

20/6/12

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

Wednesday, 20 June 2012

Canberra

Talking Points for Opening Statement

- Thank you for the opportunity to make some opening comments.

I would like to briefly discuss three issues:

- the APS Blueprint for Reform agenda;
 - leadership in the APS; and
 - future APS capabilities.
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- Firstly, the APS Blueprint for Reform established a fairly ambitious and broad agenda to improve aspects of the work of the Australian Public Service, especially in the way we deliver programs and services, collaborate with citizens, and develop policy advice, and to help strengthen our leadership.

- Since its endorsement by the Government in May 2010, substantial progress has been made in implementing the 28 recommendations of the APS Blueprint for Reform.
- Fifteen of the initiatives across the 28 recommendations have been completed and are now business as usual activities, and another four have been completed with actions continuing as part of another reform initiative.
- For instance, the Strategic Centre for Leadership, Learning and Development is working to improve talent management, and strengthen learning and development across the APS.
- We have established a Strategic Policy Network and an APS Policy Implementation Network to strengthen our policy development and implementation capabilities.

- As I am sure members of the JCPAA are aware, the *Public Service Amendment Bill 2012* has been introduced to Parliament, and seeks to establish revised APS values and clarify the roles and responsibilities of Secretaries and the Public Service Commissioner.
- Finally, we have developed an Agency Capability Review Program that involves an independent assessment of an agency's ability to meet future objectives and challenges. The assessment is made against a common framework, focusing on leadership, strategy and delivery capabilities.
- This leads me to my second topic: leadership in the APS. I have said publicly that it is critical for the APS to become an organisation of high quality leaders and managers.
- In my view there are three things that we must do to further develop the leadership capacity within the APS. These are: attract and retain the best people; offer diverse experiences; and develop individual leadership capabilities.

- Attracting the best people requires us to highlight the intrinsic value and diversity of our work, and to maintain and build the reputation of the APS. We also need to continue to attract lateral transferees from the private and community sectors, as well as academia, as they bring valuable skills and different perspectives to the APS. We also need to nurture and grow the skills and experience of people within the APS.
- Ideally, our future leaders will have diverse experiences in policy development and implementation and service delivery in different agencies. As I have just stated, non-government experience is also important. To provide our leaders with these experiences we need to encourage and facilitate employee mobility across the APS and outside government. This is one area where I think we can build on some of the initial work undertaken under the Blueprint Reforms.

- In addition to diverse experiences we also need to provide opportunities to strengthen individual leadership and management capabilities. Since I consider everyone in the APS is a leader, we need to provide those opportunities broadly, and not just in the Senior Executive. Further, and building on the work done by the APSC's Strategic Centre for Leadership, Learning and Development, we need to remember that learning and development is not restricted to formal programs. We need to provide a range of development experiences including on-the-job training, mentoring and coaching, as well as formal programs. We also need to allow public servants to develop judgement through real world experience and accept that sometimes mistakes will be made. These are often the most valuable learning.
- The third and final matter I wish to raise is building the broader capacity of the APS to meet the challenges and opportunities that are likely to be faced from the continued economic rise of Asia.

- The opportunities and challenges that accompany this rise are being and will be felt across all aspects of Australian society and our institutions, not only the economy. Asia's growing weight and influence will bring dramatic changes and dramatic opportunities.
- To help realise those opportunities, the Australian Government and the Australian public will increasingly need an APS that has a better understanding of Asia and its potential role in Australia's future with the necessary capabilities to develop integrated and informed policy and programs.
- Building a genuinely Asia capable APS will require a more outward looking public service and a renewed focus on broad Asia relevant skills – from graduates to senior executives.
- I suspect it is something we will be talking about for some time to come.

Thank you