# Executive Summary

Please accept my submission to the Independent Review of the APS (the APS Review) in which I provide suggestions for generating a technically expert and adaptable APS fit for a future that is uncertain and likely to be subject to rapid change.

The APS has already undertaken extensive work to anticipate future change and to position itself.  My submission attempts to take this work into account and to add value only in the remaining areas where it might be potentially useful.  Many of my suggestions are new and untested so I am expecting they will need adjustment in light of further evidence and exposure to collective wisdom.  They are as follows.

# Better knowledge management

Efficient and effective use of knowledge is critical to improving APS policy and services. Knowledge includes feedback from citizens, technical expertise and on-the-job know-how and past experience of APS officers.  The APS could benefit from more explicitly focussing on:
- working out what needs to be known and how to obtain/generate that knowledge
- creating a culture that rewards the use and sharing of knowledge
- keeping knowledge workers happy
- encouraging processes for knowledge creation and sharing
- improving ways to make existing knowledge accessible

# New management strategies

New strategies are needed to ensure the APS is more adaptive, expert and innovative.  These should aim to:
- progressively restructure the APS workforce so that it can meet future demands while taking into account likely changes to the nature of work and minimising negative impacts on existing staff
- make the best use of data and IT expertise
- adjust APS leadership and management practices to provide an environment in which staff are happy and innovation can thrive

# More productive relationships

It would further help the APS to have more productive relationships that facilitate the transfer of knowledge from other sectors.  In this last section, my suggestions relate to:
- managing expectations for open government
- being 'citizen advocates' during consultations
- improving information available to the media
- benefiting more from academic knowledge

# Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose and evidence base

I am providing this Submission in the hope of influencing the Panel and Secretariat to consider some new ideas for updating the Australian Public Service (APS) and to address some longstanding issues that perhaps are coming to a head.

This material is based on my ongoing interest in and gratitude to the APS which has included being coached, reading widely, discussing these topics with a large network of contacts and working for the Australian Government, in addition to working for overseas and state public sectors, academia, non government and community organisations.  Where possible and relevant, I have drawn on public information on what is currently being done to address these issues and available APS data.

I have not been employed by the APS for just under five years and I apologise that sometimes I still refer to it as if I was still a member.

## 1.2  Expectations for the future

As the Prime Minister famously said, we live in the most exciting times.  Much has been written about the expected future and how it might change the way we work and live.  Aspects that are relevant to this submission include:

- recognition that use of consumer feedback, expert knowledge and technology are increasingly important for driving improved policy and service delivery
- evidence that we are experiencing a period of rapid social, economic, political and environmental change in which the forces of urbanisation, emerging economies, demographic change and increased connectivity may coalesce into 'no ordinary disruption' that is rapid and transformative
- signs that technological change involving automation and artificial intelligence will drive changes to the nature of APS work
- retirement of the baby boom from the Australian Public Service and the potential to lose existing knowledge, wisdom and expertise
- indications that social values have changed, enabling more individualism, greater appreciation of diversity and manifesting as reduced trust in authority

In response to these anticipated changes, I have made suggestions at the 'whole of APS level' which are intended to assist the APS to make better use of knowledge, be more adaptable in

preparation for uncertain change, with workers managed in a way more consistent with current values and to further improve relations with the community and access to external knowledge. These suggestions are consistent with the Review's terms of reference related to innovation, productivity, collaboration with the community and acquiring necessary skills and expertise.

## 1.3 APS reform context

There is already extensive work being undertaken by the APS to anticipate change and position itself.

Significant recent examples include: development and review of the PGPA Act (2013), establishment of grants hubs and related information portals; the creation of the Digital Transformation Office; the Report on Public Sector Data Management; development of the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project and the Business Longitudinal Database along with its analysis infrastructure; strategic policy work on cities and infrastructure; establishment of Innovation and Science Australia; new approaches to staffing and service delivery at the Department of Human Services and Australian Taxation Office; new approaches to cyber-security and border control; workforce development by the Australian Public Service Commission; establishment of Behavioural Economics Team of Australia; and current efforts by the Future of Work Taskforce.  I am sure there are many other examples that I have omitted that are similarly significant.

These recent developments are consistent with, and are often extensions of many reform efforts undertaken in the past, including those discussed in the Coombs Report (1976).  It was rather entertaining to read in a paper by the Parliamentary Library (Holland, 2003)[1] that there have been three main categories of recommendations emanating from the many reviews of the APS between 1976 and 2003, which relate to: open government, improving equality for APS officers and increasing APS efficiency and effectiveness.  I think my own suggestions fall into the same categories!

My contribution is necessarily much more limited than those already mentioned, since it is not extensively resourced and I have not been able to benefit from 'insider-status' in the APS for many years.  Nevertheless, that hasn't stopped me from forming views, which may be useful because I have had time and an opportunity to view the APS from arm's length.  However, I accept these views are also likely to need adjustment in light of further evidence and critical discussion.

