discusses the pressing need, during a cost-of-living crisis, for the creation of quality jobs, and the structural factors that make the cleaning industry so susceptible to low pay and worker exploitation.

It also shows that another path is available to NSW - in other states and territories, cleaners are directly employed by government and results are profoundly different. Throughout this report, cleaners' voices and experience are given a spotlight to ensure that this often-invisible labour force is seen and heard at a time when the Government is considering the future of their jobs. The report concludes with clear and specific recommendations for the transition of the workforce to direct government employment.

2. Key facts and figures

- **7000**¹ – Estimated number of cleaners employed under the NSW Government's whole-of-government cleaning contracts (WGCCs)
- **2241**² - Number of NSW Public schools cleaned under the contracts
- **\$518,000,000**³ - Cost to the NSW Government for the WGCCs in 2024
- **\$24.07 per hour**⁴ – Level 1 Wage under the Cleaning Industry Modern Award (the common wage for school cleaners) (**\$0.84** above the minimum wage)⁵
- **9.69%**⁶ – The workers compensation premium of school cleaners – the **5th highest** of over 500 job classifications in NSW assessed by iCare
- **600+ tasks a day** – The average number of tasks cleaners are expected to complete on a daily basis under the terms of their contract.
- **43 seconds**⁷ – The amount of time school cleaners can have to complete each task in their work day
- **75%**⁸ - The share of cleaners who report their workload has increased in the last 5 years
- **1994**⁹ – The year school cleaning work was privatised in NSW
- **31 December 2024**¹⁰ – When the current WGCCs contracts expire
- **Now** – When the NSW Government needs to act to bring the cleaning work inhouse to create safe, secure, quality jobs and improve cleaning standards

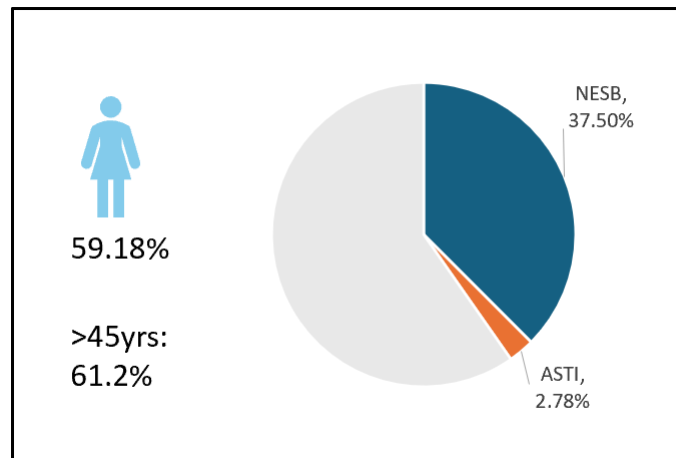
3. Who cleans our schools?

The cleaners

An estimated 7,000 cleaners work under the NSW Government's whole of government cleaning contracts (WGCCs). The state's more than 2200 public schools make up approximately 75-80% of the cost of the cleaning work under these contracts¹¹. In addition to cleaning schools, cleaners service another approximately 2000 sites including TAFE campuses, Police stations, court houses, electorate offices, Service NSW sites and other state properties and office buildings.¹²

The workforce is majority women (59%), majority over 45 years of age (61%) and highly diverse – as of 2016, 37.5% of the workforce identified as coming from non-English speaking background and just under 3% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.¹³

Graph 1. Demographics of cleaners under whole of government contracts



Cleaners employed under the WGCCs live in every corner of the state - the union has members that live in each of the 93 state legislative assembly electorates with large shares of workers living in western and south-west Sydney.

Cleaners get up early, work hard, risk injuries on the job and are low paid. They are united in the need for change and demand respect for the essential work they do.

The companies

The whole of government cleaning work is divided into nine regional contracts. In 2023, the contracts were extended for the 2024 calendar year at a combined projected cost to government of \$518 Million.¹⁴ Excluding the Sydney CBD contract which covers predominantly office buildings, the eight remaining WGCCs are held by four companies:

- **Serco Facilities Management** (Northern Sydney)
- **ISS Facility Services** (North Coast, Sydney, South-West Sydney)
- **Ventia** (Hunter/Central Coast, Western Sydney)
- **Joss Facility Management** (North-Western NSW, Southern NSW).

Serco Facilities Management and ISS Facility Services are part of large, publicly traded, multinational corporations. Serco’s name in Australian is often associated with its controversial and lucrative role as a contractor in offshore detention centres.¹⁵ Ventia is a large Australian based, ASX listed company, with a significant foreign ownership stake. Joss Facility Management is a privately held Australia company with numerous contracts in NSW.¹⁶

The contrast between the earnings of the cleaners and the executives of the contracted companies could hardly be greater. The combined CEO remuneration of the three publicly traded companies in 2022 was \$16.88 million (AUD). Individually, the CEOs’ pay, calculated hourly, are 94 to 173 times a cleaners’ wage. The 2021 remuneration of Ventia’s CEO Dean Banks included a cash bonus of \$540,000 – a figure it would take a cleaner 560 weeks (or over 10 years) to earn.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Serco spent £90 million on share buybacks in 2022 and committed to spending another £90 million on buybacks in 2023 – a move intended to increase the stock price and benefit shareholders.¹⁸

Table 1. Profile of contracted cleaning companies, including CEO remuneration

Company	Global revenue (AUD) (2022)	HQ	Trading status	Largest shareholder	CEO	CEO remuneration (AUD) (2022)	CEO vs cleaner pay ratio ¹⁹
Serco Facilities Management Pty Ltd	\$8.07 Billion ²⁰	United Kingdom	Listed on the London Stock Exchange ²¹	BlackRock (10.06%) - US investment fund manager ²²	Mark Irwin ²³	\$7.8 Million ²⁴ (ongoing CEO, Rupert Soames)	173:1
ISS Facility Services Australia Ltd	\$15.61 Billion ²⁵	Denmark	Listed on the Nasdaq Copenhagen ²⁶	KIRKBI Invest (17%) - Investment fund of the Kristiansen family (heirs of the Lego founder) ²⁷	Jacob Aarup-Andersen ²⁸	\$4.83 Million ²⁹	107:1
Ventia (Australia) Pty Ltd	\$5.2 Billion ³⁰	Australia	Listed on the ASX and NZX ³¹	JPMorgan Chase (7.26%) – “World’s Largest Bank” ³²	Dean Banks ³³	\$4.25 Million ³⁴	94:1
Joss Facility Management	\$460M+ (2019-20) ³⁵	Australia	Private	Privately held	Colin Joss (Founder) ³⁶	Not available	Not available

4. The time is now for quality jobs

Quality jobs are essential in allowing working families to thrive. Unfortunately, trends like the “gigification” of work in the on-demand economy, casualisation, the use of labour hire and sham contracting have all undermined job quality and denied workers, including low-income and vulnerable workers, access to basic entitlements and job security.³⁷

These trends have contributed to a reduction in workers’ bargaining power and have occurred in parallel with long-term stagnant wage growth.³⁸ Workers in insecure jobs even face greater risk of heart disease and increased risk of depression.³⁹ As outlined in this submission, the cleaning industry is itself notorious for its exploitative and precarious employment practices.

The scale of the whole of government contracts means the NSW government has the opportunity to positively shape the industry by establishing high-road employment standards and creating family sustaining jobs through direct employment. In addition, the cost-of-living and housing affordability crises, working families face, means that the need to create quality, secure jobs for workers in all regions of NSW has never been greater.

The NSW Government has the opportunity to act now. The expiration on the whole of government contracts on December 31, 2024 means that decisions and planning must occur in early 2024 to ensure that there is a smooth and seamless transition for the 7000 cleaners employed under the contracts.

