I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS EACH OF YOUR SUBJECT POINTS.

The name of the organisation is a very good place to start --- THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE.

Servicing Australia and nobody else. As isolationist as that sounds, it is not as incomprehensible as it sounds. Whatever is good for Australia is good for its community, so that’s good. Whatever makes Australia a better global citizen and makes its population proud and that’s good.

Servicing the Australian public means looking after the Australian population. For all our foibles, the APS is there to do its best to provide service with the long aim of making us all safe and enjoying the fruits of our labour and all that Australia can offer legally.

Providing service, whilst a lot of public servants may not want to face up to the realities of their job, they are employed to serve and service the public. Apart from getting paid by the public, they have a responsibility to achieve within a budget worthwhile, achievable and good outcomes that will benefit the public.

All the points you stated don’t seem to identify what the public service is and where it fits into Australian society. The most important part of any of this is the calibre of the people who staff the Departments.

GENERAL COMMENTS…

PERMANENT HEADS (Secretaries) of Departments should visit sections of their responsibility regularly eg Let them sit with any officer therein and watch what is done. Suggest the Secretary interview someone for citizenship that does not have fluent English and perhaps let the Secretary go on a deportation raid, all without fanfare.

Have the Secretary interview someone for a passport. Let the Secretary do some interaction at a Centrelink office. There should be no fanfare. They can be introduced as a new starter learning the ropes. Let him/her make decisions on the spot on issues that arise. He/she will be making them probably later anyway.

The Secretary should be doing this for a day at least every month and throughout Australia.

These are just two instances. Secretaries should be going out to isolated settlements chatting with Aboriginal Australians, farmers and townsfolk asking them how to improve their life styles etc.

ONE) BE A TRUSTED AND RESPECTED PARTNER

How should the Australian Public Service work with partner organisations and Parliament?

The APS has a reputation that may not be fairly attributive. Over the years it has suffered that awful disease called “bureaucrecia” complicating what seems to be the easiest of tasks and then not only complicating it but taking too long to finalise it.

The APS as seen in such TV shows as “The Hollowmen” and its ilk, reinforcing the view that public servants are indolent, passing the buck and bludgers.

The APS should be seen as responsive to new ideas and the conduit to better government.

The role the APS serves is three fold, service to the Australian public whilst simultaneously service to the Government not forgetting it must service itself.

The APS is seen as implementing Government’s policy. It adopts a protective mode of behaviour. It is there to help Government install the policy it was elected to follow.

The APS must be seen also as both responsive and proactive. The APS must be constantly searching for new, innovative, fairer and inclusive ways of implementing policy as well as promoting new variations on existing policies.

It was sometimes said that the public service is a permanent government in exile in its own country.

Given that sometimes Public Services see themselves as the holder of the real power, and that is probably the case more often than not, it is still subservient to the elected individuals.

Sometimes it is felt that the Public Service see themselves as greater on the ladder of importance than the elected officials. Until the Public Service comes to accept their role trust and respect could be a bridge too far.

Trust and respect involve responsiveness and proactivity. The Public Service must be seen to be grounded in the community for which they serve.

Their concept, sometimes, is trust us we will look after you. Some Ministers are usually convinced that they will be looked after by their staff and have to do very little. A true servant of the people, elected or otherwise will continuously seek out community views and understanding of where to proceed with policies popular or otherwise.

Trust comes from here where the public sees the APS being community focussed in its responsiveness to all issues and proactive because the APS actively seeks out community based solutions.

In general terms and in an ideal world these are not concepts that are hard to embrace but because the APS has been going for over 100 years there is some baggage to be jettisoned before Trust and Respect are welcome back to the community. It is not hard to claw back to a platform to begin to have the APS become a trusted and respected partner to the Australian public.

Firstly understand that sometimes community finds politicians and bureaucracy dodgy, false and unresponsive. There is also the matter of being seen to be slow to embrace new attitudes, technology or innovation.

Currently, all politicians see themselves as the font of knowledge as they stand for elections. Their platforms become the basis of their tilt at government whether those platforms make sense or are in fact good for the country. Within a certain amount of time those elected and who become Ministers start sounding like the mouthpieces of their Departments. The language used is so foreign to them and to their audience no wonder there is no understanding which leads to mistrust and lack of respect.

