

Submission to the APS review:

Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the review of the Australian Public Service. As a current public servant, I personally cherish being part of creating positive change and contributing to the flourishing of Australia.

With this in mind, there are a few things I would like to see changed that could make the APS an environment that truly breeds innovative solutions to bigger issues that affect all Australians to varying degrees, by creating an environment responsive to public need that is ready and future focussed for the decades ahead. To achieve this I have a few ideas to contribute for consideration. These ideas could be summed up under the following topics:

- Creating a dynamic workforce
 - Simplifying reporting and administration (reducing red and beige tape)
 - Diversity and inclusion
 - Innovation and human advancement
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Creating a dynamic workforce

During the past seven years that I've been employed in the APS I've been involved with two Machinery of Government changes. (MoGs). Both of these MoGs were disruptive for staff and management particularly from an operational and public perspective. They were also an extraordinarily expensive use of public funds with little return on investment too.

I've also noticed that departments have invariably had to cut staff numbers across the APS and deploying various staff attrition strategies to meet FTE, ASL or productivity dividends.

To address these issues, I would like you to consider the possibility of centralising the APS workforce under a central agency that would become the employer of the entire APS workforce.

By centralising the APS workforce it would enable more control to be cast over needs based Human Resources. It would mean that employees of the APS would no longer become department centric and would encourage a whole of APS mentality meaning employees would be more engaged in observing and acting within the scope of how their skills are able to be deployed across the whole APS enabling APS staff to observe and be aware of how their actions affect government outcomes, building accountability into what we do through observable cause and effect.

To manage the workforce APS employees would be deployed on SES request across any department where the skills of the staffing pool is most relevant to the need that the agency is seeking to fill. Almost like a recruitment agency for want of a better analogy.

Benefits are that there would be better control of APS human resourcing. It will remove department centricity amongst departmental staff. Reduce costs and increase mobility and agility of the APS workforce. It would encourage staff to ensure their skills are kept regularly updated and relevant.

This approach would also allow faster and more effective transfer of staffing resources to be allocated across the APS on short notice and make the nature of APS employment more fluid for agencies and staff. Making it easier to move between agencies for staff. Whilst APS officers will remain permanently employed the agency they're working with will become more fluid resulting in staff movement becoming transient.

It will build new opportunities for staff, encourage diversity within the APS, prevent stagnation of staff, eliminate deadwood and obliterate personal fiefdoms and the issues that ensue this

scenario. Whilst allowing resources to be quickly called upon in urgent or emergency situations. It would also round individuals skills, whilst also ensuring corporate knowledge is still accessible. The list of benefits goes on and on.

Simplifying reporting and administration (reducing red and beige tape)

Is there any way to simplify the way that financial responsibilities and procurement can be simplified to eliminate red and beige tape? As a public servant I find it one of the most confusing aspects of being a public servant. Worst still there are significant penalties for getting financial reporting wrong with the threat of gaol time in severe cases or embarrassing your department in others.

There has to be a better way to manage the administration of public funds. Unfortunately I don't have the answer but wish I did.

Diversity and inclusion

Whilst a large number of departments and agencies have staff diversity and inclusion networks. No diversity or staff inclusion network has the delegated authority through their terms of reference to contribute to the development of public policy through the consultation process.

As a person who identifies as LGBTI I have been frustrated by the fact that as public servants our voices, knowledge, opinions and lived experience are ignored in stakeholder engagement and policy formulation process. Public servants are generally considered as part of the 1% of the population in policy development terms that could be considered as part of the attentive and informed. We're also tax payers meaning we're acutely aware of the potential effect that our work has on the community.

Whilst inclusion networks are managed by people branches and serve to allow minority cohorts to bring their whole selves to work, they only serve to address issues of workplace visibility and issues that relate to human resourcing issues. I personally don't need to feel validated in the workplace by being visible. As an LGBTI person I need validation through policies that improve lifetime wellbeing for some of the most vulnerable people in the community.

Whilst diversity networks are a good idea, I'd also like to see diversity mini think tanks within departments that can collect data and research and feedback ideas and recommendations to departmental policy and program areas within departments. This could also be centrally coordinated by the APSC as a means to link different departmental mini think tanks so that cross APS collaboration can occur.

Additionally I believe the APS desperately needs the creation of an LGBTI policy branch within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's social diversity division where every other minority cohort is represented. Every other except the LGBTI community.

Sadly one thing I have noticed is that there is currently not one program or policy area that exists within any commonwealth department or agency that exists to address issues that affect the LGBTI community. Not one. Whilst LGBTI people are estimated to make up around 10-11% of the population.

