

OZZIE GETS A JOB

HOW I LANDED A JOB WITH THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STATE GOVERNMENT

AND HOW YOU CAN TOO



OZZIE JONES | [OZZIEGETSAJOB.ONLINE](https://ozziegetsajob.online)

PROLOGUE

Not too long ago, I was broke, jobless, and delivering UberEats just to survive. Today, I work for the Western Australian State Government – and I've never been happier

Hey there, I'm Ozzie – a public officer working here in Western Australia. I'll be honest with you: I never saw myself working in government: federal or state. I spent most of my career in the private sector – chasing KPIs, working long hours, dealing with tough clients, and constantly worrying about job security.

What I didn't realise back then was how badly it was burning me out. I was helping make someone else rich while living contract to contract, always one restructure away from being let go. Once, I even had my role terminated because the company decided they had overhired. (The same company that begged me to join them just weeks earlier.) No matter how well I performed, I was never in control.

Then came the crash.

I lost my job. I had bills piling up, no savings, and a family to support. I applied for jobs every single day while doing hundreds

of UberEats deliveries just to put food on the table. I had to rely on Centrelink but it was far from enough. Things got worse when our landlord gave us a month's notice to move out – and anyone in Perth knows how brutal (and expensive) the rental market can be.

I still remember the breaking point clearly.

One afternoon, while dropping off my tenth delivery of the day, I had tears running down my face. I pulled over and parked by the road, completely overwhelmed. I wasn't angry – I was exhausted, defeated. I asked God why things had become so hard. I asked for forgiveness. And I begged Him to show me a way out.

That night, I kept delivering. Because life had to go on.

The next day... a miracle.

I received an email inviting me for an interview at a Western Australian government department.

It was just a six-month contract role – but for me, it felt like a lifeline. I swore I would not waste the chance. I prepared like my life depended on it. It actually did.

Weeks after I submitted my application, I stepped into my first day as a public servant. Months later I was made a permanent employee.

Since then, I've never looked back. This job has given me some purpose, stability, and a future. And now, I want to help you get there too, as someone from the inside.

In this book, I'm going to walk you through exactly how I did it – and how you can too:

- **How to prepare for the 5 stages of application**
- **How to prepare a CV and cover letter for public sector recruiters**
- **How to prepare for interviews the right way**
- **How to avoid the common mistakes that get people rejected**
- **Use my proven 33-point power checklist to help you through your own journey**

Whether you're starting from scratch, burnt out from the private sector, or simply want a more meaningful career – this guide is for you.

Let's get started.

CHAPTER 1

MY JOURNEY INTO PUBLIC SERVICE

Before I show you how to land a state government job, let me take you through my own journey – step by step. If you're somewhere in this process right now, just know: I've been there and you are not alone.

13 November - Jobless Era Begins

I became jobless at the most unfortunate time. It was end of the year and most companies have frozen their recruitment. I had little savings, but I applied for Jobseeker from Centrelink to get some help. It took some time to get through the process and when I did get assistance, the amount was too little. I even applied to Woolies and Coles (even KFC) and was rejected. In the end, I had to start delivering food on UberEats to earn income.

20 February – Received Job Alert

After January, the job market was picking up slightly. I was in constant job hunting mode and I knew that in order to get ahead of the competition, I had to apply for jobs sooner than others. Other than manually checking the job sites every few hours daily, I had

registered myself to receive job alerts. This was how I found my current job. I saw the job opening via an email alert.

27 February – Application Submitted

There were not many jobs that fit my experience and expertise. But I saved the jobs that I thought would be a good fit for me. That night, after an exhausting day, I stayed up late, tailored my CV and cover letter to every line of the position description. I highlighted the skills they were after, showed how I met the criteria, and submitted everything at 4am. I was hopeful... and tired. But it felt right. I did the best I could.

12 March – Received Interview Invitation

I was in the middle of my UberEats shift, scrolling through emails during a break, and there it was – "Interview Confirmation". My heart stopped. I couldn't believe it. I texted my partner straight away. The email from the recruiter included the interview date, time, venue... even a list of interviewers. I had two weeks to prepare.

26 March – Interview Day

I wore my suit – no tie. I arrived early. A friendly lady greeted me and led me to a prep room. She handed me a printed sheet: the exact questions the panel would ask. I had 10 minutes to scribble bullet points that would help me through the interview.

The interview started. Four people. A mix of formal and friendly. I answered confidently. What they didn't know was how much this interview meant to me. How badly I needed this job.

26 March – Thank You Email Sent

After the interview, I emailed the recruiter and asked her to forward my thank you email to the panel. I also messaged the panelists via LinkedIn. Later that evening, I was back in my car, delivering food to strangers, trying not to overthink what had just happened.

27 March – Reference Check Commenced

One of my referees messaged me – he had received the reference request. He said he gave a glowing review. I took that as a positive sign. Things were moving.