Each Minister needs to issue a lexicon with each speech so we can understand what is being said. Even in Question Time there is bureaucratic noise.

So, (1) begin by having the APS brief their Ministers in everyday English. If the world speaks in strange big words that describe things, we need to know what it all means and in SIMPLE English.

Each Government Department should have a spokesman go around to each senior school and explain what they do, in simple English. Make officers available to any community group to explain what they do and how they do it. There may be suggestions received from the community on how to do things better, easier and gosh maybe more efficiently.

The APS should be instructed to accompany local members to explain Government policy and its implementation within the particular electorate. The local member can then explain the timetable, impact and benefits. The APS spokesperson will add credence to the implementation plan.

All local members should be compiling priorities from their electors on what should be done in their areas. This enables government to prioritise their infrastructure plans. So for example, if the local member believes that a TAFE and a Post Office are needed in their community but others believe that a shop front government office should be constructed then fruitful discussions can be had. The point is that the APS will realise that both these ideas should be considered high priorities NOW. A Government shop front in the electorate could save residents a long trip into the city and they are attended to much quicker. A TAFE and/or a Post Office could be integrated into that space making the area a hub for progress. It is possible that maybe the area was not considered for any improvement or minimal attention. Now it is a popular addition to the political, economic profile of the area and the public service worked it out. If situated near a school it could enhance the hub of the area.

The community would immediately realise that government is listening.

These APS outreach officers could be asking community members during their visits in general terms how government can help local employment, security, protection of income, protection of superannuation, infrastructure improvement, trade and protection of the agricultural and industrial base of the country should be the main reason for the APS.

You see the APS officers when responding can explain these terms in PLAIN ENGLISH and get reasonable feedback.

This sounds esoteric but there can be no other way to garner information.

People probably find it hard to send answers to questions trying to find out about the above to Canberra.

The APS makes party policy happen in the less disruptive way but must take fulltime and permanent attendant responsibility for the well being of the country. Politicians are temporary. If the community sees that the APS is working for the well being of the country some trust and respect will follow.

It is too easy for public servants with degrees to conclude that they are above all they survey and act accordingly. This is precisely why vetting of Public Servants must be a closely orchestrated exercise, not an outsourced waste of time and money. I was told that when I went to University that I represented the top 10% of the population. That arrogance sticks. The APS must begin to employ clever people but people that can embrace and encourage change. If outsourcing must be then the APS must employ good managers. They must have training courses to train managers. There is no shame in outsourcing APS potential managers to the private sector for experience.

APS snobbery must be weeded out by dismissals and loss of pension. The APS must be taken seriously and that this is a professional service and all Australian born or naturalised are welcome to apply.

Technology enables massive change. Technology can make management more efficient. There is much that can be done to show the public that technology is a good tool but it should not be forced down their throats.

Centrelink should be more responsive to the needs of people who attend their offices rather than force people who don’t have the wherewithall to email their problem to the office. That is the first place I would start to engender trust and respect.

MAKE CENTRELINK HUMAN.

Again, many citizens either do not understand technology or reject it. They will only respond to letters or a door knock. They like face to face experience. So public meetings are important.

Whilst the APS is usually seen as responding to situations it should try to foresee what could happen and then be proactive. If Departments prepare Possible Parliamentary Questions for their Minister, how hard can it be to see possible problems with a policy implementation, action or statement? The APS needs to have ongoing communication with the public, its clientele and the political parties. How will it ever understand what the priorities are for the client when it is always listening to one side of the situation?

If Government is seen as responsive respect will come faster.

So far, we can see the APS building up issues that are important to the community. Remember as the APS is the permanent government it must understand those issues that simmer just below the surface and inform elected Government of these when they break through the surface.

Whilst the APS must implement Government policy, it can do so genuinely, with compassion and communication.

The APS needs to be the active arm of the Government but also its minder.

Maybe that is where the need to aspire to the call for TRUST and RESPECT emanate?

The APS can respond to government policy with consultation, trials, research and small initial community involvement. The need to get whatever is required mostly right the first time is a goal to be aimed for. There will always be tweaks needed in the beginning but if the client sees what you are trying to achieve there will always be good will and an offer of help to reach that beneficial end.

