

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

Agency: **Australian Taxation Office , Interested GST Staff**

Focus Groups Convened by: Members of **The Innovations Co-operative**

Focus groups of between 4 and 10 participants were held at the following locations:

- Adelaide
- Albury
- Box Hill
- Chermside
- Dandenong
- Hobart
- Southport
- Wollongong

Not all questions were considered, nor did each group address the same questions. Where responses were received to a question from more than one focus group, the responses were consolidated into key ideas.

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Questions	Your response
Chapter 1: The Australian Government sector today	
1. Do you think Chapter 1 accurately captures the role of the Australian Public Service?	Not addressed
2. What are the implications of the statistical snapshot, and of employee views and attitudes in Chapter 1 for the future of the APS?	Not addressed
Chapter 2: Challenges in the strategic environment	
3. What are the most important challenges facing the public sector over the next	Not addressed

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

ten years?	
4. What are the key implications for how the public sector will need to operate?	Not addressed
Chapter 3: An aspiration for Australia’s public service	
5. What do you think is an appropriate aspiration for the Australian Public Service?	Not addressed
6. Do the five key characteristics outlined in Chapter 3 adequately encapsulate what you would expect from a high performing public service?	Not addressed
Additional items to raise – for any of the above chapters	
Chapter 4: Values-driven culture that retains public trust	
Questions	Your response
7. Should the APS Values be streamlined? What values do you consider should be included in a revised set of APS values?	<p>2 focus group responses:</p> <p>(a) Streamlined values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, the values should be streamlined. At present, whilst people know the APS values generally, it is hard to remember the values because there are so many and some are quite wordy. • There is some duplication and overlap. For example, Values (e) and (f) could be combined and simplified. • Value (b) - employment decisions are based on merit and Value (l) – APS promotes equity in employment are similar • Focus Group participants thought Value (n) isn't clear in its intent <p>(b) Revised APS Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise how we see ourselves AND how the community sees us <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the community’s expectations? ○ Is how they view us different to our view of ourselves? • The values are not comprehensive enough. For example, the Tax Office has found it necessary to supplement the APS values with ATO values. Some of these values could be adopted as APS values (such as “Being consultative, collaborative and willing to co-design”) • Suggest that the values could be broken down into key themes so people can remember them. Shorten

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

	<p>them but then have common definitions/understanding behind it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be better to have about 5 values which incorporate key concepts such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Being open and accountable ○ Being fair and equitable • We need to add a value that relates to decision making. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. “Be prepared to make decisions” ○ Remove the internal bureaucracy <p>Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As well as revising the values we need to empower people to adopt them. • People who don’t support the APS Values should not remain in the APS.
<p>8. How do we ensure that APS leaders fulfil their responsibilities to promote and uphold the values?</p>	<p>1 focus group response:</p> <p>Transparency in decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that the APS as a whole had become too results based, which compromised the principles of natural justice or good decision making. • From an external perspective our transparency requirements tend not to focus on the recipient rather on ensuring the internal processes have been satisfied. A quote from the focus group: “we’re so transparent we’re opaque”. • Meaningful consultation and transparency should be included as values and conduct from senior leaders. • There is a lack of understanding of what the roles of the Senior Executive Service are and no transparency in decision making. • Decisions are delivered as a <i>fait accompli</i> and there is no consideration given to alternative perspectives. In fact there have been instances where an obverse perspective was seen as detrimental to both the long and short term career aspirations of individuals. Others in the group stated that consultation was not consistent from leaders as some SES do not network downwards successfully. <p>Recruitment and Probation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions were raised about employment decisions being based on merit. The generic selection process did not always align itself effectively to the positions on offer or the best person for the job. • Restrictions on the ability to apply for organisation wide short term vacancies seemed not to align with the value of promoting equity or being career based. Further there was concern with the successful applicants not having any capacity or capability in the area that they have won their positions. • A reform suggestion is that newly promoted staff should be required to serve a probationary period to assess their actual capability in the role that they have been selected for. <p>Leadership Stability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that Directors and Senior Executives were moved too often. Each appointee tends to try to establish their own <i>imprimatur</i> creating unnecessary and irrelevant requests causing chaos and

