

High quality, forward looking and creative policy advice

This submission mainly responds to issues raised in Chapter five of the discussion paper about possible reforms directions, in particular improving policy formulation and integration.

The submission supports the idea for the establishment of ‘strategic policy hubs’ as outlined in the discussion paper.

I proposed this very idea to a Departmental Secretary in 2008 following my observations and concerns in relation to the current capability of the APS in strategic policy development. My idea was for an establishment of a Strategic Policy Unit in the Department where I outlined key objectives and activities that a Strategic Policy Unit could undertake.

I have outlined some of the aspects of my proposal below, as I believe these are useful for consideration by the Advisory Group on Reform of the Australian Government Administration.

Objectives

The key objective of a Strategic Policy Unit or a hub – ideally placed in each Government Department or Agency – would be to strengthen the capacity of the APS to provide high quality, forward looking and creative policy advice.

A Strategic Policy Unit would work with existing policy areas to strengthen strategic policy development and implementation. This would enable Departments or Agencies to maintain focus on current policy activities while also assisting the Government in developing its future policy direction.

Key activities could include:

- Providing direction to existing policy areas for strategic policy development and fostering a culture of policy innovation and new policy approaches;
- Reviewing policy advice to ensure the delivery of high quality policy advice of a forward looking and strategic nature;
 - challenging assumptions, reviewing evidence/analysis, critiquing options or proposed models, stakeholder consultation, policy cycle;
 - applying the ‘time horizons’ (5yr, 10yr, 20yr) approach to think about future policy and implementation issues; and
- Acting as a knowledge centre on strategic policy and coordinating policy development activities within the Department and with external agencies.