5. Outcomes of the current model

Contracting leads to Impossible workloads

Once awarded contracts, companies have an incentive to generate profits by driving down labour and material costs. The result is cuts to cleaners’ hours, understaffed schools, unfilled shifts, faulty and broken equipment and a lack of cleaning chemicals and other essential material. This leads to immense workload pressure for cleaners and undermines cleaning standards. Cleaners, who are enormously committed to their job, report often being left in the position of either failing to complete their work to the required specifications, or working unpaid hours to get it done.

In a 2023 survey of over 300 school cleaners completed by the United Workers Union:

- **Almost half (48%) of surveyed cleaners report hours being cut at their school in the last 5 years**
- **The most common reduction cleaners report is 38 hours per week, per school**
- **75% of surveyed cleaners report their workloads increasing over the last 5 years**
- **54% said their workloads have become much worse during this period**

These workload pressures are supported by an analysis of a summary of the contract specifications underpinning the daily tasks for cleaners (as overtly used by one contractor⁴⁰ and informing the practices of the other companies), which sets out 179 separate “regular” tasks that school cleaners are required to complete daily. When considering these tasks and the areas to be cleaned, cleaners report they are required to do more than 600 tasks a day at an average of 43 seconds to perform each task.⁴¹

Cleaner workloads example: Pooja, the only cleaner at a public school in Sydney’s west

Pooja has worked as a school cleaner for nine years and is currently the only cleaner at a mid-size public school in Sydney’s west with about 350 students and 40 staff. The areas Pooja is responsible for the daily cleaning of include 14 classrooms, a school hall, office area, two toilet blocks (both with six toilets), three disabled toilets, an office toilet, plus blowing the entire playground area. [The contract specifications obtained by United Workers Union](#) outline the number of cleaning tasks to be performed daily in different school areas.

Area	Number of regular tasks
Toilets, bathrooms & shower areas	19
Halls & multipurpose centres	23
Food technology, canteens, tea rooms, clinics and sick bays	19
Schools for Specific Purpose	17
Classrooms and libraries	23
Manual art, pottery and ceramics rooms	20
Offices, hallways, corridors & other similar areas	23
Wood and metal technology rooms	19
External hard surfaces & grassed areas	7
External eating areas	9
Totals:	179

Cont.

Applying these contract specifications to the areas Pooja is responsible for gives a total of 642 daily tasks.

Results across cleaners are consistent. When more than 300 cleaners outlined their daily workloads in the 2023 survey their average cleaning duties came **to 634 tasks a day – or 43 seconds a task across 7.6 hours.**

Pooja says of her workload: *“It’s not hard – it’s very hard. I’m supposed to start at 2pm but I start one hour earlier so I can cope with my work, and that’s not paid. I’d like to tell the Government to reduce the pressure, because we are bound only for two minutes in a classroom and that’s not enough.”*

Workloads drive high turn-over

One of the flow-on effects of workload pressures is the high turnover of cleaning staff. This is reflected in the resignation rates for a number of the contractors. According to data provided to the Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency for 2023, approximately 30% of non-managerial staff quit during the year at Serco, Ventia and Joss.⁴² Compare this to the ACT, which after making the decision to insource school cleaning in 2020, experienced a retention rate of 96% to February 2022.⁴³

Students and the entire school community loses out

One of the less obvious impacts of the current model of cleaning is on the social learning of students. As academic Frances Flanagan puts it, the contracting model means:

“Children do not get the chance to put a name and a face to the person who cleans up their mess, and so to think more carefully about the consequences of their actions.”⁴⁴

What cleaners say:

“The contractor does not give me enough time to clean my areas to a reasonable level yet the contractor threatens me with warnings and dismissal if I do not make sure the areas are cleaner. They don’t listen to my concerns or opinions about the unsafe, unreasonable requests that they give me on a weekly basis.” Anonymous cleaner, NSW North Coast

“Working in the whole of government school cleaning contract for 15 years, you see the changes. Hours are cut from contract to contract. Workloads are increased. There is a lack of training and minimal equipment to do the job. There is no respect from contractors towards the workers, shifts aren’t covered but workers are expected to cover those shifts as well as their own work. Our industry is in crisis and we are managed by crisis management.” Judith

“Even if I wanted a day off in a month’s time, I could tell my boss today and my shift will still not be covered.” Ryan (TAFE cleaner)

Contracted cleaning has created an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ approach to the cleaning work performed at schools, such that the labour is invisible to many staff and students, and has hidden the unsafe workplace practices, injuries, and broken equipment from the school community.

6. Workplace health and safety

Cleaners face excessive risks on the job

Under the Work Health and Safety Act, schools are defined as Persons Conducting and Undertaking Business. Therefore, schools have obligations under the legislation to ensure all persons, including contract staff, are safe at work. However, schools often have little knowledge about how cleaning work is being performed at their school. Cleaning is usually undertaken outside the regular working hours of teaching and admin staff at schools with school cleaners often working split shifts before and after students and staff are on the school grounds. Contracting has eroded any expertise from within the school system in how cleaning can and should be performed safely, and oversight is left to area managers that are rarely on site. Cleaners report significant turnover in these supervisor roles.

The results of the 2023 survey are illustrative of a failure to adequately address issues of occupational health and safety on a systemic basis:

- **37% of cleaners reported they had been injured at work in the last five years (particularly alarming was the response from Joss cleaners, of whom 64% reported being injured).**
- **46% of cleaners reported they were not satisfied with the way their employer had handled the issue.**

This breakdown in onsite accountability combined with excessive workloads and poor equipment can be seen as contributing factors to a high injury rate among cleaners, and consequently, an incredibly high workers compensation premium - equal 5th from a list of over 500 occupations in NSW assessed by iCare.⁴⁵ The assessed premium is specific to cleaning services under the NSW Government Schools and Sites contracts. Other cleaning services, outside of the NSW government contracts, are assessed a rate almost five full percentage points lower at 4.960%, place them 94th on the list.

Table 2. Top 10 Workers Compensation Premiums, NSW, by occupation

Industry Classification	WIC Rate
Professional Footballers	12.720%
Concrete Construction Services	12.720%
Shearing Services	10.440%
Furniture Delivery and Removal Service	10.190%
<i>Cleaning Services (NSW Government Schools and Sites Contracts)</i>	9.690%
Log Sawmilling	9.690%
Demolition	9.460%
Bricklaying Services	9.460%
Cement Rendering and Plastering	9.460%
Line Fishing	8.780%

Bullying and harassment is pervasive

The health and safety risks experienced by cleaners are not only physical, but also due to bullying and harassment experienced under the intense conditions. These risks were clearly reported in the survey:

- **Over a third of all cleaners (34%) said that they had experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination in the workplace.**
- **Only 17% of cleaners said they were satisfied with their employer's response.**
- **54% said they were not satisfied with their employer's response.**
- **Almost a third (29%) said they had not reported the issue.**

What cleaners say:

"They didn't take my [safety] issues seriously as a HSR...[t]he vacuum cleaner, you [would] have to carry [from] building to building because there's not enough of them. The supervisor and manager blame me, that I broke it. Why would I break it?...we are supposed to finish 6'o'clock, but we are still there, still doing our job, because it isn't finished. The school becomes our home. It's really hard to get up, the body aches, and the money is not enough... When I go home, I eat or sleep, I don't know what to do." Lanie (retired cleaner)

"The equipment is so old and lacks maintenance that I've had electric shocks up my arm from a faulty cord connection on the vacuum...[On one] occasion I was operating the floor polisher, it tipped over on top of me and I was stuck flat on my back. There was nobody else to call for help because I work alone and there's no body-worn emergency buttons or work mobile phones provided." Louise

"If we had extra cleaners, it would make a big difference. [We would be] mentally well, and not screaming at each other. It's not [currently] healthy." "N" (full name withheld)

7. Cleaners' Pay

Outsourcing = low pay

Cleaners at NSW public schools are the lowest paid workers among the many jobs that are essential to run our schools every day. Notably, when compared to positions like General Assistants and School Learning Support Officers, they are also the only category of workers *not* employed by the NSW Government and therefore not covered by an award negotiated directly with their employer and payer of their services. As outlined below in this submission, the modern award rates of pay cleaners in NSW commonly receive also lag well behind what cleaners who are directly employed by government in other states and territories receive.