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

	<p>uncertainty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested reform – appointments to these leadership roles should be for a minimum period of six months. <p>Talent Management and Succession Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Discussion Paper suggested that the ATO had a talent management strategy but no one in attendance at the focus group session was aware of it. • Succession Planning – We need to ensure that the knowledge of our ageing staff population is retained in some way.
9. Do you think the APS engages appropriately and actively with government on an apolitical basis?	Not addressed.
10. Are further reforms needed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the APS when dealing with ministerial offices??	Not addressed.
Additional items to raise – Chapter 4	

Chapter 5 - Providing high-quality, forward-looking and creative policy advice	
Questions	Your response
11. How can internal and external collaboration be strengthened to improve policy development and implementation?	Not addressed.
12. What should be done to continuously improve the capability of the APS workforce in policy formulation and implementation?	Not addressed.
13. What can be done to bring the workforce development approach of the APS up to the level of the best organisations globally?	Not addressed.
14. How do you think a stronger culture of innovation can be fostered?	Yes. This was a common theme in all focus groups.
15. What approaches to engaging with risk	Not addressed.

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

are most appropriate for the APS to provide high quality, forward looking and creative policy advice?	
16. How can agency performance management processes be amended to maximise the focus on the attainment of outcomes?	Not addressed.
Additional items to raise – Chapter 5	

Chapter 6 - Delivering high-quality programs & services that put the citizen first	
Questions	Your response
17. How do we embed a citizen centred philosophy in all aspects of program and service design and delivery?	<p>2 focus group responses:</p> <p><i>Shared understanding of roles and responsibilities of citizens and APS</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been some feedback that the public may not like the term “citizen” • Need a shared understanding of what “citizen” means including having a sense of belonging and certain responsibilities • Need a philosophical statement and education program about what the APS is about (i.e. for the benefit of the citizens of Australia, APS doesn’t make the rules, we can advise the Government but they make decisions, Governments come and go but the APS stays and continuity is important) • For a citizen-centred philosophy to work, citizens and public servants both need to accept their roles and responsibilities. • The public need to know the value of their services. • One difficulty re devising a philosophical statement for the whole of the APS is that different agencies have different roles (e.g. regulatory vs. service provider) but the aim is the same – i.e. collective benefit • From an early age, students need to understand what the public service is about, so they can both understand its role and consider the APS as a career choice. Teenagers need to understand what happens to the tax they’ll be paying. <p><i>Focus on what we’re trying to achieve for citizens</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus should be on what we’re trying to achieve in the community, not what we’re doing internally (e.g. some people can’t even get through to contact centres) • We need to find out what the public want to do (e.g. older people want to speak to a person face-to-face and pay bills in cash). • There needs to be reality testing of what will occur in the future (e.g. prediction that everyone will be using the internet hasn’t happened; it’s a fallacy that Gen X and Y only want to use computers)

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People generally want an answer at any time that is relevant to their circumstances and searching on the internet may not give them that. • The ATO closed a number of the shopfronts in the country, yet personalised services are valued (e.g. banks are bringing back mobile Bank Managers). • Tax used to be self-contained, but not now (e.g. family payments and child support are linked). Need to integrate systems based on effects of events (e.g. if someone loses their job, allowances should be recalculated). <p><i>One –stop shop</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to sell ourselves as Government services– what we do and how we do it • Multiple agencies in one location local government to federal (“A Powerhouse of information/assistance for citizens”). • Local Government has a service desk in nearly every community, which provides an opportunity for people to get assistance on government services at all levels • Workshops – multiple agencies roving the country together in combined locations so that citizens can attend a hall and get help – local government, state and federal • We need to align like agencies throughout the APS because people just want the government to help them with a problem. We need people on the ground in localities who can help them and advise them of others who can help. This will also assist APS staff to feel they are making a contribution. <p><i>Improved feedback process from citizens</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need an improved feedback process from citizens – more transparent – so if we ask for feedback and receive it, it should be made available. • Need public transparency about what we did about suggestions from improvement from citizens.
<p>18. How can we better bring together service design, delivery and policy formulation processes—within individual programs and across all of government?</p>	<p>1 focus group response:</p> <p><i>Whole of government approach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at what history tells about what the APS does and look to the future. • Interconnectivity with technology across the APS – find a total APS solution and not be agency-centric in our design • Centralised training for all APS in non technical core skills like FOI, conflict resolution, conduct and values – this allow portability of staff, consistency for all client basis and professionalism in all the APS. <p><i>Customer- focused approach</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co design with our clients assisting, listening to the ordinary people, get a sound demographic spread on what individuals want and need, move away from just recognising what the professionals need or want.