2 April – Post-Interview Follow-Up

A week later, I followed up with the recruiter. She replied – they were still trying to reach another one of my referees. Turns out, her work email blocked the reference request email. I provided an alternate personal email instead. My referee replied to the request quickly and gave a strong reference. It shudders me to think what would happen if I didn't follow up with the recruiter. They would have probably failed my interview because they were unable to contact my references.

The Long Wait (And 3 More Follow-Ups)

Three agonising weeks went by. I had another job interview in the meantime, but I was still hopeful for this job.

- 10 April: Recruiter says HR is finalising things.
- 17 April: Still no word. I asked if there's anyone else I can contact. "Just follow up with me," the recruiter said.
- 22 April: A different recruiter replied, blaming HR backlog. I thanked her anyway.

By this point, I was spiralling. It had been nearly four weeks since my interview. I had been unemployed for almost 6 months. I honestly thought they had picked someone else. I felt crushed.

24 April – Pool Appointment Email

I was driving when I saw the email notification. I pulled over. The subject line read: "Recruitment Outcome – Pool Ref XXXXX". I took a deep breath.

The message said: "You have been successful in being appointed to the pool."

I was elated. But wait – does that mean I got the job? Or not? I wasn't sure. It was signed by an Executive Director, so I knew it was official, but... still unclear.

25 April – Follow-Up for Clarity

I emailed the recruiter (again). She congratulated me and said someone from the panel would be in touch soon. I took that as confirmation. Kind of.

2 May – Second Follow-Up (Still No Contact)

A week passed. No word. I emailed again. This time no reply. I started convincing myself: Maybe I was only good enough for the pool, but not the job.

Maybe they already hired someone else? Depression kicked in. I couldn't even get out of bed some mornings. I was exhausted.

12 May – Notification of Success from HR

3:32pm. I received the email:

“Congratulations on being offered a position...” I ran to tell my partner. I wanted to scream.

But then: “Once all pre-employment prerequisites have been met, we will issue your contract.”

Right. Not a done deal yet. Still had to pass the police clearance and submit documents. I did both that day.

14 May – Letter of Offer

Finally, the official offer arrived. It was a 6-month fixed term contract. It didn't matter. I HAD A JOB.

I forwarded the email to my partner. That night, we had smiles at the dinner table again. For the first time in a long time.

3 June – First Day on the Job

I woke up early. Put on a fresh shirt and made myself some instant coffee (yuck). Took the bus and arrived at the office. Met the team. Received my pass card and laptop. Did my onboarding training.

I still remember sitting at my new desk thinking: I'm a public officer now. My new journey has begun.

CHAPTER 2

MY PROCESS : A STEP BY STEP GUIDE

They say hindsight is 20/20 – let me walk you through my process so yours can be better.

Everyone's experience applying for state government jobs is a bit different – different departments, different roles, different recruiters and/or hiring managers – but most follow the same general processes.

After going through the full cycle myself (with plenty of sweat and uncertainty along the way), I can summarise the journey into 5 key stages:

- Stage 1: The Job Hunt
- Stage 2: The Application
- Stage 3: Preparing for the Interview
- Stage 4: The Interview
- Stage 5: Post Interview

In terms of importance to your success, I'd say:

- Stages 1–2: 40%
- Stages 3–4: 40%
- Stage 5: 20%

Let's unpack each one.

STAGE 1: THE JOB HUNT

Every working person will know what this process is all about. Jobs seldom fall into our laps (if yes, lucky you), and for most of us, we have to go out there and hunt. It is not fun, but an essential part of the process.

Many working Australians would already be familiar with some job sites like Seek, Indeed, and LinkedIn.

However, the best site for Western Australia state government jobs can be found here <https://search.jobs.wa.gov.au/page.php?pageID=215>

WA Government Jobs

Find the government sector job perfect for you

Welcome – This is where you can find adverts for jobs in the WA Government sector.
By working in this sector you can make a positive contribution to communities across our vast state.

Changes to WA Government jobs
Changes to WA Government departments.
From 1 July 2025, some WA Government departments have new names that reflect the reshaped functions under the [Public Sector Reform 2025](#).
This website has been updated with the new names.

Start your job search now.
You can refine your job search by selecting options in the boxes below. Use the CTRL key (or 'Apple' key for Macs) to select multiple options from the list in each box.
You can also use the keyword search function to find job adverts with specific terms or you can enter the position number or job title to find a specific vacancy.

To view all vacancies, leave all search boxes blank and click 'Search'.

Occupation *	Salary Range *	Location region *
Accounting/Economics/Finance	\$1 Less than \$20 000	Perth Metropolitan
Administrative/Support Service	\$20 000 to \$29 999	Goswamee Region
Agriculture/Horticulture/Forestry	\$30 000 to \$39 999	Coastfields/Esperance Region
Apprenticeship/Traineeship	\$40 000 to \$49 999	Great Southern Region

Agency **

Work type ***

Specify Professional positions

Geographical Affairs, Department of	Fixed Term - Full Time	Level 1
Agent General	Fixed Term - Part Time	Level 2
Albany Port Authority	Permanent - Full Time	Level 3
Animal Resources Authority	Permanent - Part Time	Level 4

Keyword search

Advertised (in the)

Apr 2025

Search Reset Clear

BigRedSky

WA Government

Go to
Jobs search
View all Jobs
Email me Jobs
Login
Closed Jobs

Copyright | Privacy | Terms

Via the WA government jobs portal, you will be able search for jobs according to your preferences (full or part time, location, salary range, type of occupation, agency).