Table 3. Cleaners pay (full-time hourly wage) compared to other jobs in NSW Public Schools and cleaners directly employed by the NSW Government

Job/Classification	Hourly Rate	Award/Instrument
Cleaner (Level 1)	\$24.07	Cleaning Services Award 2020
General Service Officer, Grade 2	\$26.02	Crown Employees (Security and General Services) Award 2022
Cleaner	\$27.17	Parliamentary Staff (Security Officers, Attendants/Gatekeepers, Joint Services Staff, Food and Beverages Staff), Agreement 2379 of 1981, Agreement 2381 of 1981, Agreement 2382 of 1981
General Assistant (Adult Year 1)	\$27.67	Crown Employees (General Assistants in Schools - Department of Education) Award
School Learning Support Officer (Level 1)	\$34.74	Crown Employees (School Administrative and Support Staff) Award 2022

Cleaners are paid less than applicable rates under NSW Award

Cleaners in public schools and other buildings covered by the whole of government contracts are paid less than the rates specified for cleaners under the respective NSW award that would apply if they cleaned the same buildings as direct NSW government employees. The General Service Officer, Grade 2 classification under the Crown Employees (Security and General Services) Award 2022 applies to workers engaged to perform “cleaning work of any description...in Government offices, courthouses, police stations, technical colleges and other Government establishments” – the exact same buildings covered by the whole of government cleaning contracts. The rates under the award, from 1 July 2023, are \$26.02 if employed fulltime (38 hours) or \$28.20 if employed part-time.⁴⁶

The modern award rates are even further below the rates received by directly employed cleaners in NSW Parliament House. This means that a cleaner who services an MP’s electorate office under the whole of government contracts is paid less than a cleaner who attends to their parliament office.

Cleaners are struggling on low wages

Cleaners’ base pay rate of \$24.07 is only \$0.84 above the minimum wage of \$23.27.⁴⁷ Not only is this rate of pay incredibly low for the hard and dangerous work involved, but a lack of full-time hours has long held back cleaners’ earnings. In 2017, just over 25% of cleaners had full-time hours, while 54.4% had part-time hours and 20.5% were employed on a casual basis.⁴⁸ The experience of cleaners suggests that the extensive use of part-time and casual employment continues today.

Low wages and a lack of full-time hours have a significant impact on cleaners’ lives. To afford a rental apartment in Sydney, at the median weekly asking price in 2023 of \$670, and *not* be in housing stress, a cleaner would need to work almost 93 hours a week.⁴⁹ If sharing the rent with another person on the same wage, both people would need to work more than 46 hours a week to avoid paying more than 30% of their income in rent.

The combined effect of low wages and part-time hours pushes cleaners to find housing in relatively cheaper areas, which in a city like Sydney, can often be a considerable distance from the schools that they clean. Long commutes only add to the physical and psychological stress of cleaning while road

tolls further erode cleaners' earnings. Under the current contract model, with multiple geographic based contracts, there is no ability for cleaners to transfer between different employers to find a worksite closer to their housing.

Underpayments are all-to-common

To make matter worse for cleaners, underpayment and other pay errors are widespread. In the 12 months to December 2023, payment issues were the problem members contacted the union about most often, with the largest portion of issues relating to underpayment.⁵⁰ In the 2023 survey of school cleaners, 52% reported problems receiving the incorrect pay in the preceding 5 years, and many faced problems attempting to get underpayments fixed, with 64% of cleaners reporting an unsatisfactory response from their employer when they raised the issue.

What cleaners say:

"I get \$24 an hour before tax. It's not enough – you have to pay your rent, you have to pay your food. Everything is very expensive now. You have to pay your way to go to work and back, and go back again to work...we have a split shift, we go twice a day to work and back. That's a lot of petrol to use and the petrol price is too high. I guess why a lot of people don't apply for this job is the money is no good. The job is too much to do and the money is not enough." Charlie

"I am paid very low, it's not fair. I would nearly give up because it's getting hard. The living price is very dear, very expensive while we are being paid less and I've got children to support, so it's so hard. I'm missing a lot. Because even now I want to go on holiday and I don't have enough to buy a ticket. I can't afford to buy a ticket. I would like to tell the Government to improve the wages because the wages are so very low." Arou

"I like cleaning in the school and doing my job. The kids like me. They say, Hi cleaner, you work hard. Some boy asked me, You like this job? How much do you get paid for this job? He says, this is not good, this job, one boy told me like that. I need more money for working the job because everything is expensive now. It's not enough for the job. You need an extra job...I am working two hours in the morning working in disability." Angalina

7. Cost

Over half a billion per year while increases far exceed labour costs

The whole of government cleaning contracts were extended in October 2023, for the 2024 calendar year, for a projected cost to NSW taxpayers of \$518 million. Prior to this extension, the contracts, which commenced in March 2019, were set to expire at the end of 2023. The combined total projected cost over the initial base period of the contracts was \$1.75 billion.⁵¹

On a monthly basis, the total combined value of the contracts increased by 43.01% upon extension, compared to their cost at commencement in 2019. Individual contracts are anticipated to increase by 36 to 58% (for a full breakdown of contract costs, see appendix 1).

Increases in the contract costs exceed those attributed to movements in the minimum legal award rates that are commonly paid to cleaners. Since the contracts commenced, the Level 1 rates in the Cleaning Services Industry Modern Award have increased by 19.10% (rates applicable July 1, 2018 to June 30 2023) while mandatory superannuation contributions have increased from 9.5 to 11% (11.5% from 1 July 2024).⁵²

Graph 2. Cost increase of WGCCs 2019-2024, monthly basis



\$100 plus million in profits

Embedded within the contracts cost are of course the companies’ profits. A conservative estimate of a 5 to 7% profit margin would mean \$24 to \$33 Million in NSW taxpayers’ money going to the shareholders, owners and executives of these companies in 2024. Over the life of the current contracts the total estimated profits are \$103 to \$144 million.⁵³

The value of these public contracts to private interests, often benefiting offshore investors, should not be underestimated. Using a conservative Price-Earnings Ratio for the companies listed above of 11 (well below the reported PE ratios of the publicly-listed companies), the estimated profits from the NSW Government contracts have created \$1.1 billion to \$1.6 billion in wealth for owners of the cleaning companies.⁵⁴

The cost of these contracts to the Department of Education for school cleaning is substantial. If the Department is assumed to pay for 75% on the contracts it would amount to \$388.5 million, or 1.7% of the Department’s total budget in 2023/24.⁵⁵ Not included in these costs are the unaccounted day-to-day expenses incurred by principals and other school staff in dealing with staff shortages and cleaning performance issues, or the cost to government of managing the contracts including the procurement and ongoing compliance.

It is unacceptable for the Government to spend this much money on a failed contracting system. Every dollar that goes to CEO bonuses, share buybacks and further lining the pockets of the billionaire heirs of the Lego family, is a dollar that is not going to fair pay for cleaners and the equipment and resources they need to do the job properly.

8. Experience of other states and territories

Direct public employment is a proven model

Direct employment of cleaners is not a radical or untried move. Cleaners are currently directly employed by Government in Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania and the ACT.

