**APS Review – Primary Subjects & Associated Comments**

1. **Relations between Ministers and the APS**

Abandon fixed term appointments for Departmental Secretaries. A temporary Secretary is unlikely to provide frank and fearless advice in an apolitical APS.

Reduce Ministerial staff. The majority have little knowledge of APS machinations, nor have an appreciation of the quality of APS advice.

1. **Central coordination**

Central coordination of the APS in the age of devolution is a contradiction. The key players (PM&C, Finance, APS Commissioner, Auditor-General, Fair Work Commissioner) should meet regularly to consider APS-wide issues. Why include the Auditor-General and Fair Work Commissioner? Someone needs to be there to remind all that they can’t simply make it up according to whim.

1. **Leadership**

Senior Executives need to be held responsible for ‘courageous’ decisions and personally appear before the Fair Work Commission, et al, rather than sending groups of functionaries to explain what considerations another person took. Personal appearances by Senior Executives will ensure future careful thinking.

1. **Recruitment & Staffing**

Recruitment is a specialist HR field. People who are not HR specialists need to take a subordinate role in recruitment and staffing. Everyone thinks they are good at selecting people but the majority are not. In an extreme case, I observed an applicant, when applying for a job in a workplace relations Agency, attach a picture of his two dogs to his job application. Inexplicably, he was hired.

The myriad ways that a motivated APS employee can use to deflect attention from their often ‘symbolic’ work performance has driven Departments to adopt staffing methods of less resistance. As such, the increased use of consultants, contractors and labour-hire staff is partly understandable as these forms of labour don’t have excessive absenteeism or lodge compensation claims in an extremely generous compensation environment. Also, there is no need to engage in laborious and confronting performance management processes for consultants, contractors and labour-hire staff. If the labour contract is tightly worded, you simply cancel their services.

In any case it is extremely rare to see an APS manager engage in performance management procedures. When in doubt, they simply restructure. Again, partly understandable as the performance management systems require backbone, which is generally lacking.

1. **Remuneration and employment conditions**

Individual Department Workplace Agreements have been an abject failure. The overhead cost of negotiating individual Agreements is a total waste of taxpayer money. Union resources are also stretched by this. The economic lunacy that improvements in remuneration should be directly linked to increases in productivity at Agency level has resulted in some ripping yarns regarding productivity offsets.

Go back to centralised negotiations covering the public service as a whole.