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

19. What options could be pursued to ensure citizens, especially those with higher needs, can access government information and services that they need?

2 focus group responses:

Identify target groups and define higher needs

- Who are these people?
 - e.g. not available during office hours, using Apple computers, NESB, people with disabilities
- Where do people start looking when they need help?
 - Identifying their needs
 - Many don't even know themselves what the question is – never mind where to start looking

Multiple options required

- What is the community looking for?
 - Let's ask them
- Need to accept that not all people want to deal electronically. There is an expectation that everyone has both access and the desire to conduct their public service contact through the internet, whereas for a great number of citizens the technology is still too expensive, cumbersome, frustrating and inconvenient. Furthermore, there are really security concerns re on-line payment.
- Extend "office hours" – more accessible and more choices
- Be the face of the government – establish a central access point

Co-ordinated approach required

- Coordination with other departments and other channels for specific high need groups
- Certain higher needs individuals may be receiving government assistance through other agencies. These agencies may already have established contacts with taxpayers and may be an appropriate partner for the ATO in meeting the needs of high need taxpayers.
- Training non-ATO staff from other agencies in relevant tax issues may be an option.

Some suggestions for innovative service delivery

- 'TaxTube' concept

- Internet content in community languages to provide short 5 to 10 minute movies on tax topics. Examples of topics: How to report foreign pensions, How to start a business, How to withhold wages, Bookkeeping etc.
- Would also require a multilingual website and support from community language speakers. They would be designed so that they are also usable for people with disabilities like vision or hearing impaired taxpayers.
- A model for the type of video would be some of the better produced instructional videos found on YouTube.
- Benefit would be that there is an accessible centrally administered resource where the ATO can control quality and information. This would provide knowledge to people who may not otherwise be able to access it.
- A similar concept may be used in other areas of the public service.

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

	<p>- Large Print/Audio commentary/Community language Forms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some taxpayers use the services of Tax Agents and accountants because they have a problem dealing with paperwork. This could be due to vision deficiencies or unfamiliarity with technical English and accounting terms. • Provision of Activity Statement or Tax Packs, booklets and pamphlets in alternate formats; for example large print, audio files (available on the internet or phone) that explain the processes involved and forms/pamphlets in community languages.
<p>20. How can we ensure performance management frameworks focus on the attainment of outcomes for citizens?</p>	<p>2 focus group responses:</p> <p>Service driven approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the past 10 years the APS mantra has been to do things cheaper and this has cost greatly in terms of effectiveness and service delivery. As an organisation currently there has not been sufficient regard to the citizenry of whom we serve. • We have moved away from providing client service and had become too outcome and process driven. • It is seen as a negative that the ATO does not provide public contact in some places, even though that is considered to be essential. • A suggestion to overcome this was to appoint designated staff in each business line to be public contact staff. Whilst this role would remain secondary to their primary function they would need to be available to see members of the public as required. • Further suggestions: introduction of shopfronts in major shopping centres; programs on community radio and television; information booths in shopping centres, particularly at tax time. <p>Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all should be accountable for both the efficiency and effectiveness of services. • These two concepts needed to be linked together so the public know they are getting value for money. People need to see and understand they are getting value for money.
<p>Additional items to raise – Chapter 6</p>	

Chapter 7 - Providing flexible & agile responses to changing realities and govt priorities

Questions	Your response
<p>21. What is the optimal rate of mobility between APS agencies and other parts of the labour market? What could the APS do to</p>	<p>4 focus group responses:</p> <p>a) What is the optimal rate of mobility between APS agencies and other parts of the labour market?</p>

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

encourage and support greater mobility?