The ACT made the decision to bring cleaners in house in 2020. In reviewing the decision in February 2022, the ACT Department of Education described its action as aligning with the “Government’s commitment to address insecure work by promoting job security for employees, minimise the use of sub-contractors, increase the use of direct employment of workers across the ACT Public Service.”

Of particular importance in the case of the ACT was the Government’s recognition of the high number of vulnerable workers in the cohort (including workers from non-English speaking backgrounds and visa holders) and the history of wage theft findings against contractors.

The effect of the decision in the ACT has been, according to the Department of Education, the development of a “fair and productive workplace environment”, which in turn “supported improved cleaning outcomes and enabled innovations and contemporary industry methodologies.”⁵⁶ The new approach in the ACT proved particularly effective during the first years of the COVID-19 pandemic when the workforce was able to pivot and not only adopt new cleaning protocols, but to support entirely new functions within school buildings. This was able to be done without the need to negotiate contract variations with contract cleaning companies.⁵⁷

Direct employment in Queensland has also fostered a more consultative safe workplace for cleaners. There are rigorous dispute resolution processes for cleaners to resolve issues, usually at a site level, but there are also opportunities for regular consultation through regional joint consultative committees. Queensland also has workload parameters, with an established criteria for calculating cleaning time and workloads, including time for additional tasks.

NSW lags on cleaners’ pay

As a consequence of direct government employment, cleaners in both Queensland and the ACT have been able to negotiate enterprise agreements directly with their employer. This has resulted in higher pay than the rates contained in the national modern award under which cleaners are commonly employed in NSW.

Table 4. Comparison of base hourly rates of pay across QLD, ACT and NSW (as of November 2023)

	QLD ⁵⁸	ACT ⁵⁹	TAS ⁶⁰	WA ⁶¹	NSW
Level 1	\$30.24	\$27.81	\$25.76	\$29.64	\$24.07
Level 2	\$31.05	\$29.31	\$26.90	\$30.39	\$24.87
Level 3	\$31.89	\$30.67	\$27.32	\$31.30 (\$33.19 if school >7000m ²)	\$26.18
Level 4	\$32.70	\$32.30	\$29.30	\$33.79	n/a

9. Workplace relations

Commitment is not reciprocated with consultation

Cleaners are deeply committed to their work and ensuring schools are clean and safe for students and the entire school community. On a personal level, many cleaners form relationships with principals and teachers that make them feel welcome in the school community. Under the current arrangements however, cleaners can often feel separated from the communication channels of their workplaces, particularly compared to the experience of direct employment.

Academic Frances Flanagan quotes school cleaner Kath Hadden and describes her experience upon privatisation in 1994⁶²:

“We went from being employees of the school to being employees of the contractors overnight, and you could physically feel the change.”

“She stopped being invited to meetings about school health and safety – that was now the contractors’ job – and face-to-face conversations with the school principal ceased. Instructions were now delivered via a bureaucratic maze of faxes, phone calls, logbook entries and area manager site visits.”

Another cleaner, Lanie, explained the situation she faced in deciding to leave the job after 12 years, as the result of the deterioration in workplace condition and the impact on her health:

“[The relationship with the school] makes me feel good – the school gives me coffee and chocolate, I felt like I belonged. But I had to look after my health. I love [the school].”

Cooperative workplace relations do not exist under the current model

Contracting has resulted in a dysfunctional model of workplace relations in which cleaners and their representative, the United Workers Union, lack any means for cooperative and effective consultation, let alone meaningful bargaining over wages and conditions, with either the contractors, or the government.

The decisions of government as the funder and contractor of services, play a dominant role in shaping the wages and conditions of workers and the nature of consultation between contractors and unions. However, whole of government cleaning contracts in NSW are currently awarded and funded with no expectation that anything apart from the legal minimum award rates of pay will be provided. Similarly, employers are required to take a risk management approach to workplace relations and have no direction to enter into any consultative arrangements with the union.⁶³

There is no path to effective bargaining under the current model

Until its termination in October 2019, cleaners, the United Workers Union, and a number of contractors were covered by the NSW Government Cleaning Contractors Multi Enterprise Agreement 2016.⁶⁴ However, negotiations for a replacement agreement have proven to be unsuccessful – due in large part to the futile nature of bargaining with employers that are focused on maximising their profits while operating under contracts that do not account for wages above the award.

The current situation is untenable. Cleaners face low pay, crippling workloads and high turnover of staff, yet they are unable to effectively bargain with their employer over changes that would improve their workplaces. It is notable that the NSW Government recently passed amendments to

the NSW Industrial Relations Act that specifically make it an objective of the law to “encourage strategies to attract and retain skilled staff”.⁶⁵ This objective seems perfectly suited to address the crises faced by cleaners but unfortunately will not apply to them while they remain outsourced and outside of the NSW IR system.

Gendered impact of exclusion from public sector conditions

Cleaners employed in accordance with the modern award and other minimum statutory entitlement receive inferior conditions to those they would receive performing the same work as direct NSW government employees. This discrepancy is particularly acute with respect to paid leave available to the majority female workforce.

Table 5. Comparison of select leave conditions

Type of leave	Entitlement of contracted cleaners	Source	Comparable public sector entitlement	Source
Paid Parental leave	No entitlement under Modern Award or National Employment Standards. Access only to federal paid parental leave pay.	N/A	14 weeks paid in addition to the federal paid parental leave pay	Crown Employees (Public Service Conditions of Employment) Reviewed Award 2009 - deferred to by the Crown Employees (Security and General Services) Award 2022
Sick/personal/ carers leave	10 days	National Employment Standard	15 days	As above
Long Service Leave	2 months after 10 years	Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave Scheme) Act 2010	2 months after 7 years (accelerate accrual after 10 years)	Government Sector Employment Regulation 2014 - Schedule 1

The NSW Government should be congratulated for the commitments made in the Gender Equality Budget Statement, including the scrapping of the public sector wages cap, and other initiatives to support women and feminised public sector workforces.⁶⁶ In this context, continuing a system of contract cleaning that perpetuates inferior conditions of employment for the feminised contract cleaning workforce can be seen as running counter to the Government’s values.

No forum for consultation on major workplace changes

School Infrastructure NSW has advised members of the school cleaning review group that they are seeking changes in how cleaning work is performed in schools, including a move to have more cleaning work done during school hours. Outside of the review group, which has been convened for a specific purpose for a limited period, there is no standing forum, such as a joint consultative committee, in which workplace changes can be discussed. A move to have more work performed during school hours may have significant industrial implications for cleaners, including the loss of shift allowances and loadings that apply when cleaners perform split and early shifts.

The current contract model in which Public Works manages the contracts, the Department of Education and other agencies are the recipient of services, while the contractors employ the cleaners, is clearly inconducive to effective consultation and workplace relations. While agencies are responsible for determining the contract specifications which shape what and how work is performed, they are not party to, or responsible for, adhering to the industrial instrument cleaners work under. The employers, on the other hand, who are notionally positioned to consult with their employees and the union, frequently implement changes at the workplace level reportedly at the behest “of the government”.

The solution, as articulated by Mitchell, a school and TAFE cleaner is simple:

“Being directly employed would be cutting out the middle-man and allow for better discourse between workers and the government.”

10. Secure Employment

Cleaners have long fought for secure jobs

Insecure employment is a dominant characteristic of the contract cleaning industry. Separate to the actions and exploitation by their own employer, cleaners face the constant threat of losing their jobs and accrued entitlements should their employer be terminated by a client or fail to retain the work upon a contract’s completion.