For me, I was checking all the job sites for suitable roles at least twice a day. Fortunately on that day, I saw the job ad within an email alert I received from Seek. I saved the job ad and made a mental note to make my application as soon as possible.

I would recommend setting job alerts if you are serious about applying. This would ensure you would receive alerts as the jobs are posted and provide you more time to evaluate and consider the job.

With Seek, you just need to save a job that you are interested in and it will send you similar job alerts once a day. Other sites would have similar ways to set up job notifications.

For WA government jobs, you can go to <https://search.jobs.wa.gov.au/page.php?pageID=215> and click on the 'Email me jobs' link. If you haven't registered, go through the registration process and follow the instructions to set up your job alerts.


There are more than 170,000 public sector employees in Western Australia and competition is high to fill the vacancies advertised. The job hunter who is alert to the availability of jobs has the advantage over those who look once in a while. I can truly attest to the saying the early bird catches the worm.

Ozzie Tip:

- Most government agencies will post their vacancies on their main job portal. Sometimes they will also duplicate the same job post in Seek or other job sites. This is to increase their chances of getting applicants. If you miss the job ad on Seek, you might see it on Indeed or LinkedIn for example. Some smaller agencies might advertise directly in Seek. It helps to register yourself with all the job sites just in case.
- A good rule of thumb to remember during the job hunt process is to **apply as early as possible** before the application closing date. Many recruiters or hiring managers prefer to process the applications as they come in, instead of waiting until the closing date. They would receive hundreds of applications and sorting the applications earlier would ensure they would be able to filter the suitable candidates as early as possible.

- **Save the job ad.** Take screenshots of the original job advertisement and save it on your computer. It will help if you print it out to prepare for your interview later. If you're not sure how to take full page screenshots, I recommend installing an extension called 'GoFullPage-Full Page Screen Capture' on your Chrome browser. By using this, you can easily capture screenshots of the job ads and save them as PDF for future reference.
- If you're interested in health related roles, you can also visit <https://www.jobs.health.wa.gov.au/page.php?pageID=215>

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Department of Health

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Reports & publications
Careers
Services search


Careers

Job search

Find jobs by clicking on an item in one or more categories or enter a job title or position number in the keyword search or reference number box.

Select multiple items by holding down your CTRL key (Apple key for Mac user). If you don't click on an item, all items will be chosen.

Keyword Search or Reference Number	Last Advertised
<p>Occupation *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting/Economics/Finance Administration/Support Service Agriculture/Horticulture/Forestry Apprenticeship/Traineeship 	<p>Salary Range *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Less than \$20 000 \$20 000 to \$29 999 \$30 000 to \$39 999 \$40 000 to \$49 999
<p>Location Region*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perth Metropolitan Gascoyne Region Goldfields-Experiance Region Great Southern Region 	<p>Work Type *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed Term - Full Time Fixed Term - Part Time Permanent - Full Time Permanent - Part Time
<p>Agency *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child and Adolescent Health Service East Metropolitan Health Service Health Industrial Relations Service Health Support Services 	
<p>Level * <input type="checkbox"/> Specified Callings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 	



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STAGE 2: THE APPLICATION

Once you find your preferred role, it is time to create the application. This is a very important stage and you need to give it your full attention. Your cover letter and CV would open the door to the next stage which is the interview.

What I did:

1. I read and understood the the job application pack
2. I customised my CV and cover letter to the job description
3. I prepared my references

Understanding the Job Application Pack

Normally, the job advertisement contains the below information:

- what are the expectations of the role
- what type of role (full time/fixed term/others)
- salary range
- the contact person for the role (if you have questions)
- how to apply for the role
- pre-employment conditions
- benefits that the successful applicant be entitled to
- work location

The above would be a good summary of what you should expect. At the bottom of the

advertisement, there should be links to the job application pack, which at the minimum should contain the Job Description and other important information.

Job Description: My job description document specified in detail the duties of the position, expected results and outcomes. I treated the job description like a checklist and I went line by line. Fortunately, I was able to relate to every point in the list because I had the necessary experience and was able to give specific examples for each point. This proved useful in customising my CV and cover letter, and also the interview later.

