Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to respond to your advertised call in the Gold Coast Bulletin dated 23 June 2018 for “..(my) thoughts on its (the Australian Public Service (APS)) future.…the world is changing and we (the Australian Public Service (APS)) need to make the most of it..”. I must say that the manner of this call is not only refreshing, candid and says hopefully a lot about your attitude to possible change. So here goes …

THE LAWS THAT GOVERN SOCIETY

Whilst it is the Parliament who decides the laws to govern society, the APS must administer them.

It is surely possible to frame the language in the legislation etc to be plain and simple.

Legislation challenged in court is usually for clarification. Courts have shown that more often than not most if not all words can carry two or more meanings. I can give an example, the word “apparently” has turned out to be quite difficult to cope with.

These actions sometimes can be educational, I submit that in most times they are an inefficient use of Attorney-General’s Department and the other particular Department’s time, manpower and money.

So your task to publish in plain and simple language will be difficult but not impossible.

Include the Minister’s introductory speech and the second reading debate into each act at the end.

The Courts more often than not refer to those speeches for guidance in their interpretation. If the reason for the Act is revealed through the speeches those affected by that Act could probably self regulate thereby possibly saving money themselves and the Government not having to prosecute or defend and there could be even more cooperation.

Each Government instrumentality should be mandated to hold regular public meetings with their constituent clientele to give feedback, to produce better interaction, to discuss how to reduce paperwork and generally improve relations.

Perhaps we could create three or four APS positions that could travel around Australia by train. They would get off at designated major country towns along the way and conduct community meetings at the local council or shire offices. They should also be attending meetings at say in Sydney: Strathfield, Hornsby, Parramatta, Liverpool and Katoomba, just to name a few.

Their main job would be to listen and report back to Community Feedback Liaison Office, where issues brought up would be sent to the relevant Department Head for a response. Some meetings it may be possible to give policy explanations. Regulations sometimes become outdated or unworkable. Let the public provide regular feedback on these Regulations. It may be that a slight tweaking will fix a problem that is vexing the smooth operation of an Act through its Regulations.

Government would be given a face. Ministers could attend or skype a particular meeting to offer an explanation about initiatives and how things are going relevant to the area being travelled through. Through this technology a Minister could make a decision on a request and explain the reasoning immediately.

The officers involved here would need to be in the ranking scale of lower high management. This makes the position desirable and teaches these officers interacting skills as well as accumulating knowledge of Government or Departmental policies. I would imagine this could be seen as a posting of 12 months. The organisation would welcome back an officer destined to higher management and hopefully a good manager.

THE POLICIES THAT SHAPE HOW ORGANISATIONS OPERATE

 This is, I think, two questions in one.

1. Policies on how to run an organisation and
2. Policies that enable the APS to operate.

Organisations depend on those people working inside them to plan, be active, alert, fair and just. They must decide what it is they can achieve.

1. HOW TO RUN AN ORGANISATION

Implement a Suggestion Scheme with financial rewards for efficiency.

Remove all chairs from meeting rooms.

Bring back the tea lady. Remove any coffee machines. It should be mandatory that whenever the Tea Lady comes past that everyone stops work for a few minutes, gets up and walks to her for a drink. If non Tea or Coffee drinkers, they should request water. The beverage should be drunk at or around the trolley. People will discover soon enough through conversation that it’s someone’s birthday, wedding anniversary, a child has been born, a promotion has occurred or a change in policy is coming. The result of this is a more relaxed workforce, slightly less stressed, friendly to each other and that people will know what others do in their office and consult occasionally.

Have regular brainstorming sessions with everyone included.

Let all middle management, without supervision; meet once a month to discuss what problems they have within their areas. They will find out that their problems are not theirs alone. Further they will find out how either to solve or agree to discuss ongoing resolutions later.

Reward good management, loyalty and meaningful productivity by including in references for interviews etc. The APS should not indulge in offering financial productivity bonuses. Their job is to serve the public not take advantage of the situation.

Training programs should be reviewed and conducted regularly.

ENABLE THE APS TO OPERATE

The APS provides policy and advice service.

Invite the public to suggest changes to the public service. There is no need to defend anything the APS does because this is about service and nothing else.

There is nothing that would be said about the APS that has not already been said but the request is for constructive criticism. To be told a particular Department is hopeless in what it does is not constructive criticism and would not be included in feedback.

There should be an opportunity for the public to submit, suggest or request certain legislation be enacted. If such a suggestion comes from the public and the follow through occurs there should be little or no resistance.

