

From the perspective of a Public Service employee of fifteen years I offer the following viewpoints:

- The Government's current requirement for efficiency dividends (ostensibly to fund agreed payrises) is very much at odds with the concept of inflation and places undue pressure on departments to cut services and other necessary costs. I can't speak broadly but the department that I work for is already running very lean at the client interface level.
- Generally, funding cuts are adversely affecting frontline services (let's not forget that the Public Service exists to serve the public) and placing frontline staff under a lot of pressure. This is very demoralising when you see Managers, Directors etc creating extra high-level jobs. Also, there seems to be a lot of waste in publications, uniform changes, name changes and other activities that are seen by lower level staff as less than useful.
- Centralising some administrative functions is working most of the time, but it's disastrous for operational functions. We quite often have operation decisions made for us by someone in Canberra who has never done that job and doesn't fully understand the implications of their decision. If they are consulting with regions prior to making their wide-reaching decisions, it is only limited consultation and doesn't reach to the people who do the actual work.
- Work needs to be done to address the issue of morale in the public service. This doesn't necessarily cost much money to achieve; it's more to do with the attitude of senior management towards their staff. All the words in the CEOs' messages to staff mean nothing if their actions don't mirror their words, and filter right down through the organisation.
- Performance assessment needs to reflect 360 degree feedback. For example, a manager or supervisor's assessment needs to take account of subordinates' input. In my organisation, performance feedback currently hinges on one person's input. Also, performance bonuses are largely confined to higher level staff, in Central Office (that would be the people making operational decisions that regional staff have to try to work with or around).
- The Public Service generally needs stronger inter-agency relationships. This could be achieved by an inter-agency exchange program to foster understanding of other Public Service functions, which would result in better sharing of ideas and innovations, as well as relevant operational information.
- I don't think anybody wants the 'Old' Public Service to return, but elements of the old culture were beneficial, such as looking after staff and providing the environment and resources to get the job done. The Public Service needs to be setting an example in proper management and service delivery, not just trying to be seen as doing everything as cheaply as possible.