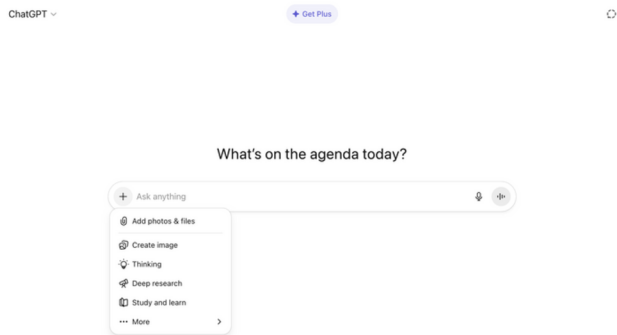
Information Pack: In the information pack, it explained the eligibility criteria (e.g. national police clearance, working rights, working with children check, etc.), how to lodge the application, and selection process. I know I met the criteria and had the necessary documents requested. However, since it was my first time applying for a government job, the selection process did not make that much sense to me at the time. I learned that first hand as I went through the process. Also, you can infer the culture of the agency through their descriptions. Sometimes, but not all the time, the pack will contain the values, working culture and mission of the organisation. Pay attention to these details, as they might help you later on.

Customising Your CV and Cover Letter

Once you have picked apart the job description and information pack, it's time to tailor your CV and cover letter. Thank goodness for the creation of AI and now we have ChatGPT and similar services to help us with this time consuming activity.

Here's what I did:

Step 1: I took my CV and Job Description and uploaded them into ChatGPT.



I used the prompts below to create and refine my CV (You can try different prompts as needed, but I started with these):

- *“Write a tailored CV for this [TITLE] role at [COMPANY]. Don't include an objective statement or references, but do include a professional summary, my past 10 years of work experience with 3-5 bullet points per*

role, and incorporate the most important keywords from the job description in those achievements. [Paste the job description.]”

- *“Based on this job description for a [JOB TITLE] role at [COMPANY], write a resume for my past [X] years of work experience with 3-5 bullet points per role that include metrics and the most important 10 keywords from the job description. [Paste job description.]”*

Step 2: Next, I refined my CV. Why? Because AI generated CVs are just too obvious. It needed to sound authentic and in my voice. Sometimes it spews out complicated jargons that doesn't sound human. Other times ChatGPT 'hallucinates' and churns out sentences that do not relate to your experience. Take the points it generated, but you still need to edit the tone to sound like you wrote it. Plus, if you can't understand your own CV, you won't be able to articulate your experience clearly during the interview. Your interviewer and recruiter would be able to notice the disconnect between what you have written and what you speak in person.

Step 3: Ask ChatGPT to produce a cover letter. Here's the prompt I used:

I am applying for the [Job Title] role at [Agency/Department].

Here is the job description: [Paste the job description here]

Here is my CV: [Paste your CV or key work history here]

Please write me a 1-page professional cover letter tailored to the job description, using the STAR method to highlight at least 2 key achievements. The tone should be confident, clear, and suitable for a Western Australia state government job application. Keep it concise and aligned to the selection criteria.

Once I went through the above methods, I had a CV that highlighted my achievements and concise to a few pages. My cover letter also clearly defined how I can contribute to the role supported by my experience (defined by the **STAR method**)

What is the STAR method?

STAR is an acronym for *Situation, Task, Action and Result*. This is a very effective way to describe the work you did in a concise, yet factual, storytelling form.

For example, you want to apply for an administrative support officer role and you have some experience that you want to highlight that would showcase this.

Without the STAR method, you might have described it as *'I provided administrative support to my team and ensured reports were completed on time.'*

By using STAR, your description would be like this: *'Our department was falling behind in preparing monthly reports due to staff shortages. I was asked to streamline the reporting process so deadlines could be met. I redesigned the reporting template, automated data entry steps, and trained the team on the new system. Reports were consistently delivered 2 days early, reducing manager complaints by 60% and improving team efficiency.'*

Situation: *Our department was falling behind in preparing monthly reports due to staff shortages.*

Task: *I was asked to streamline the reporting process so deadlines could be met.*

Action: *I redesigned the reporting template, automated data entry steps, and trained the team on the new system.*

Result: *Reports were consistently delivered 2 days early, reducing manager complaints by 60% and improving team efficiency.*

The STAR method is a framework that will help not just in the job application stage, but also during the interview process.

I have memorised between 5-10 experiences that I had broken down into STAR. It helped me reply to the questions as they were posed to me.

Ozzie Power Tips:

1. Try to limit your CV to 2 pages. (Mine was 3 pages, but the 3rd page only had my references)
2. Highlight key achievements relevant to the job description.
3. Use numbers (data) when possible to show the quantitative impact you made..
4. Save and upload your CV and cover letter in PDF format. (Avoid Word formats because if you use fonts that isn't compatible, it would look horrible on-screen)

5. If you have work rights, clearly mention that in your CV. There are many overseas applicants that do not have work rights, but trying their luck. If you mention that you have the necessary work rights, then the recruiter/hiring manager would notice that.
6. The layout of your CV matters. Minimalist style is best compared to one that has multi-colours and cluttered.

Preparing your references

References are often underestimated, but they carry serious weight in government job applications. Here's why they matter:

Validation of Your Claims

Your CV and cover letter are your version of the story. References provide independent confirmation that you actually delivered the results you claim.

