

Submission: Reform of Australian Government Administration: Building the world's best public service

**Educate the Media and Public to call for root and branch reform focused on building an outcomes driven public service.**

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The evolution of Government departments into process driven autocracies requires root and branch reform requiring significant change at both the executive and parliamentary level. Both parliamentary correspondents and the public will be required to participate in the root and branch re-engineering of the Public Service, away from Legal process driven organizational structure to outcome driven structures.

I have personally experienced public service structures driven by legal thought rather than:

- Marketing/ sales objectives organizations: demonstrated by the “Coca Cola's” of the world.
- Financial cost focused organizations: demonstrated by Service Companies / Shell Australia.
- Engineering focused entities: demonstrated by Mining / construction entities.
- Legal process driven entities: being Government entities.

I am defining “Legal process driven” as having a focus on process rather than cost per widget / outcome.

What has emerged or evolved in Australia is a public service driven to keep present ministers and Senate enquiries contented. The public service has evolved into an organization focusing on process rather than a sales, marketing or accounting driven organization focusing on output.

The Current indigenous housing project in Northern Territory demonstrates the ultimate outcome of legal process drive operations. Houses just aren't built. Indigenous Australians are crying out for any housing, even coca-cola methodology mass production housing, but have received nothing due to the focus on process rather than outcome.

In my career in Private enterprise, I worked in Accounting or Marketing roles in Cadbury Schweppes, Shell Australia, SPF International and other leading organizations. I perceived a willingness within the organizations and their staff for the entities to be both a good corporate citizen, dynamic provider of quality goods and services, and profit motivated enterprises.

I was astonished to discover that on occasions at Cadbury Schweppes, one person fulfilled the role of processing all sales from the national warehouse into the accounting system, doing today what would be millions in sales daily. I am sure that current government process driven approaches would require 100 people to do the same job to achieve the same outcome. I relieved in that position a couple of times, was stressed but was amazed with what I actually achieved.

Having spent nearly 7 years in the public service, I can see that the overwhelming focus on legal process has made the genuine efforts to deliver quality service to the public almost impossible on occasion. My experience is that process driven practices are devised as if every matter was possibly going before the justices of the High Court. There is an essential failure in risk managing processes to maximise outcomes for the public through the limitation of process driven paperwork. I have experienced a five minute interaction with a member of public that required 10 or more hours of documenting. There was no disagreement or dispute to create complexity. Risk free events occur in the public service that requires significant documentation, in essence to satisfy the "High Court possibility".

Recently, I was awarded a National Heritage Grant in Round 9 of the Envirofund grants. I found the departmental staff helpful and documentation comprehensive. The problem was the amount of paperwork was overwhelming, requiring such an incredible amount of hours that I would not apply again. The cost benefit did not stack up. The overwhelming focus on process is ensuring that only the well connected or resourced succeed in obtain the grants, whilst the neediest may miss out because of the process. It may have taken 100 hours to obtain the \$4995 grant. It may have been better to drive a taxi after hours and fund the project myself. Results of the project can be seen at

<http://members.optuszoo.com.au/cudgeracreek/rain2.htm>

## The solution

I believe the solution to these problems cannot be resolved by a bottom up approach. Only a top down approach through a paradigm shift in attitude from Government can regenerate the public service. Parliament must redesign the public service to focus on results and not process. The media and parliamentary correspondents must understand that more will be delivered but the "error rate" will increase with appropriate risk and occasional embarrassment.

This contrasts to the current results, such as in the Northern Territory, with housing outcomes = zero.

Better to have 1000 houses and 20 "mistakes", than zero houses, and obviously no mistakes. The media and public must be willing to accept a higher error rate and not call for the sacking of the relevant minister for every occurrence of error. The Minister can then give their department's leaders, greater latitude and confidence to get on with actually achieving results, and not focus on risk management elimination to the detriment of outcomes. The media and public should focus not on the 20 mistakes but 1000 achievements!

We need a new mix of organizational structural philosophy, a focus beyond legal process to include sales, accounting and engineering focused outcomes embodied in the philosophy of the running of the public service.

This approach must be preceded by a change in attitude from the media and public, whom should be educated to expect great increase in reward with marginal increase in risk. This result will come through the efficient operation of the public service, whom are re-energated to focus on delivering services and not risk managed inadequate outcomes!