Therefore imagine the Government announcing that it needed to stimulate the economy. Why not ask the public what they feel would do this. The public may not know what to do but they certainly know what not to do. The Government could incorporate the better suggestions and still proceed with their plans but they would know where to tread carefully.

POLICY ADVICE

Every public servant must be accountable for their advice and their actions. Any Ministerial advice from the Minister’s office or the APS that is acted upon and bad consequences result there should be an enquiry held and if found derelict in duty (didn’t read enough literature available on subject etc) then that person should be charged with an appropriate crime and if found guilty, face possible gaol time. They must not be allowed to just resign. Take the insulation batts saga of the Rudd era… whoever advised that adventure should be facing manslaughter charges after the deaths that resulted from that policy.

The APS should never be asked or ask of itself to conduct a business that is not government service based. They should consult extensively but have the private sector do the work.

The APS should be the focussed reflection of their targeted audience. Every Department/Office should be independent of any other Department/Office otherwise not only is there confusion but hesitancy in formulating policies and in the carriage of those policies. There is enough of this now with Ministers always vacillating over decisions. Why then make the APS that much harder to work by imposing vague goals etc. There should be clear paths to decision making.

So as an example: Let us go with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. These are two discrete functions pushed together. Could I suggest the following:

Create a Department of Immigration, Employment and Training.

\*\*Whilst each of these entities has a specific duty to perform and can decide within themselves how to achieve their goals, they can still fall under one Minister because there is logic at work in the functions. Function 1) An immigrant arrives, must commence English classes (this should be of 6 months duration). Pay the minimum wage to everybody while they learn English.

This is done in most other places throughout the world. Simultaneously be introduced to the Australian resident and work ethic. If they don’t finish the course, they will be required to work in the hinterland for 2 years then restart the English course they stopped before.

His/her employment prospects are discussed during this education phase and if a TAFE course is suitable it could be offered under some payback scheme. Government should have infrastructure jobs always available for these people to be slotted into immediately. The duration of these jobs should continue for no more than say 6 months. They would be encouraged to secure a job outside this environment.

Function 2) As graduates leave school or an immigrant who qualifies then if University can be attended due to successful application then a pathway has been established again under some payback scheme. Otherwise his/her employment prospects are discussed and a TAFE course could be offered under some payback scheme. Government should have infrastructure jobs always available for these people to be slotted into immediately. The duration of these jobs should continue for no more than say 6 months. They would be encouraged to secure a job outside this environment.

Create an Office of Customs. This should be within the Finance Department. This would be the first arm of Customs, the gathering of excise and taxes etc.

Create a joint **Police, Military and Quarantine** (This would be the second arm of Customs, the assurance of unhindered legal and clean health movement of people into Australia) **Border Protection Office** (with links to ASIO and ASIS etc) with its own small permanent officer core but with the immediate ability to increase its force size subject to circumstances. This office could be made accountable to a Border Protection Committee of Cabinet administered regularly by a suitable person in the same way as ASIO.

THE PROGRAMS THAT HELP PEOPLE

In very general terms, programs should be geared exclusively to the target clientele. Having said that, your question, by the nature of the Australian political landscape, requires cooperation with the States and Territories. Whitlam also wanted to link directly with Councils and Shires.

Apart from the politically motivated programs that emanate from government there should be programs that are linked directly to the constitution. People can identify with such if shown that it is the federal government’s direct responsibility to enact laws or programs to achieve the ends as delineated in that document.

So the Federal Government has direct responsibility in, among other things and complementary to;

Immigration and emigration: Naturalization and aliens: The influx of criminals: The people of any race, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws: see \*\*

2) Invalid and old-age pensions: The provision of maternity allowances, widows' pensions, child endowment, unemployment, pharmaceutical, sickness and hospital benefits, medical and dental services (but not so as to authorize any form of civil conscription), benefits to students and family allowances:

Programs should allow every pensioner to work and pay tax over the pension income only. The amount of corporate or departmental knowledge and experience that is lost to the community when workers are forced to retire is lost gold. The time taken to accumulate is virtually impossible.

Here is an idea: why not cease child endowment at the birth of the 4th child?

3) The service and execution throughout the Commonwealth of the civil and criminal process and the judgements of the courts of the States: The recognition throughout the Commonwealth of the laws, the public Acts and records, and the judicial proceedings of the States:

All those facing a charge of violence who used a weapon, firearm, knife etc if found guilty automatically attract a Federal sentence of 25 years. This Federal sentence is not negotiable. If the Court decides a State sentence of say ten years, then that person serves 35 years. All criminals must pass a common sense test prior to release. If passing this test takes their time past their release date so be it. They can be indentured to have to pay for their continuing incarceration due to their non passing of the CS test once they are released.