Meanwhile Indigenous populations who make up around 6% of the population have representation in a number of program and policy areas across a number of APS agencies (and rightly they should).

Women are represented with the office for women among a number of other areas including PM&S's social policy division.

Disabled and differently abled people are represented in the DPMC, DHS, and DSS as well as the NDIS. Yet make up 20% of the population.

Multicultural people are represented through DPMC and Home Affairs and more.

Whilst the LGBTI community is literally ignored leaving me to wonder is this deliberate? I can't possibly be the first person to have recognised this issue.

An LGBTI program and policy area should address issues such as:

Community and religious stigma. In the same way as multicultural communities address religious stigma the LGBTI community suffers the reverse stigma by religious organisations and to an extent by extension governments too. Its time that the LGBTI community and religious organisations sat down and sorted our issues out.

Mental health, poor mental health in the LGBTI community is a driver for the high incidence of body dysmorphia, suicidal ideation and suicide, anxiety disorders and more caused due to discrimination usually occurring from an early age. It is also telling that the LGBTI community is where a high prevalence of illicit drug use occurs caused by community stigma manifesting in poor self worth and poor mental health. Where drug use usually results in a compounding of the mental health issues and thus a vicious cycle ensues. Again drug use is another area to address.

High prevalence of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Statistics from the Kirby institute indicate that up to 85% of people living with HIV in Australia are gay men. Yet the government leaves the responsibility of addressing HIV as an issue for community organisations or the states to address whilst in some ways this solution does work, deployment of more tools and resources from within the APS are needed.

The good news is that The government and APS shouldn't be scared and choose to shy away from it choosing to rely on only states and the not for profit sector to address it the issue as the area of HIV is an interesting and exciting. Australia is in the unique position where if addressed properly we have the very real potential to become the first country in the world to contain HIV and virtually eradicate it. The Kirby institute released figures in 2016 indicating there are 26,444 people living With HIV in Australia with the Average cost to the health system in medication being \$1million per case for treatment over a lifetime. Most recent figures indicate that there are on average 1,000 to 1,200 new cases reported each year. Meaning the cost is going up. However data since the addition Pre exposure prophylaxis medication to prevent acquisition of HIV since its listing on the PBS isn't yet available, however it is expected to be a significant factor in reducing numbers. On the flip side the instance of other treatable STIs is on the increase. The rates of STIs within the LGBTI population is an issue which could be tackled by an LGBTI policy and program area. Why do we not have an LGBTI immunisation program we badly need something of this type.

There are many more issues that affect the LGBTI community such as the Trans community having one of the lowest employment rates of any community cohort, homelessness of young LGBTI people these are all issues that require redress, a program and policy area is needed to address these and many more issues that affect the LGBTI community. The interesting this is that the LGBTI community includes all other cohorts as well, women, multicultural, indigenous, disabled, and the elderly. Linking policies and making policies inclusive and not exclusive as so often is the case now is the only way to see a flourishing Australia.

Interestingly due to the stigma and discrimination of past generations we also need to do a significant amount of social research on the LGBTI as there are certain to be more aspects to the community that could provide insights into issues that affect other sectors of the broader Australian community.

By building more inclusive policy and program processes we will build policies and programs that address the needs of all communities not just some whilst ignoring others. This will allow us to be fairer, and create incentives for everyone to be their best.

Innovation and human advancement

As a public servant who is involved in the government's innovation agenda I'd like to see the policy ideas included as part of innovation within the APS as at the end of the day policy especially social policy is akin to social innovation.

Too often innovation considered a tired bus word. However, It has a deep and useful purpose as a business management function, too often though when it is taken seriously its considered as a thoughtful use of technology however things like the NDIS and medicare are exceptional examples of positive world leading disruptive innovation. We as a nation really do under estimate our capability to innovate.

As a means to build recognition and realisation of the benefits of innovation in the APS I really want to see some way for people like me to contribute to innovation and policy. I work in a Communication based role so when I come up with a left of field idea I have nowhere to share it. Some of my ideas are really out there and completely left of field but they're almost always based on evidence based research. I'd like to find a way to share these ideas particularly things like policy or program ideas because currently not even the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science is equipped for this.

At this point I'm about to launch a blog to share my ideas but I'd prefer to share them where they will make a difference.

In conclusion I would like to thank you for your time in considering my submission. I do hope what was contained herein is able to be applied in some way.

Regards