- There is no "optimal rate" however a balanced transfer of staff (either on permanent transfer or temporary secondment) allows for a steady flow of new ideas and innovations leading to increased efficiency.
- Participants in one focus group proposed a rate of 5%; one participant in another suggested that the optimal rate of secondment/mobility might be as high as one person per team on mobility to ensure a continual exchange of ideas and improvement.

Nevertheless, some factors should be taken into account:

- the need for significant knowledge retention / succession planning.
- the mobility process needs to be quick and efficient.
- Mobility need not be permanent. 12 month secondments between agencies would help spread new ideas and innovations, as well as developing better relationships between agencies. Temporary transfers allow people to build knowledge and skills but not get stuck in a particular area (e.g. contact centre).
- There is potential for more conflicts of interest if there is increased mobility between the public and private sectors (e.g. common clients, incentives for staff to give favoured treatment to potential employers)
- We need to recognise that not all people want to work in the private sector because they are more interested in serving the public than profit making.

b) What could the APS do to encourage and support greater mobility?

Address barriers to movement

- People won't move in and out of the APS and around the APS to positions of lower pay and reduced conditions.
- Staff need the ability to retain their position within the APS. At the moment we have a restrictive Leave Without Pay policy which doesn't allow people to try out a new job in the private or not-for profit sector
- A move outside the APS shouldn't be detrimental to a person's long term financial security. For example, employees should be able to continue to contribute to their public sector superannuation scheme whilst working elsewhere for a limited period.

Flexibility in Location

- Work needs to move around where the capability is, rather than expecting people to move location.
- We need to make the most of the capability in regional areas and smaller capital cities like Hobart, which is often higher than in the large capital cities.
- SES jobs tend to be focussed in Canberra and major capital cities. Having a more dispersed SES group improves productivity across the country.
- Decentralisation to where majority of workforce lives reduces staff travel stress.

Establish an APS Mobility Register for at-level transfers

- A mobility register allows matching of capabilities and interests at an individual level and also enables people to move around when work priorities change, e.g. ATO's Mobility Register successfully enables

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

movement of staff from one business line to another when funding changes occur as a result of the Federal Budget.

- Mobility keeps people motivated and enables them to develop transferable skills or fully utilise the skills they already have.
- Moving people into an area in which they want to work can result in significant productivity improvement.
- The movement of staff also allows interchange of ideas and promotes innovation.

Match applicants to agencies

- Introduce an improved employment process whereby applicants complete one application for multiple agencies and agencies match the job requirements against skills.

Recruit for skills and attitude not specific knowledge and experience

- Part of the reason for a low rate of mobility between agencies is promotion tends to place too much emphasis on specific knowledge and experience, which favours internal applicants. We should recruit for skills and attitude and people can develop the specific knowledge and experience on the job.
- Long-term higher duties is very detrimental to mobility and is contrary to the merit principle. Often the position is initially advertised within a very limited group for say, three months, and then extended. Once the person has been acting in the position for a long time, it is very hard for someone else to be selected from another area of the agency, let alone another agency.
- Diversity of experience with other agencies and sectors tends not to be valued as highly as internal experience, whereas diversity is what is needed to create a more flexible and agile workforce.
- Undertake assessment of staff competencies across the APS so people gain an accredited qualification. All internal training should contribute to an accredited qualification. This would make it much easier other employers to determine suitability of applicants.

Address disparity in pay/conditions between agencies

- Different job conditions and pay disparity across agencies discourages cross-agency movement.
- In some circumstances you can move up a level and down in pay.
- Would need a guarantee around security of working conditions if the agency a person was seconded to had lower pay and conditions.
- Responsibility at level varies greatly across the APS, and even within each organisation. An EL1 in one area may be in charge of several hundred staff and have a broad decision making authority, whilst an EL1 in another area is not empowered to make even the most basic decisions.
- Broadbanding, which is in agencies like Centrelink would encourage greater mobility in transfers at level between agencies.

Practices to support mobility

- Improve the referee process and/or introduce a probation period for cross-agency transfers. Where a transfer was not working out, the employee would be transferred back to the first agency.
- Better pre training for mobility.