Make every prisoner study for at least their higher school certificate or a trade or a university degree if so gifted. Remove all canteens from gaols and replace with fast food outlets. Remove all gym equipment donate to school gyms etc. Prisoners should not come out healthier than when they went in.

4) External Affairs: The relations of the Commonwealth with the islands of the Pacific:

We should be talking to Pacific ethnic groups about how to enhance their life. If there is not a Colombo Plan style aid program to all South Pacific then with New Zealand there should be. We should be extending a cultural and financial hand of friendship to all countries in our immediate region.

East Timor. The Australian Government should be ASHAMED at the appalling state of that nation. We are naturally a good corporate and global citizen yet when it comes to East Timor NOTHING. It doesn’t matter if there is a dispute over the oil in the region we should be providing decent housing, clearing land for farming, providing transport of all types and offering to defend them against aggressors until they can do so themselves. We should be the envy of the world with what we offer East Timor. See 5 below at ++.

5) Railway infrastructure throughout the Commonwealth (especially with respect to transport for the naval and military purposes of the Commonwealth), The acquisition, with the consent of a State, of any railways of the State on terms arranged between the Commonwealth and the State: Railway construction and extension in any State with the consent of that State:

We could put a lot of people to work laying safer and better railway tracks right around the country. These unemployed people while earning they would be getting their self esteem and confidence back. There could be savings here in counseling fees because jobs are being filled. If there is no need for qualifications then here is a solution.

We should be removing all heavy trucks off the roads and replacing them with railways. We will need railway rolling stock to be built here. There is another employment opportunity.

Smaller trucks can deliver goods from railway stations to parcel offices and then deliveries can be to industry, business and residents. Deliveries from parcel depots should be via electric vehicles.

++ All the heavy trucks that are removed from use could be donated to third world countries as aid. Truck drivers could be repaid and retrained.

All this would clear the main roads and highways of heavy traffic, reduce damage to roads probably reduce hospital waiting times because of the reduction in traffic accidents. The environment would become less polluted and still the hospital waiting times would come down.

If every government in Australia would legislate to allow electric cars the size of golf buggies etc access to all main roads, not Highways, the immediate effect would be less pollution. Less road accidents and not so much petrol would be used. The savings achieved by supplying electric vehicles to every car owner free in Australia would be probably slightly cheaper than what we are paying now to reduce pollution annually. Further it would be a long term solution rather than a quick fix that could go wrong. I couldn’t see too many greenies refusing this option.

THE SERVICES THAT LET US ALL GET THINGS DONE

Perhaps recipients of the dole could indicate what careers they would like to try before having to decide their choice? Working through the volunteering schemes can work but sometimes it could be a bit intimidating. Say one says a gardener, landscaper etc then a service could be that he/she is placed in a public park position/company and shown what to do. If say the hourly rate is $40 per hour and the fortnitely dole is $450. So that person could begin work at the job they feel they could do and work with someone for 11 hours a week. If they want to be a para legal lawyer at $50 an hour then they would work for 9 hours at a lawyer’s office etc. After that they go home or do whatever.

If they show no ambition here then another interest is pursued. They must work for the dole doing what needs doing.

However as a general rule, I think, the Federal Government should be a partner to all State Governments in what they do and seek to achieve. Not like a big brother but as a consultant.

It seems trite to say but if more jobs were created many of community’s problems would be minimised. Therefore if groups of mothers and fathers were established around the country their advice concerning children would be a good start in what services need to be set up too enable these young people get confidence to look for a job or career.

Roosevelt’s New Deal concept would work for those people who just want to do nothing and let the community look after them. If any of this is followed then the APS must be willing to work outside the box of usual goals, because many young people do not have the same values as we older folk.

If the idea of fixing East Timor gets legs then many long term jobs would be created, both for our people as well as their locals.

If groups of retired middle and upper management people were made available for consultation by current middle and upper management people it is possible some if not many current business and public service decisions could be made with access to people with longer experience and knowledge so better decisions could be made.

Retired tradesmen/women should be available to assist current tradies with advice on situations.

Government could pay their travel allowance

FINALLY

To bring any of this into reality there should be an Office of Change created. This should be a permanent entity within the APS.

Thank you.

Yours Faithfully

Robert Rosenstraus