When people realise that the Minister has taken the trouble to familiarise themselves with their portfolio and their issues within first hand TRUST AND RESPECT will flow from that good will.

TWO) BE UNITED IN A COLLECTIVE ENDEAVOUR How can we make sure the entire Australian Public Service is pulling in the same direction?

Each Government Department needs to have a representative attached to common departmental group. This group needs to meet monthly to discuss what each department is doing. Each department outlines any administrative problems they have had and what they did to solve the problem. There is no earthly reason why each department needs to reinvent the wheel when someone else has sorted out a similar problem.

You can laugh and say “That’s not going to happen. Each department is a kingdom unto itself. We have no problems and anyway we are not going to tell anyone about it.

There is where the collective endeavour fails. If departments don’t talk to each other then Ministers don’t talk to each other and then few talk to the Prime Minister.

There is strength in knowing your weakness. If you solved a problem you’re on top of your game. Once a problem is solved efficiency can be reinstalled and collegiate government begins. Jealousy is time and money wasting.

Imagine at Joint Departmental hearings a senior departmental head says we have increased efficiency by doing A and it can be measured. Further we showed other Departments how we did it and they can now boast increased efficiency. Imagine if all Departments spoke to each other about what they are doing? There could be revelations that Departments are reinventing the wheel. There could instances where the task they are doing is the same or almost the same as another. Doesn’t that help the Government deliver better and perhaps in a cost saving manner?

This is where respect appears and the public, your clientele, begin to see that the APS actually tries to be better at what they do.

By talking to each other Departments and Government become friends and are all working for the same side. Having a united endeavour means everybody in government knows what the other hand is doing and can act accordingly, for the betterment of the community.

Government should consider producing short films for display at cinemas using comedians to show how government works. These could be done on the basis of old training films. Film titles could be “Why does the Government ask you in for an interview?”, “What is the point of telling us about things in the Budget, when we don’t understand most of it anyway.”, “How can we find out what a political party is offering us to get our vote?”, “What does racism look and sound like?”, “How do we help newly arrived immigrant parents and children understand enjoy life here?”, “Why we need immigration and how it benefits EVERYONE?”, “Why can’t we build our own military industry?”, “Why voting is compulsory?”, “How to use your member of Parliament to tell the Government what is important to you?” and “Why it is important not to say things to anyone that could be taken the wrong way?”

THREE) BE AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

How can we make sure the Australian Public Service gets and keeps the people it needs?

This is much harder to achieve. Immediately post war, the APS was seen as the “iron rice bowl” in other words a job for life. To get fired from the APS was not easily possible. Therefore there was no urgency, no desire to improve age long protocols and no need to achieve high standards.

Wide spread education changed that but only for the worse. Outsourcing now highlighted major differences in attitude to achievement. No departmental body trusted another and it was a badge of honour to be seen to be spending outrageous amounts on consultants.

Public servants know what to do, they know what they can achieve and what is permitted under the law. Let them do that. Consultants can be brought in to show finesse, perhaps more efficiency, how not to be racist etc.

Respect within the service, high desire to achieve best results and to be seen to care about the client and the workforce within will in time become a destination for people to want to work for the APS.

There needs to trust within the APS. Each officer needs to feel that their opinions mean something either down the line in a decision making process or helping to create the environment to make the decision start to appear.

FOUR) HAVE DYNAMIC, DIGITAL AND ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES How can we make sure the Australian Public Service is nimble, ready for and embracing change?

There is nothing wrong in having officers from a Department of Adaptive Change scour the planet for systems that would meet our specific needs even if they don’t exactly meet our needs we can manipulate to suit our requirements, much as we do with our defence force appliances.

There would need to be a backdoor for access by the public to contact government. This would entail 2 systems with very high grade firewalls. One system would be for the APS to do its work the other enabling exposure to the outside world for interaction with our public.

There could be automatic encryption upon certain words being detected. That message would be transmitted to its destination then upon receipt be unencrypted for the reader to action. For transmissions within the APS everything would be encrypted but there is probably a jamming device to stop non authorised users gaining access.

The example of the American Department of Defense (DARPA) is good to follow.

Perhaps a worldwide quest for a protected computer system could be sought.