Proof of Work Ethic & Reliability

Government recruiters value consistency, accountability, and integrity. A referee can vouch for how you show up daily, not just your highlight reel.

Cultural & Team Fit

Sometimes, agencies already assume you can do the job (based on your application). What

they really want to know is: “Will this person work well in our environment?” References give that insight.

Risk Management

A bad hire in government can waste months of recruitment, disrupt a team, and cost taxpayers money. References reduce that risk by acting as a background check on your professional reputation.

Influence at the Decision Stage

In tight competitions (where candidates score equally in interviews), strong references can tip the scales in your favour.

If your interview goes well, the recruiter or hiring managers will want to initiate the reference check as soon as possible. You want to provide them with your references in your application or CV. If they need to ask you for it, then you have added additional work for them to do. Always make it easy for them.

Prepare your references early on. During the job application process, I made contact with my references and received their permissions to be contacted by future employers. This way you can provide their contact details during the application itself, not after.

After your interview, check with your references if they have received any contact from your recruiter or hiring managers. Sometimes reference check emails might be missed, or worse, go to the spam folder and deleted.

Ozzie Power Tips:

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3. Use numbers (data) when possible to show the quantitative impact you made..
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STAGE 3: PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Congratulations! You have received an interview invitation. What do you do next?

Go into panic mode? Sigh of relief? Dread? Or look forward to it in anticipation?

Most likely you will have a few days to prepare. For me, it was 13 days between receiving the invitation and the interview day. The only thing you need to do at this stage is prepare as much as you can.

Here's how I prepared for the interview:

I printed out the important documents

I've always found it easier to remember things if I write them on paper, as compared to typing it on screen. I printed out copies of the job ad, job description, CV and cover letter: One copy for scribbling notes, and another copy to bring to the interview. Unfortunately, I don't have a good memory and during the job hunt stage, I had applied for many roles. By printing out the documents, it jogged my memory to this particular application and I was able to revisit my mental process during the application. Also, by having the print-outs physically in my fingers right before the interview, it acted as a trigger to unlock

critical memories and thought processes that helped me answer the interview questions.

I tried to predict the questions they may ask during the interview. And I prepared the answers to standard questions using STAR method.

Based on a quick Internet search, I was able to find out that most government interviews tend to ask the same type of questions. The first will always be the tell-us-about-yourself question, while the rest of the questions tend to be situation type questions, i.e. “Tell us about a problem you faced in your previous roles and how you addressed the situation?” Since I’ve already tailored my CV according to the STAR method, I just needed to repeat verbally what was written there.

I did mock interviews.

It’s important to keep to the time limit of your interview. The best way to ensure this is to practice with someone you are familiar with. I had my partner pretend she was the interviewer and ask me the questions that I had predicted. Using the timer function on my phone, I actually timed my answer to each question. Generally I gave 5 minutes to answer each question. From the mock interview, I was able to fine tune my answers. For example, my answer to the tell-me-about-yourself question took 10 minutes,

which means I was rambling. (My partner's bored look means I probably would have failed the interview) Then I was able to refine my answer further to a few key points and kept it to a manageable 5 minutes. My partner was also able to point out my body language and mannerisms which I needed to correct. (I had to work on maintaining eye contact, as I'm on the shy side and my default behaviour is to avoid staring into people's eyes.)

I felt that this gave me a real edge. I did a few mock interviews until I felt confident of my answers. As they say, practice makes perfect.

I surveyed the interview location and environment

I was not familiar with the location of the interview venue. The day before the interview, I made a point to visit the location so I won't be sweating looking for the place. It would be a tragedy if I couldn't find the place and it made me late. This enabled me to work out the best route to the location and the best method of transport. (Uber worked best for me) Also, when I was at the location I was able to check out how the employees there dressed for work. I noticed a few wore suits without ties, while others

wore normal pants and single coloured shirts. No denim jeans in sight. Based on this knowledge, I was able to determine my interview outfit. I had to dress like an employee of the agency.

I prepared my interview outfit earlier

This is a small one, but saved me time on the interview day. I prepped my interview clothes the day before. This way I won't waste precious time ironing my shirts and pants, when I could be using that time mentally preparing for the interview. For me, I prepared my grey suit with blue shirt and no tie. I also decided I was going to wear my pair of black leather Oxford shoes to fit into the 'government' look.

I brought along an extra CV to the interview

The interviewers would already have your CV in hand before the interview. But I've always made it a point to bring an extra CV to any interview. It allowed me to jog my memory of my work experiences and also sometimes if there are last minute forms to fill out, you can just refer to this extra CV to save time. (Who remembers their exact start/end dates of previous roles or references details off-hand, right?)

I read the news.

Information is power and the more of it you have, the better your chances are of asking smart questions during the interview. Government activities are always covered in the news. The best way to find good talking points is to scour the relevant department/agency website and read their official media releases. It would provide valuable information on what they are currently working on or recent achievements.