For school cleaners, fighting for secure jobs has been an ongoing concern since the work was privatised in the early 1990s. Through the efforts of cleaners and their union, cleaners have generally been assured of their jobs upon a change of contractors. This was not the case however the last time the NSW Government changed contractors in 2017. All 7000 cleaners were initially advised that they would have to reapply for their jobs.

Following a public campaign and significant press attention, the former NSW Government agreed to include job security provisions, including the retention of hours for existing cleaners, into the new contract document.⁶⁷ With an impending contract expiry, cleaners are once again anxious as to whether they will keep their jobs and continuity of entitlements.

Image 1. Extract from Sydney Morning Herald story, 14/11/17



Victoria: An Example *not* to Follow

The Victorian Government also undertook a review in 2023 of the contracting arrangements in their public schools (along substantially the same terms as the NSW review).

In early December 2023, while the government's actions following the review were pending, one of the major contractors, ISS (who holds three whole-of-government cleaning contracts in NSW worth \$189M in 2024), declined a 12-month extension. The Victorian Government failed to ensure a smooth transition to two new contractors, Serco and Tradeflex. Consequently, workers lost income over the holiday period, were forced to reapply for jobs with the new contractors and face massive cuts in hours for the forthcoming school year.¹

To make matters worse, immediately before Christmas on the 20th of December, the Victorian Education Minister, Ben Carroll, announced that the government intends to continue using contract cleaners under a revised model from 2025 which will include minimum labour standards. The model however was developed without any consultation with the union and proposes an above award wage differential lower than that used in other areas of procurement by the Victorian government. The new model will also do nothing to make up the enormous loss of pay workers are currently facing.

United Workers Union, Property Services Director Lyndal Ryan, slammed the decision saying:

*"A 5 per cent pay rise doesn't make up for losing 60 per cent of your salary the year before. [Cleaners] are not just worried about income, but also the workload they are coming back to, where they are expected to do the same amount of cleaning but in less than half the time in some cases."*²

The United Workers Union is committed to an ongoing public campaign to hold the Victorian government to account for their decision to continue with the use of contract cleaning.²



School cleaners protest the Victorian Government decision, December 22, 2023

¹ [School cleaners in Victoria face jobless new year after contract shake-up | Australia news | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/dec/22/school-cleaners-in-victoria-face-jobless-new-year-after-contract-shake-up)

² <https://unitedworkers.org.au/all-updates/cleaners-pay-cut-in-half-deputy-premier-turns-his-back/>

Lack of standard grievance procedures further undermines job security

In addition to the loss of jobs during contract change over, cleaners employed by private contractors lack the grievance procedures and job security measures that apply to directly employed public sector workers. This becomes a particular concern when complaints are made against a cleaner related to matters outside of their control – such as misaligned cleaning expectations and excessive workloads. There is no standard procedure for handling grievances between contractors and the experience of cleaners is that investigations often lack natural justice and can involve being stood down for extended periods without pay. It is deeply inequitable that the lowest paid workers in the school environment lack any sense of the due-process and job security when these issues occur.

11. Supply chain compliance and modern slavery

Systemic issues in contract cleaning

The contract cleaning in Australia is systematically plagued with compliance issues related to workplace rights and entitlements and the mistreatment and exploitation of workers. These issues exist on a continuum that ranges from wage and superannuation underpayments, and other award breaches, through to incidents of modern slavery that involve threats, coercion and restrictions of workers' freedoms.⁶⁸

Endemic wage theft and workplace breaches

A series of Fair Work Ombudsman Audits of the industry found workplace breaches, including the underpayment of wages, occurring in significant number of contract cleaning business - 37% of business in 2010-11, 38% in 2012-13 and 33% in 2016.⁶⁹ These findings are consistent with the survey results from schools cleaners in NSW (52% report problems receiving the correct pay in the last 5 years) and the experience of United Workers Union members for whom underpayment issues are the most frequent cause to contact the union.

Exploitation of visa holders

The cleaning industry was specifically cited in a 2016 federal parliamentary report as being one of the industries in which the exploitation of temporary work visa holders was rife. A submission to the inquiry informing the report cited the example of Swan Services Cleaning Group - the company went into administration in May 2013, owing \$9.5 million in unpaid wages and leave entitlements to around 2500 workers. A large proportion of the workforce was international students many of whom were left with weeks of unpaid wages.⁷⁰

Structural vulnerabilities inherent to contract cleaning

Academics identify labour compliance issues as being fundamentally connected to the structures of the industry, which include⁷¹:

- the separation of oversight and diffuse accountability between building owners, contract managers and employer/s;
- commercial pressure to compete on price;
- vulnerable workforces;
- the use of casual labour and sub-contracting; and
- labour cost minimisation as a dominant strategy.

Retired school cleaner, Kathleen, summarises a number of these dynamics perfectly:

“To win the contract they have to quote low, and to quote low it’s always the cleaner that suffers”.

The Cleaning Accountability Framework

The Cleaning Accountability Framework was formed by developed in 2013 by industry stakeholders, including property investors and the United Workers Union to address these systematic compliance issues in the cleaning industry. The Framework aims to takes a “preventative approach to modern slavery” and operates a building certification scheme under which participants are expected to uphold a number of core principles.⁷² These include:⁷³

- Freedom of association and the right to actively participate in and be represented by a union (including through collective bargaining) are respected and pro-actively supported by all stakeholders, and workers are protected from anti-union discrimination and interference;
- Stakeholders work cooperatively to continuously achieve best practice work environments, work design (including sufficient materials and properly maintained equipment), supervision and training to enable cleaners to perform their jobs safely and efficiently and to ensure high levels of work health and safety outcomes;
- Employee workloads are reasonable and can be performed safely, and employee performance indicators are reasonable, measurable and communicated;
- Stakeholders with control over the employment of cleaners ensure that cleaners benefit from security of employment by being able to continue working at a building with another employer when there is a change of contract;
- Stakeholders who provide wages and working conditions to employees that are over and above minimum standards are recognised as best practice;
- Subcontracting, if carried out, is done so in compliance with contract conditions and the employment conditions provided to subcontracted staff are no less favourable than those provided to directly employed staff under the conditions set out in the principal contract.

The adoption of these principles within the NSW Government’s procurement policies, and ideally, the certification of the NSW Government’s building portfolio as well as the buildings it occupies as a major tenant, would immeasurably improve the job quality for cleaners and help to resolve the ongoing compliance issues workers experience.

Best solution is to inhouse the work

The ultimate and best solution as it pertains to cleaners employed under the whole of government cleaning contracts is to inhouse the work and directly employ the cleaners. In doing so, the government would remove a number of the structural causes of non-compliance by taking direct accountability and control of the employment and economic conditions of the workforce.

12. Regional NSW

Cleaners live in every corner of the state

Of the more than 2200 public schools in NSW, more than 40% are in regional, rural or remote areas.⁷⁴ Cleaners who work at these schools and other buildings covered by the WGCCs live in their local communities. The union has school cleaning members that live in every one of the 93 Legislative Assembly electorates in the state.

Quality jobs now and into the future

Creating quality, secure jobs for cleaners by insourcing the work will mean quality jobs that regional families can count on, both now and the future.

In early 2023 the unemployment rate for regions outside of greater Sydney hit the long-term low of 3% and was below that of the greater Sydney area (3.7%) – reversing the pattern of the decade prior in which workers in regional NSW generally experienced higher rates of unemployment.⁷⁵ At this time of low unemployment and regional labour shortages, direct public sector employment of cleaners should be seen as a competitive advantage to attract workers to fill these essential roles.

Should economic conditions worsen in the future and regional unemployment rise, having cleaners employed directly by government can help to ensure that there is a bulwark of quality jobs in regional areas that workers can rely on.