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career planning for staff and staff surveys to see if people are doing the work they want to. • Regular sessions with recruitment representatives. • Ensure managers support release of staff for transfers at level. • Have a casual pool of approximately 10% of the workforce so there are job ready people ready to fill roles. • Improve retirement conditions as an incentive for people to move on. • Retiring staff in management positions could move into roles mentoring others.
<p>22. What practical mechanisms could be used to foster a more unified public service culture?</p>	<p>1 focus group response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't reinvent the wheel (we use to be one APS then decentralised) – have we gone too far • Have one “APS” uniform which all agencies can use and build on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. basics in same colour with logo but each agency then adds own designed shirts
<p>23. How could recruitment practices be enhanced within Australian Government entities? What are the strengths of current recruitment processes?</p>	<p>4 focus group responses:</p> <p>a) Enhancing recruitment practices</p> <p><i>Right person for the job</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large-scale bulk selection processes can lead to people not being in the right jobs. Getting people into the right jobs is crucial for productivity. • Ensure that people have an opportunity to utilise their skills. Many people are under-utilised. • Improve the recruitment process ensuring the right person for the job. Ensuring that successful applicants are given probationary periods and that staff from all areas are made aware of the available positions. • Use a probationary period for successful applicants even if transferring at level to ensure that they are capable to perform the role. <p><i>Removing nepotism and inequities by the control of non-reviewed staff transfers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where processes lack transparency there is the opportunity for unethical decisions and there is a perception among staff that favoritism and nepotism are occurring. • If transfer processes are open, transparent and there is an appeal mechanism, it would reduce the dissatisfaction among staff in relation to this type of recruitment. • Increase management minimum levels of qualifications for leaders. • In many organizations there is the expectation that without the human capital investment that comes with a relevant university degree, leaders are not qualified to lead and provide technical knowledge that is only obtained through years of study and training. • A minimum standard of a relevant Bachelor degree in a specified field would be what is required to effectively

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

	<p>lead a team. It is hard for someone to lead work in an environment they have never studied. The benefit to the APS would be that recruitment to this standard would mean we have leaders that are capable and confident in their knowledge.</p> <p><i>Tie individual productivity to promotions & pay rises</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One focus group suggested that using actual individual productivity results in recruitment processes would provide an incentive for staff members to perform in the knowledge that their work would be considered, not how much work time they put into their job applications. • There is the perception among many employees that those who do work well are rewarded with more work at the same level, and that employees who are more problematic are put into roles that sometimes give them a higher profile, exposure to managers and help them with promotions. <p>b) Strengths of current recruitment processes</p> <p><i>Diverse Backgrounds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APS has managed to attract a large number of people from diverse backgrounds. We have a number of people with different industry experience that has enabled us to marshal expertise in different areas (e.g. in the ATO, we have former accountants, tradesmen and retail staff that provide us with insights into how our taxpayers conduct their tax affairs). <p><i>The ATO has a merit based recruitment process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general the merit based process is satisfactory to staff. • Some participants were satisfied with how the ATO handled recruitment and they believed that we did it more effectively than some other government agencies. • However there have been some issues with specific processes that have not been very satisfying for staff. Some staff gained promotion during this particular process yet still thought it was a poor process.
<p>24. What are your top three ideas to encourage the pursuit of continuous improvement across the public service?</p>	<p>8 focus group responses:</p> <p><i>1. Cultural Change</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APS is seen as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Too process driven ○ Highly structured ○ Risk adverse: Need to truly embed a risk supportive environment so if someone takes a risk and it doesn't work out well they are supported. • Cultural change requires management buy-in. Messages need to be consistent. • There should always be a "simplicity first" philosophy. • Increase delegation to lower levels. People should be empowered to make decisions without the fear of reprisal.

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

- Address performance issues. Staff get demoralised by watching others do nothing when they are working hard and it's not dealt with by management.

