

SUBMISSION for Reform of Australian Government Administration: Building the world's best public service.

I am a public servant with 17 years experience from the APS3 through to EL2 level across a number of departments (policy and service delivery) and a lot of different work areas. My work has ranged from direct customer support through to business analysis, project management, policy writing and strategy development. I have moved, by choice, up, down and sideways during my career in the APS, both within organisations and across the APS. I believe this has given me some valuable views of the APS that have enabled me to work smarter and better as a public servant. I am proud to be a public servant. I enjoy the challenge and diversity of experience that the APS offers. The following is something I have been thinking about for a long time.

My submission seeks to provide feedback across the following questions:

- What are the most important challenges facing the public sector over the next ten years?
- What are the key implications for how the public sector will need to operate?
- How can internal and external collaboration be strengthened to improve policy development and implementation?
- How can we better bring together service design, delivery and policy formulation processes—within individual programs and across all of government?
  
- How can Australian Government policy departments improve their own efficiency?
- How can Australian Government service delivery agencies improve their own efficiency?
- What mechanisms should be used to systematically improve efficiency across the public service as a whole?
- What skills and capabilities are needed to drive efficiency throughout public sector organisations?

The greatest challenge and implication I see, and have seen particularly over the last 10 years, for the public service that impacts its ability to work either individually (at agency level) or collaboratively (at whole of government level) is a lack of understanding about the connections between strategy, policy, business process and standard operating procedures. This heavily impacts efficiency and opportunities for service improvement, innovation and the provision of evidence based policy advice that is robust, innovative and forward thinking. It also poses significant service delivery challenges when one is faced with the grey areas between two departments or agencies.

From my experience, there are few public servants who can describe how the information in their performance plan links to their business plan and key strategic documents. There seem to be few business manager level staff who understand the importance of the connectivity between legislation, Chief Executive Instructions (CEIs), policy (and what policy is), accountability/consultation matrix, business process and where they fit in higher level business processes, how those business processes break down into standard operating procedures and task cards and the resultant customer service delivery (whether internal or external or across government). I have also yet to see the definition of the business disciplines required to deliver a component of business.

The impact of this lack of knowledge is that because you can't really articulate your own core business process (and level 1 or 2 business processes), it is extremely difficult to determine how best to work in a whole of government space, or indeed across a number of agencies/departments to deliver the business of government, or even across your own agency in a seamless and sensible manner for the customer. The result is that the work is either conducted in a very piecemeal approach that does not enable synergies or process improvement or is done in a way that does not focus on the citizen and service delivery. It also often means delivery times are incredibly unrealistic, resulting in bad publicity, customer

aggression toward those who have no control over the situation, and very, very unhappy staff who often take unplanned leave as a coping mechanism.

My personal view is that every APS staff member should be taught about the value of understanding your business process and of how this links policy with standard operating procedures, business plans and other key business information. They should also be taught how to use these tools to improve their business outcomes. It's not rocket science. It is common sense business practices. They should understand where they 'fit' and why they fit in that space. They should know what they are responsible and accountable for in the delivery of their piece of government business and why they are responsible and accountable for it. They should know what disciplines are needed to help them deliver their business and why. They should understand how their knowledge of these matters can enable them to ensure the right things are in their performance plans and can enable them to plan their learning and career management accordingly. I think that only then will you find an APS more willing to engage with risk and more readily able to provide flexibility and agility in service delivery. And an APS able to deliver the goods in very short timeframes.

It is hard to say "Yes, we can do that" without understanding the above things.

Thankyou.