

**Chapter 1 The Australian Government sector today**

What are the implications of the statistical snapshot, and of employee views and attitudes in Chapter 1 for the future of the APS?

Chapter one reports an overall increase in female employees in the APS. A breakdown of increases within the various APS levels would provide a more accurate representation for both genders. It would also likely highlight the need to promote greater representation of women at higher levels within the APS and the need to implement further measures to address disparity based on gender.

**Chapter 2 Challenges in the strategic environment**

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?

Efficiency is the key challenge for the APS. That is, efficiency matched with innovative policy development, effective programme delivery, and employee satisfaction. Changing demographics and globalisation are key opportunities for improving efficiency in the APS. As the working age of the population rises, our systems (how we support our job) need to become more streamlined, universal and accessible. Put simply, we need to make APS systems easier to operate and manage. If we accept that policy development requires innovation, enthusiasm and energy, we need to spend less time on those functions and systems that enable effective policy development and programme delivery. With effective, easy to use systems in place, we're more user-friendly for an aging workforce. Lessons can be learnt and resources utilised from best case global scenarios. Australia is not alone with its changing demographics.

Keeping up with the public is another key challenge. Public access to information, particularly via the Net, is unlimited. This means we need to adjust how we deliver information and what we deliver. How - The provision of public material, for example for public education campaigns, needs to be less resource-based and more electronic. The days for delivering glossies to every letterbox is gone and we need to target the provision of information in more directly-relevant ways. While, pamphlets may still be useful for certain demographics, such as those without access to, or with limited use of, the Internet (the disabled or elderly). However the vast majority of the populace have sufficient access to the Internet and the APS should utilise it in the most efficient ways available. This means understanding and piggy-bagging on current use patterns, not only by creating new websites, but overlapping information on a thematic basis across agency websites and utilising popular sites to link to Australian Government sites.

What - The information the Government delivers has traditionally been pitched at a simplistic level for the lowest common denominator. Not only is information easily and readily available, the information we provide is often redundant due to higher levels of education and access in the community. The APS needs to embrace the level of education within society and target messages at the appropriate levels. The APS should engage with the public at earlier stages of policy development. Coming through as a Graduate in the APS 5 years ago, I have learnt not to engage with the public, it's dangerous, discussion may lead to misinterpretation. A forum that encourages frank

and open exchanges with APS officers – not only SES – at the early stages of policy development could provide valuable insights, and save the Government scarce resources.

### **Chapter 3 An aspiration for Australia’s public service**

What do you think is an appropriate aspiration for the Australian Public Service? Being “the best” may not be a very accountable goal. It’s not a competition. I agree we should pursue excellence. We should also aspire to be responsive and innovative in our policy development and programme delivery in a manner that represents all Australians.

### **Chapter 4 A values driven culture that retains public trust**

How do we ensure that APS leaders fulfil their responsibilities to promote and uphold the values? Provide a central point for SES to gain understanding of their responsibilities to promote and uphold the APS values, seek personal feedback, to monitor their progress in achieving the values, and to seek feedback from non-SES staff on SES performance.

Do you think the APS engages appropriately and actively with government on an apolitical basis? Generally, yes. The lines can be blurred in highly responsive and reaction policy areas when pressure is placed on APS employees from ministerial offices.

Are further reforms needed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the APS when dealing with ministerial offices? Potentially on the ministerial side, accompanied by further education within the APS.

### **Chapter 5 High quality, forward looking and creative policy advice**

How can internal and external collaboration be strengthened to improve policy development and implementation? Strongly agree with the “hubs” idea. Policy needs to be considered as a fluid phenomenon, ideas that don’t need to be caged by particular headings. Movement of officers between agencies/departments for short-term projects/policy development would also bring greater diversity, different perspectives and hopefully mitigate risk – as angles and policy implications are considered beyond department walls.

What should be done to continuously improve the capability of the APS workforce in policy formulation and implementation? Staff should be encouraged to move between different policy/programme areas, even within the same agency, on a more regular basis. Innovative policy-making requires a broad understanding of policy implications, seeing issues from different angles will assist this process. All APS policy officers should engage in learning and development activities on policy writing and development for particular APS levels. This links with standardising the skills at each APS level across the APS.

What can be done to bring the workforce development approach of the APS up to the level of the best organisations globally? Understand global approaches. Each agency should maintain a skills data base and skills at each APS level should be standardised – to a degree (leaving room for individual learning and development needs) – across the APS.

How do you think a stronger culture of innovation can be fostered? More planning, less reactive behaviour. More “thinking time”, whether by attending internal or external presentations/courses, further education, accompanied with opportunities to share ideas.

### **Chapter 6 High quality, effective programs and services focused on the needs of citizens**

How do we embed a citizen centred philosophy in all aspects of program and service design and delivery? Agree with One-Stop Shops. Less resource intensive for the citizen. A more personalised approach, less numbers, more names. Less passwords and usernames.

How can we better bring together service design, delivery and policy formulation processes—within individual programs and across all of government? Greater utilisation of electronic services through thematic linking, not divided by agency.

### **Chapter 7 Flexibility and agility**

What is the optimal rate of mobility between APS agencies and other parts of the labour market? Greater than 5%. Mobility between APS agencies should be seamless, this will require greater standardisation of remuneration and skills at each APS level. Mobility with other parts of the labour market, including the international market, should be highly encouraged through ensuring APS benefits are retained or at least still accessible for people moving in and out of the APS.

What could the APS do to encourage and support greater mobility? Standardisation across the APS as mentioned above and ensuring benefits are maintained or still accessible.

What practical mechanisms could be used to foster a more unified public service culture? Graduate programmes that are standardised in practical terms ie length of placements, to enable transfer to other agencies and back.

How could recruitment practices be enhanced within Australian Government entities? What are the strengths of current recruitment processes? Recruitment practices need to be standardised and possibly managed at a central point to avoid inconsistencies in practices.

What are your top three ideas to encourage the pursuit of continuous improvement across the public service?

Cross-Agency Idea Forums – thematically based, for different levels of the APS ie APS5-6 Forum or EL2 Forums, could be conducted on line, or at a presentation, providing the opportunity for immediate feedback, avoiding significant use of resources and time. Feeding back to a higher level forum, Portfolio Secretaries (?).

### **Chapter 8 Efficiency in all aspects of government operations**

How can Australian Government policy departments improve their own efficiency? As Above.

What mechanisms should be used to systematically improve efficiency across the public service as a whole? As above, streamlining business systems, streamlining communication across the APS and with the public.