2. Innovation

- Encourage innovation sharing (at lower levels not just senior management), also
 - Internal and external networks
 - Separate specialist funding
 - Engaging community
 - Take a whole of government view
 - Innovation hub across all the agencies, not single agency/business line focus, centralised area for collecting data and innovation and share across all agencies – small ideas could be a big solution for multiple agencies.
- Promote continuous improvement suggestions not just internally but externally – our clients who are the ones that are on the end of our services would probably have some great ideas
- Review our processes – what can we change then what needs to be changed. How do we do this?
- Less focus on the process – move to the end result and purpose of why we are doing our work and look at that.
- Innovation today is geared towards system changes; need to look at the small incremental changes that really impact the business as a whole.
- Front-line level improvement meetings – staff need to take specific time out to reflect on ways to improve, which is the first step in the improvement process. They are so busy with the work that they do that they do not take the time to reflect. Setting aside time each month – as part of a team meeting for example – would help staff identify best practice within teams and which methods are most effective.
- Development time – Operative staff often need a few hours to work on a project to develop ideas and bring them to fruition. Allow time for APS staff the time to be innovative and think about continuous improvement at every level.
- Reward for innovations – can vary between a simple acknowledgement to financial incentives.

3. External focus

- Create a high level of expectations for level of service across all agencies and APS.
- Public servants, particularly those in leadership roles, need to spend less time talking to each other and more time working with the public to achieve outcomes.
- One-stop shop: “Why can’t the APS look like Myers, Harrods” “One stop shop for all agencies” Make the product (the APS) look familiar, professional and meet the expectations of the client. Become a brand that Australia is proud of. Take an environmental look at the product (the APS). Take the opportunity to have an open policy with our customers (the public) within the APS (all agencies) to better meet their needs. It is possible that there is a mismatch between the client perspectives of self and the APS’s perspective. We need to maximise the experience and minimise the time that the clients spend dealing with the APS. Clients just want problems solved.
- Improve public contact and allow those who want to use face-to-face services.

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create an environment where all agencies can share information and provide a whole of government response to clients.
Additional items to raise – Chapter 7	

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

Chapter 8 - Being effective and efficient in all operations	
<p>Possible reforms areas (including things that are already underway):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Finance & Deregulation's travel and property review • OECD strategic services review (mid 2010) • 2007 MAC report (reducing red tape) • Support services for small agencies (may lead to amalgamation into larger agencies) 	
Questions	Your response
25. How can Australian Government policy departments improve their own efficiency?	Not addressed.
26. How can Australian Government service delivery agencies improve their own efficiency?	<p>4 focus group responses:</p> <p><i>Change the way we plan</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at what we want to do then work out how many people and funding instead of current way of just being allocated budget then needing to plan around it. • When making decision focus on core business and stop programs that don't work. • Extend the funding cycle to enable agencies to plan for 3 years of work as annual funding allocation is disruptive, resource intensive and narrows opportunities for longer term strategies. <p><i>Removing duplication/ red tape</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly within each agency (e.g. same work types being undertaken in different business lines) • Then within APS <p><i>Utilising Technology</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformity of business systems – i.e. agencies use same systems (allows person to travel to new agency without lengthy training) • Improved IT and cross agency use of resources. • Use of SMS across agencies – Younger population communicates by text • Process maps should be the same across the agency – e.g. Siebel is used in same in the ATO in every area – not the many different ways currently – Centrelink uses the same method <p><i>Financial savings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government entities are facing stable or decreasing budgets, and are expected to provide more 'bang for the buck'. • The budget shouldn't be broken up into little buckets • Shared services (e.g. pay function) can reduced costs

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency one stop shops improve efficiency as well as services to the public • Co-location of APS agencies will reduce costs and allows networking and provides a sense of “togetherness”. Co-location would also assist in better communication and shared objectives, especially when we are dealing with other agencies as clients. • Analyse the agency’s staff profile to see how many operatives there are for each executive. If higher level positions are reduced, more operatives can be funded. Managers are reluctant to get involved in operational work, because they might not be thought of as a manager and therefore may be overlooked for management promotions. <p><i>Proactive leadership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders need to ensure that best practice is communicated across lines • Senior staff need to work together, collaboratively, in ensuring the goals of the organisation are met above the goals of the team. <p><i>Decision making at the appropriate level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation needs to trust its staff to be capable of doing the job that they are employed to do. Extra layers of approval are inefficient. • Greater autonomy and responsibility needs to be given to capable and supported staff. Processes must be streamlined to ensure that decision making is made singularly and at an appropriate level. <p><i>Better decision making through healthier work practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictions on national office hours and use of laptops from home or out of office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e.g. some SES send emails on weekends or very early hours of the morning ○ People burnout ○ Decision making ability affected by too long hours and lack of sleep, etc ○ Decisions may be made quickly but they are not necessarily fully thought through <p><i>Improve management of underperformance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the performance management process simple and easier but maintain balance and integrity, etc • Provide more experienced support for managers who are dealing with underperformance issues. • The main focus should be on increasing capability. It is rare for staff to want to do a bad job or make incorrect decisions. • One problem with capability is that a Director or above who is not performing tends to be hidden by the efforts and results of capable staff who report to them
<p>27. What mechanisms should be used to systematically improve efficiency across the public service as a whole?</p>	<p>6 focus group responses received:</p> <p><i>Integration across agencies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint task forces