Regardless of the economic cycles, cleaning is work that is needs to take place locally. As long as the school, TAFE campus, police station and courthouse is in town – that’s where it needs to be cleaned. This is not true of all public sector jobs – regions such the Hunter Valley (35.8%), the Illawarra (32.2%) and the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven (32.2%) see a large share of their public sector employed residents commute outside of the region for their job.⁷⁶ And cleaning work is certainly not a job that can done remotely – you can’t clean school bathrooms over zoom! Investing in our cleaning workforce means quality jobs for local residents, who in turn support local small businesses when they shop where they work.

Opening more doors to quality jobs

Importantly, directly employing cleaners would provide an entry point into the public sector for regional workers without tertiary qualifications and to workers whose qualifications may not be recognised in Australia. Compared to the private sector, public sector workers in regional NSW are significantly more likely to have a diploma level qualification and above (70% in the public sector, compared to 28% in the private), reflecting the bias towards advanced qualifications required in many public sector jobs.⁷⁷ Direct employment of cleaners would open more doors to a career path in the public sector while also ensuring quality jobs for workers who remain the positions long-term.

13. Scope of sites and implications for employment models

Cleaners work across multiple locations and school and non-school sites

Under the current whole of government contracts arrangements, cleaners’ work allocations and schedules can see them clean only school sites (either single or multiple schools), schools and non-school buildings, or only non-school buildings. The scope of sites on the one hand allows cleaners to

be scheduled to work a greater number of hours across a cluster of sites in a given area and maximise their earnings. On the other hand, cleaners report contractors cutting their hours at certain sites and reallocating them elsewhere across the contracted region – a decision that can result in additional commuting time and expenses for the individual worker while exacerbating workloads at the site where hours are reduced.

Contracts should be in-housed holistically

All cleaners employed under the current contracts deserve quality jobs regardless of the sites they clean. While the scope of the current review is primarily to consider the cleaning arrangements in schools, it is impossible to ignore the implications for non-school sites. It is the clear and unambiguous view of the union, and one that we believe is supported by the evidence presented here, that the whole of government contracts should be in-housed in their entirety so that fair wages and conditions and safe workloads can be implemented for all cleaners across all locations.

It would be hugely inequitable to transition only school cleaning to a model of direct government employment. The result would likely be the creation of a two-tiered workforce with one set of workers able to negotiate directly with government for improved wages and conditions, and the other left under the limitations and failings of the contract model. It would also be highly impractical for cleaners employed across school and non-school sites who would be faced with either loss of hours, or the challenge of dealing with two employers on an ongoing basis.

Transitioning the entirety of the work currently performed under the whole of government contracts unavoidably comes with questions regarding which agency will become the employer and where the work will be managed and overseen. The union is open to discussing the merits of a range of options to address these questions and is confident that there are a several viable models. Most important in this context is to recognise that any complexities involved in transitioning to direct-employment pale in comparison to the evident failings of the current model and the challenges already being experienced.

14. Conclusion and recommendations

After thirty years of privatisation of cleaning services in NSW the evidence is clear – the only winners have been the private contractors that have reaped millions of dollars in profits from the taxpayer. Our schools are not better-off, students are not better-off and cleaners are certainly not better-off.

There are few things government can do more decisively in their efforts to boost living standards than improve the quality of jobs for low-wage workers directly impacted by government spending. There are a number of meaningful reforms to the government's procurement practices that could help to achieve this end, but it is clear with respect to the dedicated cleaners employed under whole of government contracts that direct employment is the most appropriate, and will be the most effective, model.

Recommendations

1. The adoption of a model of direct government employment for all cleaning work currently performed under the whole of government cleaning contracts from 1 January 2025 (following the expiry of the current contracts);
2. Ensure adequate staffing levels across all schools and sites to ensure safe working conditions and reasonable workloads;
3. The establishment of a transition working group, which includes union representation, to plan for the transfer of cleaners to government employment and related matters;
4. A commitment to negotiate an industrial instrument that establishes fair wages and conditions and promotes secure employment and safe working conditions; and
5. A commitment to ongoing cooperative relationships with the workforce and its representatives, including a joint consultative committee, and clear pathways to resolve workplace matters enshrined in the industrial instrument.

Appendix 1. Whole of Government Cleaning Contracts Award Costs

Base Contract Years						2024 Extension					
Region	Company	Contract Period	Months	Estimated cost (including GST)	Monthly Cost	Company	Contract Period	Months	Estimated cost (including GST)	Monthly Cost	Pct. Increase
North Coast	ISS Facility Services Australia Ltd	1-Mar-2019 to 31-Dec-2023	58	\$163,000,000.00	\$2,810,344.83	ISS Facility Services Australia Ltd	1-Jan-2024 to 31-Dec-2024	12	\$46,195,748.95	\$3,849,645.75	36.98%
Sydney	ISS Facility Services Australia Ltd	1-Mar-2019 to 31-Dec-2023	58	\$191,000,000.00	\$3,293,103.45	ISS Facility Services Australia Ltd	1-Jan-2024 to 31-Dec-2024	12	\$57,225,856.44	\$4,768,821.37	44.81%
South Western Sydney	ISS Facility Services Australia Ltd	1-Mar-2019 to 31-Dec-2023	58	\$277,000,000.00	\$4,775,862.07	ISS Facility Services Australia Ltd	1-Jan-2024 to 31-Dec-2024	12	\$86,020,748.58	\$7,168,395.72	50.10%
Southern NSW	Colin Joss & Co. Pty. Limited	1-Mar-2019 to 31-Dec-2023	58	\$285,000,000.00	\$4,913,793.10	Joss Facility Management	1-Jan-2024 to 31-Dec-2024	12	\$84,245,052.41	\$7,020,421.03	42.87%
North Western NSW	Colin Joss & Co. Pty. Limited	1-Mar-2019 to 31-Dec-2023	58	\$204,000,000.00	\$3,517,241.38	Joss Facility Management	1-Jan-2024 to 31-Dec-2024	12	\$59,835,606.57	\$4,986,300.55	41.77%
Sydney CBD	Pickwick Cleaning Services	31-Mar-2019 to 31-Dec-2023	57	\$22,000,000.00	\$385,964.91	Pickwick Group Pty Ltd	1-Jan-2024 to 31-Dec-2024	12	\$7,333,912.54	\$611,159.38	58.35%
Northern Sydney	Facilities First Australia Pty Ltd	1-Mar-2019 to 31-Dec-2023	58	\$176,000,000.00	\$3,034,482.76	Serco Facilities Management Pty Ltd (Facilities First Australia)	1-Jan-2024 to 31-Dec-2024	12	\$54,599,657.03	\$4,549,971.42	49.94%
Hunter/ Central Coast	Broadspectrum (Australia) Pty Ltd	1-Mar-2019 to 31-Dec-2023	58	\$223,000,000.00	\$3,844,827.59	Ventia (Australia) Pty Ltd (Broadspectrum)	1-Jan-2024 to 31-Dec-2024	12	\$62,903,150.32	\$5,241,929.19	36.34%
Western Sydney	Broadspectrum Pty Ltd	31-Mar-2019 to 31-Dec-2023	57	\$206,000,000.00	\$3,614,035.09	Ventia (Australia) Pty Ltd (Broadspectrum)	1-Jan-2024 to 31-Dec-2024	12	\$59,720,418.37	\$4,976,701.53	37.70%
				\$1,747,000,000.00	\$362,275,862.07				\$518,080,151.21	\$518,080,151.21	43.01%
				Total	Annualised cost				Total	Annualised cost	(2019-2024)

¹ Per the form 17 submitted to the Fair Work Commission in 2016, there were 7346 employees covered by the NSW Contractors Multi Enterprise Agreement which covered the contractors engaged under the whole of government contracts

² “Whole of Government Facilities Management Services (Asset Maintenance and Cleaning)”, Part B – Technical Requirements, 2017, Property NSW. Note: there are approximately 20 NSW Government schools that were built and are maintained under Public Private Partnership arrangements separate to the WoG contract.