Our experts would then suit it to our requirements.

Digital systems cannot be used because that’s where we are now. I am dubious about relying on the cloud for storage and would advocate for offsite storage. There is nothing wrong in having 2 or 3 offsite storage facilities.

I think there should be remote destruction protocols if any of these facilities are breached. No storage “bin” should be easily identifiable, eg all PM&C material should carry random 6 numbers, say 456, 834, 2 etc and so on. The number identifiers for the same department should be different in each facility and with no rhyme or reason.

The APS should be employing hackers around the clock tasked with breaking into any and all systems. Set up a test database with all the bells and whistles and invite anybody to hack our test database. If able to be done then back to drawing boards. If unable to hack then we should be putting double even triple “locks” on our information.

FURTHER….

Schools should be encouraged to make every student adept at the use of computers and also writing, reading and arithmetic. Students should be shown how to work smarter not harder.

After learning how to protect our data, the APS should be financing another set of students from school into University within the IT and Arts courses (we want them to know computers, software and how to write in English). They then spend as much time as possible learning how to program what it is we need and want.

For example how to set up templates to buy things. The need to be able to create a contract to purchase a tank, fighter jet etc. Some of these contracts can end up being 100 pages long. The contract must specify penalties for non delivery or faulty parts, spare parts, the precise type of screws, washers and nuts to be used etc.

Rather than have the Defence or Attorney-General’s Departments reinvent the wheel of contract over and over there should be adaptive programs that can be a template for anything needed for purchase from a tank to desk for the PM, from office services to new buildings. There should also be check lists available with these templates eg if a building is required, calling the template up with building in the title there should be additional documents available for copying into the contract containing whatever is required again for access to eg toilets, storage and carparks.

This seems to me to be servicing the public and the APS smarter, being more efficient and getting the most out of every dollar available.

STILL FURTHER…

Whilst I am personally against big brother, there could forwarded a case for government protection of the Australian community from hostile forces within and outside the country.

I am sure those people tasked with this sort of responsibility exist. However the public needs to be aware that their life style is being protected.

We should be encrypting all internal government messages. We should be jamming signals from all points outside government buildings.

So, all computers within the government are within a jamming protected bubble. There could be a bank of receiver computers available to the public to receive messages and so on that would be forwarded on to the relevant Department for action. Once a response is crafted that response would be transmitted to a receiver computer and sent out in answer.

STILL EVEN FURTHER… As long as people are aware that there is a possibility that Government may be monitoring conversations with alarm words, few people care. We don’t know what we don’t know therefore it is important for those people who should know to find out.

NO MATTER WHAT, THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO DO NOT AND WILL NOT TOUCH OR WANT TO COMMUNICATE ELECTRONICALLY. THERE MUST BE OFFICERS WHO UNDERSTAND THAT AND CATER FOR THOSE PEOPLE NO MATTER WHAT.

FIVE) BE WORLD CLASS IN POLICY, REGULATION AND DELIVERY How can we make sure the work of the Australian Public Service is all that we want it to be, and what results does it deliver?

So, the question is “what do we want our APS to be?”

I submit we want a responsive, accountable and sympathetic APS. The work of Government and governing is always needing to know what is wanted and how much do we really want it.

The problem within government is when do you know as much as you can know about something? I suggest that when this point is reached, make the decision. There would be nothing wrong in tweaking the impact of the decision taken as long as the public is told new information has just arrived. There is only so much current information available.

There is nothing wrong with Advisory or consultative committees to interact with the APS and the public about the solution to any problem. The need is not to take too long to reach a conclusion. So, as soon as possible the APS should establish advisory commissions on anything that has costed, in the past, say over 10 million dollars. Those committees should be putting together action plans for the next time money should be spent in that area.

This way Government just ticks off the checklist of conditions that exist now as related to the conditions that attracted the money and if the same conditions exist then spend the money asap.

The problem here is that if the same conditions exist after one or two goes at it something is not happening. There is a need to change the something. Is it possible the goals are out of date, misplaced, irrelevant, unattainable or wrong?