Comments against discussion paper questions - APS Reform

- Create an environment that encourages, supports or sponsors more cross-departmental projects
- Economies of scale
- One salary system across all agencies
- Consistent client identifier between agencies (e.g. U.S. uses a social security number for all government and many private services)
- Rotation of work in different agencies – apply to transfer to multi agencies 1 year each

Budgeting

- Focus on whole of government planning and budgeting.

Benchmarking efficiency

- There are no benchmarks (unlike private sector competition) that force the APS to take the risks necessary to make new efficiencies.
- The use of surveys is an effective means to measure and improve efficiency.

Rationalise senior leadership

- Rationalise senior leadership to improve the cost effectiveness of the APS and to limit the approvals process for many roles in the organisation. With each appointment comes added levels of bureaucracy and reporting, which shifts focus from the core goals of the organisations.
- One focus group suggested that a time and motion study of each Government agency should be undertaken in order to identify and match the needs of the organisation to the numbers and levels of staff employed to do the job.

Increased accessibility to/for people retiring

- Retirees take with them a great deal of experience and knowledge. It may be possible to tap into this by creating more flexible arrangements that allow retirees to contribute to the APS on their own terms (e.g. a couple of hours per week). Centrelink deployed a call centre staffed by retirees in a convenient location and the result has been very successful.
- There is the opportunity for agencies to their Alumni networks and try a similar approach.

Technology

- Invest in infrastructure and update software: Our systems are too slow. If we want the best public service then we need to invest in infrastructure to enable the APS to be the best and keep up with citizens' expectations.

Data Integration with other agencies

- Review legislation that governs exchange and use of information. The community just sees “the government” and may not care which agency collects the information.
- Current provisions lead to duplication of effort and often to duplicate requests for information from citizens.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If citizen identities were matched across systems and data was readily available at appropriate security levels APS would be more efficient. • Feedback loops between agencies regarding the transfer of information (e.g. tip-offs) enables the information provider to see that the information they passed on was useful. <p>Better risk management approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The APS needs to risk manage what it does. For example, we can spend a significant amount of time getting information from citizens and documenting cases when there are no issues in dispute. We need to talk to citizens more and work out a solution. • Need better tolerance of mistakes by the APS and the Government. We develop processes that achieve little or no results. • We could use systems to look for exceptions rather than 100% checking (e.g. cab charge vouchers). • Suggest a top down approach which addresses the underlying expectations of the Australian people & the press. There should also be more focus on acknowledging the successful outcomes as well. <p>Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation needs to be encouraged and ideas progressed. • Change needs to be aligned to the organisation's core goals and to be reviewed after implementation to see if it has actually been for the better.
<p>28. What skills and capabilities are needed to drive efficiency throughout public sector organisations?</p>	<p>1 focus group response:</p> <p>Effective management and effective leadership skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make all agendas client orientated and with a national focus and not empire driven. Create a long term vision and stop short sighted responses to work. • Stop the widget counting, skill and prepare out team leaders and staff, stop the push pull mentality, concentrate on all staff skilling not just team leaders, create a stronger bond on the importance of mutual expectations. • Recruit for the job – management skills not technical knowledge. <p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at the training delivered and stop targeting the lowest common denominator. • Create the emphasis on the individual rather than a group.
<p>Additional items to raise – Chapter 8</p>	<p>1 focus group response:</p>

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	<p>There are still too many levels of government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Reporting burden○ Providing similar services○ May need to review the Constitution.
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