³ Per contract data available on the NSW eTendering website: <https://www.tenders.nsw.gov.au>

⁴ Cleaning Services Award 2020, Level 1, minimum hourly rate (effective 1 July 2023). Available at <https://www.fwc.gov.au/document-search/modern-awards-list>

⁵ National minimum wage effective 1 July 2023. See, <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/pay-and-wages/minimum-wages#national>

⁶ “NSW Workers Compensation Industry Classification Rates and Dust Diseases Contribution, 2023-24”. Available at <https://www.icare.nsw.gov.au/-/media/icare/unique-media/employers/premiums/calculating-the-cost-of-your-premium-2023-2024/workers-compensation-premium-rates-2023-2024.pdf>

⁷ Based on an analysis of the “contract specification summary” obtained by United Workers Union setting out 179 separate “regular” tasks that school cleaners are required to complete daily and interviews with school cleaners. Redacted copy of specifications document available at: <https://unitedworkers.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/230307-school-cleaner-contract-specs-redacted.pdf>

⁸ Results from 2023 United Workers Union survey of over 300 school cleaners

⁹ Noted in Hansard, NSW Legislative Assembly, 17 May, 2018. Available at: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Hansard/Pages/HansardResult.aspx#/docid/HANSARD-1323879322-101949/link/115>

¹⁰ Contract extension expiry dates per NSW eTendering Contract Award notices

¹¹ Calculation based on evidence provided in NSW Parliament Budget Estimates 2017-18, indicating 75-80% cost share to Education from the total costs of whole of government cleaning contracts. E.g. In 2015-16, Education paid \$255.640 million of a total \$334.3 million (76.47%) and in 2016-17 \$262.724 of a total \$340.9 million (77.07%). Cf. *Answers to Supplementary Questions on Notice, Finance, Services and Property*, pp. 12-13 (Answer 55) at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/11006/ASQs%20-%20Dominello.pdf> and *Answers to Supplementary Questions on Notice, Education*, pp. 23-24 (Answer 51) at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/other/11015/ASQs%20-%20Stokes.pdf>.

¹² Per “Whole of Government Facilities Management Services”, Part A, Overview (Region: North Coast), 2018, Property NSW, and “Whole of Government Facilities Management Services (Asset Maintenance and Cleaning)”, Part B – Technical Requirements, 2017, Property NSW

¹³ Per the Form 17 submitted to FWC in 2016. This data is consistent with the union’s current membership in school cleaning which is 65% women with an average age of 54 years.

¹⁴ Per contract data available on the NSW eTendering website: <https://www.tenders.nsw.gov.au>

¹⁵ Serco’s 10 year contract, expiring 2024, to manage offshore detention centres for the federal government is worth a reported \$4.6 Billion. For details and reports of detainee mistreatment see, Grieve, C. (2023). “‘I cannot breathe’: Violence, excessive force plagues immigration detention”. *The Age*, 25/11/23. Available at <https://www.theage.com.au/national/i-cannot-breathe-violence-excessive-force-plagues-immigration-detention-20231016-p5ecoo.html>

¹⁶ Yun, J. “5 surprising companies that grew that fastest during Covid-19”. *Yahoo Finance*, 25/9/20. Available at <https://au.finance.yahoo.com/news/5-fastest-growing-233205921.html>

¹⁷ Calculated using the current award wage of \$24.07 and assuming a 40 hour week. For Banks cash bonus, See Ventia 2022 Annual Report, p. 88, available at: <https://simplebooklet.com/ventia2022annualreport#page=7>

¹⁸ Serco 2022 Annual Report, p. 4, available at: <https://www.serco.com/media/9382/serco-ar22-web-pdf-spreads.pdf>

¹⁹ Calculated using a full-time hourly equivalent of CEO remuneration compared to the Cleaning Service Industry Award, 2020, Level 1, Base Hourly Rate for the 2022 FY - \$21.71 (available at: <https://www.fwc.gov.au/agreements-awards/awards/modern-awards-pay-database>)

²⁰ 2022 global revenue – £4.534 Billion (converted to AUD using 12-month average exchange rate – calculated monthly). See Serco 2022 Annual Report, p. 1, available at: <https://www.serco.com/media/9382/serco-ar22-web-pdf-spreads.pdf>

²¹ Ibid, p. 15

²² Ibid, p. 176

²³ Ibid, p. 15

²⁴ Salary shown is that of outgoing CEO Rupert Soames, £4,376,876 (converted to AUD using 12-month average exchange rate – calculated monthly). See Serco 2022 Annual Report, p. 147

²⁵ 2022 Global Revenue – 76,538,000,000 DDK, (converted to AUD using 12-month average exchange rate – calculated monthly). See 2022 ISS Annual Report available at: <https://brand.issworld.com/m/704fa93766767419/original/ISS-Annual-Report-2022.pdf>

²⁶ Ibid, p. 103

²⁷ ISS 2022 Annual Report, p. 41 and <https://www.kirkbi.com/about/purpose/>

²⁸ Ibid, p. 4

²⁹ Salary for 2022 – 23,664,000 DDK (converted to AUD using 12-month average exchange rate – calculated monthly). 2022 Remuneration Report available at: https://brand.issworld.com/m/123d6df360418716/original/Remuneration-Report_2022.pdf

³⁰ Ventia 2022 Annual Report, p. 4. Available at: <https://simplebooklet.com/ventia2022annualreport#page=7>

³¹ Ibid, p. 2

³² In November 2023 JP Morgan Chase gave notice advising its substantial ownership of Ventia’s stock including the acquisition of shares of previous largest shareholders, CIMIC Group and AIF VIII. Holdings at the time of notice amounted to 7.62% of voting stock. See notice of initial substantial holder, available at: <https://wcsecure.weblink.com.au/pdf/VNT/02736608.pdf>. For description of JPMorgan Chase as the largest bank in world, see: <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/jp-morgan-chase-jamie-dimon-biggest-big-bank.html>

³³ Ventia 2022 Annual Report, p. 10 <https://simplebooklet.com/ventia2022annualreport#page=13>

³⁴ Ventia 2022 Annual Report, p. 88 <https://simplebooklet.com/ventia2022annualreport#page=91>

³⁵ Yun, J. “5 surprising companies that grew that fastest during Covid-19”. Yahoo Finance, 25/9/20. Available at <https://au.finance.yahoo.com/news/5-fastest-growing-233205921.html>

³⁶ <https://jossgroup.com.au/about/leadership/>

³⁷ “The Job Insecurity Report”, Select Committee on Job Security, February, 2022. Available at: <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/posts/2023/09/3%20Job%20Insecurity%20Report.pdf> (p. 13-31)

³⁸ Ibid, p. 32

³⁹ Ibid, p. xiv

⁴⁰ Redacted “contract specification summary” document available at: <https://unitedworkers.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/230307-school-cleaner-contract-specs-redacted.pdf>

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Available data is company-wide. Figures may well be higher for cleaners employed under the whole-of-government contracts. Resignation data by company and employee classification is available at: <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/wgea-dataset>

⁴³ ACT Education Directorate (2022). “Case Study: Insourcing cleaning in ACT public schools”, p. 4. Available https://www.education.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2001530/Insourcing-cleaning-case-study.pdf

⁴⁴ Flanagan, F. (2019). “What’s the school cleaner’s name? How kids, not just cleaners, are paying the price of outsourcing.” Edited extract published on *The Conversation*, 26 April 2019. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/whats-the-school-cleaners-name-how-kids-not-just-cleaners-are-paying-the-price-of-outsourcing-115443>