So what should be on your radar is what do we do 1) when we reach our agreed to goal, what next? or 2) what if we don’t or can’t reach our goal, what next? There has to be a lot of “what ifs”. I submit some of these problems can be realised by trials. If you are not sure of where the end is then trial the process for say 2 years. Have the targeted clientele involved as much as possible. It is possible to tweak as you go to see if that helps.

If the trial doesn’t work then you haven’t lost credibility. You would if you heaped your future on it.

The fact that there could be heaps of committees going is irrelevant as long as the public knows that they are the springboard to resolution. The committees must be able to talk to the future affected people to get an updated picture of happened and what might happen. Be prepared to increase the pay out by say 10% every few years.

The banks need to be mustered regularly to show they care for their customers. If there is reluctance or difficulties there can be a new commission instituted into their activities and they pay the costs. Even if there are 5 enquiries into the banking system that they pay for they will eventually realise that they must act as responsible citizens.

The Government should be encouraged to follow through with this, it saves them money and bad publicity. The banks can advertise their contribution.

It should be possible to have the banks assist government in providing aid overseas. An Australian Banking Citizen could be established with funds equal to Government contribution to say benefitting East Timor, helping the Yazidies settle, establishing points of Australian contact offshore in nearby countries or within their own country for potential boat people. The public would respond positively knowing that those institutions show concern for their fellow citizens.

If the APS begins, after an election, implementing the new Government’s platform, it should do so by slow incremental steps. A Bureau, Commission or even a Department of Adaptive Change would be the vehicle for implementation.

Like all populations Australians do not like sudden change nor new policies that have not been apparently thought through. Immediately the new Government is embedded there should be public policy advisements. “The new Government was elected to introduce this, phase that out, build this over there, recognise this country, reduce this and increase that.

By doing this and regularly over the first few months, the population will become familiar with any new policies when ultimately introduced or removed.

A Bureau, Commission or even a Department of Change would enhance this process. It would free up all other Ministers from implementation worries and allow them to concentrate on their jobs. Once a change has been introduced the relevant Minister can get to work on it.

It is vitally important to recognise we do not hold the world’s knowledge on anything. We need to constantly upgrade and update our knowledge.

The APS in its advisory role should be sending middle range officers to various countries to learn what they are doing about issues in general. These officers should be going for three months and be encouraged to mix with public servants of the country of their posting and be able to meet people who are affected good and bad by the policies of that country. There must be regular reporting. We must not make any judgement calls just observe.

Upon their return, let them brief their colleagues both in writing and verbally. They should also meet with scholars from universities and maybe the Minister to debate those issues they experienced and dissect the solutions they were given. If after a good discussion let them talk to members of the department and turn that knowledge into meaningful policy suggestions for the minister.

The thing to remember here is that with a suggested policy thrashed out its impact can be worked out quickly and with community consultation etc its implementation brought in seamlessly.

(SIX) BE WORLD CLASS IN POLICY suggests a centre of excellence in policy. We are actually talking about policy and its delivery. Government creates broad strokes of policy the APS should be able to come up with micro implementation of that policy.

All statements of Policy must be necessary, relevant, succinct and unambiguous. It must be measurable for success and be administrable.

It would seem to be quite obvious that the clientele should be involved in the first definitions of policy focus and its implementation. From there parts of the implementation can be broken up into manageable solvable projects.

Let’s look at a contentious issue as an example… Immigration.

There are studies showing the number of people Australia can sustain. Those studies show that we are just able to feed ourselves and have enough for export to earn foreign currency. Any more people would change that balance and we would begin to import more than we export.

So it seems that at least a working solution here would be to limit immigration to entrepreneurs or those with funds to invest here and immediate family. Noone past father and mother. Anymore people here and there will be shortages. So it would seem that the solution is to slow migration down to a trickle and allow natural birth and death rates to maintain the current numbers. Should there be a dip in deaths over births then immigration can be slowly introduced to maintain the balance.

Australia must look to its own future. It cannot expect other countries to do the same. So there must be a start somewhere. There would be no restriction in births but the natural births to deaths ratio needs to be monitored.

The argument that immigration keeps the economy growing is a good argument but if we can’t feed ourselves then does any of this really matter.

This is not a racist statement it is one of Australian sustainability.

