

Advisory Group on Reform of Australian Government Administration: Building the world's best public service

Some comments on the Discussion Paper:

1. I am not sure why we have to aim so high as to be **the world's best public service**. In setting the bar so high, are we just increasing the chances of failure or derision. I have become increasingly alarmed about 'workaholism' as a real trait of the current APS work culture and something which was not so entrenched a decade ago. Such lofty ideals as **the world's best public service** only serve to add to such unhealthy approaches to work and to work practices. The Work and Family balance is obviously placed under more tension and strain and I find this an increasingly alarming trend.
2. For any group (or person) in any field of endeavour to aim to be **the world's best**, it is entirely obvious that significant, sustained investment is required. While the Discussion Paper is replete with all sorts of (what appear to me to be) quite resource intensive proposals and initiatives, the Paper also states that the overall Budgetary environment is one currently of deficit and any increase in Government outlays in the short term is out of the question. This is an inherent and serious contradiction throughout the Paper. If this is the stark reality (and I am not arguing it is not) then the title of the Discussion paper should be amended to: **Advisory Group on Reform of Australian Government Administration: Building the world's best public service (and on a shoestring Budget, while delivering ongoing, multiple efficiency dividends)**.
3. The demographic reality facing the APS is that it is an aging workforce and this is occurring rather rapidly. Yet the Discussion Paper appears quite silent on the enormous challenges flowing from this fact – what are the impacts for employing an older workforce – what are some of the seismic shifts in HR policy and practices required??
4. It is admirable that a group of eminent Executives have come up with this noble goal (and no doubt it would please their political masters), but what does the normal dedicated worker in the APS think? Does she or he wish to be the world's best? Or is doing a good job and keeping work in balance with all the rest of life's many challenges sufficient? Is 8 out of 10 enough or OK any more? Do we all need to be 10 out of 10 and continually be told that working in the APS is akin to some sort of 'daily spiritual experience'?
5. Finally, if this brazen goal of aiming to be **the world's best public service** is seriously continued with (I do hope some pragmatist comes to their senses!), then there are two very serious questions to be asked also – when will **the world's best public service remuneration be paid** and **where is the world's best public service set of working conditions?**

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.