During my interview, I was able to ask the panel about a recent department program launch and we had a good conversation on what was the objective and outcome of that program. It provided a good insight to how they work internally and at the same time it made me look genuinely interested in their mission and objectives.

I stalked my interviewers

Try to find your interviewers on LinkedIn or internet. Read about their backgrounds and what they are doing at the agency. Find things in common. It would help during the interview if you could ask them about their current tasks and how you can contribute. You want to give the impression that you would be a great addition to their team. Also, if you find them on LinkedIn you can send them thank you notes directly via InMail.

I got in the right mindset

I was desperate for a job so I was in fighting mode. I prepared like my life depended on it. If there was music in the background, you would have heard Rocky's 'Eye of the Tiger' playing. I tried my very best to prepare and used any information (whether from the Internet or personal observations) to my advantage. I can only advise you to have the same mindset too.

STAGE 4: THE INTERVIEW

The day has come.

Walking into an interview is never easy, no matter how prepared you are. But I can tell you one thing: the way you carry yourself on interview day makes all the difference.

For my job interview, I made it a point to arrive early – thirty minutes early, in fact. Some people say ten minutes is enough, but being there early gave me breathing room. It allowed me to settle in, calm the nerves, and quietly run through my mock answers in my head. Those thirty minutes weren't wasted; they were part of my preparation.

The Ready Room Surprise

About fifteen minutes before the scheduled interview, a staff member came to get me. I was escorted into what they called a 'ready room.' To my surprise, they handed me a sheet containing the exact questions I would face in the interview, along with space for me to jot down my answers.

This was a golden opportunity. I didn't waste time writing essays – instead, I quickly sketched out bullet points, each framed around the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result). It helped me organise my thoughts, keep answers structured, and avoid

rambling. Best of all, I was allowed to bring this ‘cheat sheet’ with me into the interview. And yes, I absolutely used it.

Meeting the Panel

The interview began right on time. Professional to the minute. When I walked into the room, I was greeted by a panel of interviewers. To be honest, they looked a little tired – which made me think I wasn’t the first candidate of the day.

That’s when I decided: if they’re tired, I need to keep the energy up. I made an effort to smile, speak clearly, and even inject a little warmth and humour into my answers. My goal wasn’t just to answer their questions, but to make the panel enjoy the process.

There was also a recruiter present, who explained the process and set the tone. She reminded everyone of the time limit, which made me conscious of pacing my responses. Each panel member was responsible for asking one question, while a lead panel member directed the overall flow.

The Questions

The first question was the classic: “Tell us about yourself.” This is the question where many candidates go off track, but I kept it relevant. I highlighted my skills and experiences that matched the job description, and gave just enough personal story to make myself memorable.

Then came the situation-based questions. This was where STAR really came into play. By structuring my answers, I could give the panel a full picture: here’s the challenge, here’s what I did, and here’s the impact. It also helped me stay calm under pressure, because I wasn’t scrambling for words.

My Questions to Them

When the interview wrapped up, they gave me the floor to ask my own questions. This is a critical moment that many candidates waste with throwaway lines like, “What’s the culture like?”

Instead, I asked two very deliberate questions:

1. I brought up their recent program launch, which showed I’d done my homework and was genuinely interested in their work. The lead panelist happily explained more, which created a real conversation.

2. I directly asked, “What are your expectations of me in the first 100 days?” That question changed the dynamic. It showed that I was already thinking like part of their team, planning ahead, and eager to deliver value quickly.

Use ‘I’ not ‘We’

This is an interesting one. I know that professionally it always takes a team to accomplish any work. In the private sector, you are encouraged to use the word ‘we’ during interviews to show you are a team player. In the public sector, it is the opposite. It is best to use ‘I’ to describe your individual work and contributions. For example, ‘I attended 50 calls daily to help decrease monthly customer complaints by 5%’, or ‘I delivered my tasks 2 weeks ahead of schedule resulting in reducing costs by \$5,000.’ (Remember the STAR method too!) This identifies your personal contributions to the job. It may be awkward to talk this way especially if you’re the shy type like me, but it works.

Recap what you bring to the table

When the interviewer asks if you have any final question, use this opportunity to recap your strengths and what you can bring to the table. If you have memorised your points using the STAR method and practiced them during the mock interview, this should be easy to communicate to them. Just convey the right key points to make them remember you. It should not take more than a minute.

Respect the clock. Time your responses.

During my interview, there was a clock displayed on the monitor in the interview room. I used it to time my responses. It was easier to stick to the timing because I had practiced multiple times during the mock interviews. I kept the 'Tell me about yourself' answer to less than 5 minutes, and I used the same rule to answer other questions. It is crucial to respect the timing because there might be other interview candidates scheduled after yours. Also, please be vigilant if your interview is scheduled before lunch time. It is human nature for interviewers to be hungry and agitated if you extend your interview into their lunch breaks. On the other hand, don't be too quick in your answers. That will show that you have not elaborated well on your points.

There are no extra points in ending the interview earlier than expected. The interviewers have already allocated their busy schedules to hear what you have to say. Ultimately, strike a good balance between too quick and too long winded.