We should be encouraging our students to study everything we need to maintain our sustainability into the future. Reduced fees, subsidised housing etc would be a start to attract students. They would repay many fold through taxation or even if they were required to do service in the bush or as part of our aid overseas. There must be planning so that we do not fall prey to having to import those professionals needed to keep Australia going.

Everybody in the age group 18 to 40 must either study, get a trade, work in a peace corps situation helping farmers or small business for at least three years or join the armed forces for at least three years.

(SEVEN) BE WORLD CLASS IN REGULATION

There is always a need to regulate all and sundry. However all and sundry ranges from babies to the elderly, from small business to huge corporations and those with little English skills to very sophisticated English skills, so not only does the language of regulation needs to be comprehensive and relevant it needs to be in easily understood English and fair.

Nevertheless there are regulations and there are regulations. To ask any government body what are unnecessary regulations is not a wise exercise. They will say all are necessary otherwise they wouldn’t still be on the books.

Perhaps like this adventure into the workings of the APS, the APS could call for its users to advise which regulations could be extinguished, modified or introduced and why.

The public can be very helpful and does understand more than the APS because as customers the public can see what shortcomings occur in the work of Government. Further why not ask users to indicate what regulation should exist.

It will probably be suggested that every Government Department asks for the same information. Why not have shared information facilities? Members of the public could be placed on committees to police the sharing of information so that privacy is not compromised. Obviously there are some specific information about specific departmental focus not shared but that data that is should be housed in safe storage and used for specific purposes.

Instead of asking yet again for the same information it can be sourced easily from a common site and the customer whilst advised that their information is being used to complete whatever is being done there is no need to bother them with frequent requests for the same information.

The public must know about this and be invited to view their information at any time to check for inaccuracies etc. Changes must be effected immediately with written consent and reasons why.

Whilst the call is out for the public to indicate the need or otherwise of Departmental regulations, the Department should be doing the same but in reverse. Each regulation needs to be justified in terms of 1) What is it that is needed to be known, 2) Why does it need to be known, 3) If we didn’t know this would our work be affected at all, 4) How much it cost to have this information, 5) Are we any better off not knowing this information, 6) How often do we review the need for this information. I’m sure there are many more questions here.

Any and all Regulations must be necessary, relevant, succinct and unambiguous. It must be measurable for success and be administrable.

However an easy exercise is, at your next training course invent a file that contains all the things you do. To achieve finality work through that file listing what information you really need.

After the public response, the intra departmental introspection and the training course results the Department should be in a better position to know what to do. There is also the possibility of having some embassies in Canada, Britain, New Zealand, Sweden, Germany and Israel forward to you those countries’ regulations for comparison to ours.

AUSTLII databases could assist here. They have regulations available on line.

I put Sweden, Germany and Israel in just to offer a non British backed society and which are also stable societies and economies.

Let us start with this suggestion..

So, how about every business now existing and at the time new ones register be given a page of barcodes specifically relevant to that business with all its general information embedded therein.

So when that company corresponds with government, Council, State or Federal, their details etc are available and there is no need to keep asking for stuff you already know.

These Bar Codes need to be Government specific, non tamper proof and easily read by Government. They must be encrypted and should only be readable by Government.

What do those in charge want? For a start, In conclusion, the APS should be regarded as not only the protector of the people but the servant of the Government.

I presume those in charge would want a client base that understands what their Department does, what it does for them, how they do what they do and why they do what they do the way they do.

So FIRST) I would embark on an educative drive with the representatives of

each department’s clientele. Each department must have client action groups that engage with each department about disappointments, flaws and offer suggestions about policy. Discuss with them any or all functions of each department, invite them to make suggestions on delivery, encourage them to engage with policy deciders on points that need to be considered before policy is put to Cabinet.

SECOND) I would talk to every previous minister (including Prime Minister)

and ask where did he/she find a problem with their Department. Did the Department respond to their requests for information, advice or action in an appropriate manner?

THIRD) I would have every current public servant rewrite their own duty

statement to reflect what they actually do as opposed to what they should do.

FOURTH) I appreciate that the two above tasks are very time consuming but, in

reality, there are many throwbacks to the old days where tasks needed to be done but these days can be done by either a pressing of a computer key or the information is not needed anymore or is not vital.

I apologise for the lateness of this.

Yours faithfully

Eddy Robert Rosenstraus