⁴⁵ “NSW Workers Compensation Industry Classification Rates and Dust Diseases Contribution, 2023-24”. Available at <https://www.icare.nsw.gov.au/-/media/icare/unique-media/employers/premiums/calculating-the-cost-of-your-premium-2023-2024/workers-compensation-premium-rates-2023-2024.pdf>

⁴⁶ NSW Industrial Relations Commission Index to Awards, [Crown Employees \(Security and General Services\) Award 2022](https://www.irc.nsw.gov.au/awards/crown-employees-security-and-general-services)

⁴⁷ National minimum wage effective 1 July 2023. See, <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/pay-and-wages/minimum-wages#national>

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- ⁴⁸ Per a 2017 Survey of the workforce conducted by Property NSW and cited in the Q+A of contracting document “Whole of Government Facilities Services (Asset Maintenance and Cleaning), Part A, Overview (Pdf p. 402).
- ⁴⁹ For median rental price, see <https://www.smh.com.au/property/news/too-much-for-me-sydney-unit-rents-soar-145-per-week-in-a-year-20230704-p5dlpn.html>. Housing stress is defined, for low-income households, as paying 30% or more of gross income in housing expenses. See, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/housing-affordability>
- ⁵⁰ Internal union data
- ⁵¹ Per contract data available on the NSW eTendering website: <https://www.tenders.nsw.gov.au/?event=public.advancedsearch.home>
- ⁵² Modern award rates available at <https://www.fwc.gov.au/agreements-awards/awards/modern-awards-pay-database> (see award code MA000022)
- ⁵³ Profit estimates exclude GST costs which are included in the contract cost
- ⁵⁴ Per price-earnings ratios drawn from Yahoo Finance as of January 18, 2024. Serco Group, <https://finance.yahoo.com/quote/SRP.L>; ISS, <https://finance.yahoo.com/quote/ISS.CO/>; Ventia (ASX), <https://finance.yahoo.com/quote/VNT.AX>
- ⁵⁵ The Department of Education’s Budget is \$22,336,800,000 for FY 2023-24. See, https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/2023-24_01_Budget-Paper-No-2-Agency_Financial_Statements_Chapter-5-Education.pdf
- ⁵⁶ ACT Education Directorate (2022). “Case Study: Insourcing cleaning in ACT public schools”, p. 2. Available https://www.education.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/2001530/Insourcing-cleaning-case-study.pdf
- ⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 6
- ⁵⁸ Queensland school cleaners’ pay is determined by the Department of Education Cleaners’ Certified Agreement 2022. Available at: https://www.qirc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-06/2023_cb49.pdf
- ⁵⁹ ACT Cleaning Services Officers’ pay is determined by the ACT Public Sector Infrastructure Services Enterprise Agreement 2023-2026. Available at: https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/2214322/ACT-Public-Sector-Infrastructure-Services-Enterprise-Agreement-2023-2026.pdf
- ⁶⁰ Rates for Tasmanian cleaners are set by the Educational Facility Attendants Salaries and Conditions of Employment Agreement 2022. Available at: https://www.tic.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/687491/Education-Facility-Attendants-Salaries-and-Conditions-of-Employment-Agreement-2022.pdf
- ⁶¹ Rates for WA Department of Education Cleaners are set by the Government Services (Miscellaneous) General Agreement 2023. Available at: <https://downloads.wairc.wa.gov.au/agreements/gov049.pdf>
- ⁶² Flanagan, F. (2019). “What’s the school cleaner’s name? How kids, not just cleaners, are paying the price of outsourcing.” Edited extract published on *The Conversation*, 26 April 2019. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/whats-the-school-cleaners-name-how-kids-not-just-cleaners-are-paying-the-price-of-outsourcing-115443>
- ⁶³ The current contracting documents require contractors to submit a “workplace relations management plan” which is to include a risk assessment of the industrial and workplace relations environment of the cleaning industry. As part of this plan contractors are to outline “consultation and communication mechanisms” with its “employees and subcontractor employees, unions, other contractors, or subcontractors”. There is no positive requirement to develop consultative arrangements with unions if the contractor does not otherwise intend to have them in place. As cited in “Property NSW: Whole of Government Facilities Services (Asset Maintenance and Cleaning)”, Part A, Overview (Pdf p. 158).
- ⁶⁴ Available on the Fair Work Commission website at <https://www.fwc.gov.au/document-search>
- ⁶⁵ Amended Act available at: <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1996-017#sec.3> (see, ch. 1, sec. 3)
- ⁶⁶ NSW Government 2023-24 Gender Equality Budget Statement. Available at: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/working-and-business/gender-equality-statement/overview#toc-the-nsw-government-has-abolished-the-wages-cap-and-will-support-feminised-workforces>
- ⁶⁷ Patty, A (2018). “Thousands of NSW school cleaners have a win in fight for job security”. Sydney Morning Herald, 11/2/18. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/business/workplace/thousands-of-nsw-school-cleaners-have-a-win-in-fight-for-job-security-20180211-p4yzzx.html>

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- ⁶⁸ Cleaning Accountability Framework. “Cleaning Contractors Modern Slavery Guidance (V1.0)”. Available at, https://www.cleaningaccountability.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CAF_ModernSlaveryGuidance_Contractors_v1.0.pdf
- ⁶⁹ Fair Work Ombudsman. “Cleaning industry compliance needs to improve” (13/5/16). Available at: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/2016-media-releases/may-2016/20160513-cleaning-compliance-campaign-presser>
- ⁷⁰ “A National Disgrace: The Exploitation of Temporary Work Visa Holders” a report to the Senate Education and Employment References Committee, March 2016 (Pg 143 and 148). Available at: https://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/senate/education_and_employment/temporary_work_visa/~media/Committees/eet_ctte/temporary_work_visa/report/report.pdf
- ⁷¹ Rawling, R., Kaine, S., Josserand, E., and Boersma, M. “Multi-Stakeholder Frameworks for Rectification of Non-Compliance in Cleaning Supply Chains: The Case of the Cleaning Accountability Framework”. Federal Law Review, 2021. Vol 49(3) 438-464. Available at: <https://www.martijnboersma.com/new-research-article-multi-stakeholder-frameworks-for-rectification-of-non-compliance-in-cleaning-supply-chains/>
- ⁷² Cleaning Accountability Framework. “Cleaning Contractors Modern Slavery Guidance (V1.0)”. Available at, https://www.cleaningaccountability.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CAF_ModernSlaveryGuidance_Contractors_v1.0.pdf
- ⁷³ Cleaning Accountability Framework. “The Cleaning Accountability Framework: Core Principles”. Available at: <https://www.cleaningaccountability.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CAF-Core-Principles.pdf>
- ⁷⁴ NSW Government, 2023-24 Budget, “Our Plan for Regional NSW”. Available at: [2023-24_Our-plan-for-Regional-NSW.pdf](#) (see p. 19)
- ⁷⁵ Wade, M (2023). “The chart that reveals how Sydney now lags the rest of NSW on one big indicator”. Sydney Morning Herald, 23/4/23. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/the-chart-that-reveals-how-sydney-now-lags-the-rest-of-nsw-on-one-big-indicator-20230416-p5d0t6.html>
- ⁷⁶ NSW Public Service Commission. “Regional profile of the public sector”. Available at: <https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/reports-and-data/workforce-profile/workforce-profile-reports/workforce-profile-report-2021/regional-profile-of-the-public-sector>
- ⁷⁷ Henderson, T (2018). “The Economic Importance of Public Services in Regional Communities in NSW”. The Centre for Future Work at the Australian Institute. Available at: https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Public_Services_in_Regional_NSW_Final_for_Web.pdf (see p. 19)