Be yourself

Despite my preparations, I ensured that I was being authentic to my personality. I did not use technical jargons or buzzwords to appear smart, nor did I try to be someone I was not. I was genuine in my answers and there was no fakery at any point. I knew that any attempts to mislead or exaggerate would catch up with me in the future. The interviewers were talking with the real me, their future colleague who they would spend a lot of time with.

Final Thoughts

Walking out of that room, I felt nervous (of course), but also satisfied. I knew I had prepared well, presented myself professionally, and asked the right questions. Even if I didn't get the role, I could be proud of how I showed up that day.

The interview isn't just about proving you can do the job. It's also about showing the panel who you are – your mindset, your energy, and your ability to engage. That combination can often make the difference between being just another candidate and being the one they remember.

STAGE 5: THE POST INTERVIEW

The post interview process starts right after you step outside the interview room. It is absolutely imperative that the panel remembers you beyond the interview. You want to be at the top of the recruiter and hiring manager's minds

So how can you achieve that?

Send Thank You Notes

This is a lost art. After I was hired, I asked my interviewers (and now colleagues) on what me stood out from the other candidates. They said other than doing well in the interview, I was the only one who sent a thank you note. That made them remember me.

How did I know where to send the thank you notes? First, the recruiter has listed the names of the panel interviewers in the interview invitation. This allowed me to search them on LinkedIn.

An hour after the interview, I emailed the recruiter with my thank you note attached and asked if she could forward it to the panelists (which she did). At the same time, I sent the interviewers the same thank you note over LinkedIn InMail message. Luckily all of them replied back with a thank you.

When they replied back, I added the interviewers as a connection. I thought I have nothing to lose by pressing that Connect button. I took it as a positive sign when all of them accepted my connection requests.

Follow Up and Be Persistent

I thought that 1 week would be a safe time to follow up on the interview status. So I sent the recruiter an email a week after the interview to enquire on the progress and outcome.

Luckily I did. The recruiter replied they were having issues contacting one of my reference. I had that sorted out (it was a case of blocked email policies) and my reference gave a positive response.

I made it a point to follow up every week, at least until I receive a yes or no response. I know it sounds excessive and a bit creepy, but persistence works.

Be prepared for bad news

As prepared as you might have been, there is always a chance that there is a better candidate than you. If you have read the previous chapter, you would have understood the emotional roller coaster I went through.

At one point, I thought I had a positive interview. At another point, I genuinely thought they had moved on with another candidate.

The long process and silence did not help. As I was from the private sector, I was used to receive feedback and outcome just a few days after the interview. However, it is different in the public sector where due process is required during hiring. There are many levels of approvals beyond the hiring manager and policies needed to be adhered to.

Ultimately, you will receive an outcome notice. But do expect that it will take many, many weeks to hear from them. During this phase, I continued to apply for other jobs because just in case I was rejected, I did not waste time and was able to proceed with other interviews.

However, I still had to prepare myself for disappointment. It was a painful inevitability because there was only one role available and there can only be one candidate. I was not good at handling rejection, but I knew I would be fine in the end. I've always consoled myself by thinking if I was rejected, it is only because there is something much better in store for me in the future.

CHAPTER 3

INSIDER TIPS: COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

Now that I'm part of the public service, I routinely found myself as part of the recruiting process to help build the team. Allow me to share common mistakes that candidates make from my perspective of other side of the interview table.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Expect a lengthy process. It took me *78 days* from submitting the job application to receiving the final letter of offer. That is a long time to wait, especially if you are in need of a job quickly. Applicants need to understand that the process takes a while to complete as there are many approvals and processes to complete. If you are in between jobs, I would highly recommend to not wait for the outcome and continue to look for jobs or start any new job you may received. If the offer letter comes your way (yay!), then you can make an educated decision on whether to accept or reject the offer. If you are currently in a role, only resign once you receive a confirmed letter of offer. That will make your transition into your new role easier.

Customise your CV and cover letters.

Recruiters and hiring managers loathe to receive CVs and cover letters that are generic and template-ish. To stand out, spend some time making your application suitable for the position. Describe your experience in the STAR format and communicate in a effective and concise manner. Remember to make your application stand out or it would not be shortlisted.

TMI (Too much information)

Some applicants include too many attachments to their applications. While it's good to provide supporting evidence, make sure it is relevant to what you have mentioned in your CV or cover letter. For example, if you have won an award, you can attach a copy of the award, provided it is relevant to the role you're applying for. Unfortunately some applications come attached with irrelevant documents. Keep it simple.

Do not apply if you don't have work rights

This is a simple one to understand and clearly spelled out in the job application pack. Any law abiding Australian employer will not employ those who do not have the necessary work rights. Please ensure you have the proper visas before applying. Otherwise, your application will be rejected outright.

Avoid AI generated CVs and cover letters

While AI applications are great tools to create CVs and cover letters, take the time to customise them to your tone and voice. It is easy to recognise applications that fully used AI. It would be full of buzzwords and jargons that normal humans would not use. Sometimes AI would overly use certain keywords to fit the job description. Experienced recruiters and hiring managers would catch this and scrutinise your application further to avoid bot applications.

INTERVIEW PROCESS**Not being prepared for the interview.**

Out of many applications, interviewers have shortlisted YOU for the interview. Nothing would be more disappointing to the interviewers than meeting an applicant who is not prepared for the interview. It is expected that the candidate would know at least some information from the job application pack and their own research about the agency or department. Interviewers much prefer to answer smart questions from an enthusiastic candidate, compared to candidates who couldn't seem bothered. It is true when they say that skills can be taught, but the right attitude is what create great employees.

Not being professional

Being in the public service requires a certain professionalism. After all, we are in service to the public. During your interview, ensure your professionalism by communicating effectively, maintaining integrity by not exaggerating your achievements or providing misleading information, and respecting the interviewers. It seems like common sense, but sadly there are candidates who lack professionalism in their conduct. For example, being late without informing the interviewers, 'ghosting' the interviewers by not appearing on the agreed date/time, being too aggressive in the interview, or looking down to the interviewers by giving 'I'm better than you' vibes. Respect goes both ways and it is in the culture of public service to maintain a high level of professionalism.

POST INTERVIEW PROCESS

Not sending a Thank-You note or following up

It's not mandatory, but it shows professionalism. Many skip this small but powerful step. Make sure to send your recruiter and interviewers a brief thank-you email within 24 hours. Reaffirm your interest and appreciation for their time.

Misunderstanding What ‘The Pool’ Means

Many applicants panic when they hear they’ve been placed in a pool instead of getting an immediate offer. A recruitment pool means you’ve been found suitable – departments can offer you a role anytime within the pool’s validity (often 6–12 months). It’s a good thing. Take pride you have been chosen into the pool. Who know you might get that offer?

EPILOGUE

AFTER THOUGHT

One thing stuck with me after going through the entire process. In order to be successful in getting a role (whether in public service or private sector), you need to be able to SELL YOURSELF.

The conventional sales process is divided into Preparation and Approach, Presentation and Closing, and Follow Up.

Instead of selling a product, in this case YOU are the product. It is essential to attract the customer (i.e. recruiter/hiring manager) with the right preparation and approach (i.e. the application), convince them with effective presentation and closing arguments (i.e. the interview) and follow up to wrap the sale (i.e. thank you note). And of course, ultimately the product needs to deliver on its promise.

As with any sales effort, the outcome depends on your ability to convince and a certain amount of timing and luck.

I really enjoy the work that I do, but public service is not for everyone. I truly hope you find this guide useful and I look forward to seeing you around as a future colleague.

OSZIE'S POWER CHECKLIST

USE MY PROVEN 33-POINT POWER CHECKLIST TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH YOUR JOB APPLICATION JOURNEY!

Understand the Job

- I have read the full job description and application pack carefully
- I understand the department's purpose, structure, and key projects
- I meet the eligibility requirements (work rights, clearances, etc.)
- I understand the key selection criteria and what each means

Prepare Your CV

- My CV is no longer than 2 pages (3 max if senior, with references on last page)
- I've tailored my CV to match the job description (no generic wording)
- I've highlighted relevant achievements, not just duties
I've included quantifiable results (e.g. "increased efficiency by 25%")
- My formatting is clean, consistent, and professional (no fancy templates)
- I saved my CV as a PDF with a clear filename (e.g. Firstname_Lastname_CV.pdf)

Write Your Cover Letter

- My cover letter is 1 page long
- I've addressed the key selection criteria using the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result)
- I've included at least one strong, relevant example of my past experience
- I've used the department's tone and keywords naturally
- I've checked spelling, grammar, and punctuation
- I've saved it as a PDF (e.g. Firstname_Lastname_CoverLetter.pdf)

Before You Apply...

- I've confirmed all required documents are attached (qualifications, proof of ID, etc.)
- I've checked the application instructions carefully (file types, limits, naming)
- I've submitted at least 24 hours before the closing date (no last-minute panic)

Preparing for the Interview

- I've researched my interview panel and department values
- I've written down my strengths and weaknesses
- I've prepared bullet-point STAR responses for common behavioural questions

Preparing for the Interview (continued)

- I've done at least one mock interview.
- I've planned my outfit and logistics (where, when, how to get there).


During the Interview

- I arrived early (15–30 minutes before).
- I stayed calm, positive, and confident
- I respected time limits when answering
- I responded to questions using the STAR method.
- I used 'I' instead of 'We' in my answers
- I asked meaningful questions at the end (e.g. "What are your expectations for the first 100 days?")

After the Interview

- I sent a short, polite thank-you email to the panel or recruiter
- I followed up after a reasonable period (if no updates)
- I remained patient – government hiring takes time
- I stayed ready for potential offers from the recruitment pool

BEST OF LUCK. YOU CAN DO THIS.



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