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[1] Holland, I (2003) *Changes in the Australian Public Service, 1975 to 2003*, Chronology No. 1 2002–03, Parliamentary Library, Information and Research Services (since updated to 2010)

## 1.4 Summary of suggestions and their rationale

While there are many issues that I could have raised, I have limited my submission to providing suggestions relating to the following three topics, so that the APS is 'fit for the future' and on the front foot.

### Better knowledge management

The APS depends on its intellectual capital for its productivity. Examples of APS intellectual capital include: the 'administrative craft' and 'institutional memory' whose loss has been mourned by commentators and the culture, expertise, processes and organisation of the APS that supports its operation. I suggest that the APS could add to its intellectual capital (and shore up intellectual capital prior to the retirement of the baby boom generation) through explicit and conscious knowledge management. This could involve more top-down approaches to identifying the knowledge needed by organisational units and development and resourcing of strategies to generate, interpret, retain and share that knowledge.

### Updated staff management

The nature of work is changing in the APS. While the rate of change is contested, it is expected that over time, that (non-automated) work will become more complex, requiring greater collaboration across areas of expertise and creativity in the development of solutions. This submission makes suggestions for i) developing a strategy to manage the APS workforce that anticipates the effects of automation and artificial intelligence; ii) making better use of data and IT expertise; and iii) adjusting management and leadership approaches to provide an environment in which innovation can thrive.

### More productive relationships

Open government is already a busy space and this submission makes a few relatively minor suggestions which include: i) providing more information on what the APS does, its processes and the likely influence of participants' advice in consultations and other forms of 'participatory democracy'; ii) improving the quality of consultation including central oversight of consultation with some groups; iii) talking with the media about how to support reporting that informs public debate of policy issues; and iv) some suggestions for assisting academia to provide policy relevant input to the APS.

These areas are interrelated and mutually reinforcing and I have dealt with them separately simply for emphasis and ease of explanation.

# 2. Better knowledge management

## 2.1 The importance of intellectual capital

The APS is an endlessly fascinating, complex, rich and diverse amalgam of organisations whose value-add to the community is the result of their many cultures, processes, structures and institutions which have been developed to achieve a diverse array of objectives.  There is often great purpose in what already exists.

The people, structure and relationships contributing to the function of the APS can be referred to as 'intellectual capital'.  Examples for the APS include:

- *Human capital* ie the knowledge and skills of APS employees
  (including knowledge of the 'administrative craft' and 'institutional memory' whose loss has been mourned by Tingle (2015)[2]
- *Structural capital* ie the processes and organisation of the APS which support its operation (eg templates, clearance processes, training courses, delegations, databases, audit committees, legislation, cabinet guidelines)
- *Relational capital* ie relationships with Parliament, citizens, business, non government organisations and academia.

Knowledge Management is an emerging field in which one strand has come to concentrate on how to enhance intellectual capital.  It involves consciously managing the knowledge that contributes to the effectiveness, efficiency, growth and sustainability of that capital.  Ideas related to knowledge management have potential applicability to the APS[3].  The next section provides a short summary of suggested approaches in the hope of tempting further investigation and innovation in this area.

It should be noted beforehand that there is already considerable effort being invested in knowledge management tactics by the APS.  Examples are extensive and include workshops, current human resources practices, continuous improvement of work processes, investment in research and implementation of innovation labs. While none of the tactics are new, their strategic use is.   Adopting a more strategic knowledge management approach would be like recent efforts in the fields of talent management, risk management and workforce planning, in which the APS has acknowledged existing efforts and sought to learn from current practitioners to identify best practice approaches, support their wider implementation and integrate these practices across related organisational units.

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[2] Tingle (2015) 'Political Amnesia : How we forgot how to govern', *Quarterly essay* (Melbourne, Vic.) ; issue 60. 1444-884X)

[3]  I note that it shares some of the concepts and approach described in a Staff Insights paper by the Australian Public Service Commission on a Human Capital Planning Framework.

## 2.2 Methods for knowledge management

The following text provides a useful starting point for thinking about how the APS could grow its intellectual capital by better using knowledge:

> Pasher, E. and Ronan, T (2011) *The Complete Guide to Knowledge Management:  A Strategic Plan to Leverage your Company's Intellectual Capital*, Wiley

A quick scan of Amazon shows that now there are many more recent books in the market.  The tactics suggested by the above authors are as follows:

- **Work out what the organisation needs to know then develop a plan to develop that knowledge.**  One approach may be to review an organisation's corporate plan with a view to identifying the knowledge needed to achieve the organisation's most critical objectives and then evaluating current sources of knowledge, whether they are optimal and whether new knowledge needs to be obtained or generated.  The recently announced citizen survey is a good example of such top-down planning, which in this case, addresses a gap in our knowledge of citizen satisfaction across government services.

- **Create a culture that rewards knowledge management** which includes: respecting others' knowledge; seeking to use the knowledge of others including that of external people and people from different technical fields; supporting forums for sharing knowledge (eg communities of practice, seminar series, the work of IPAA); and rewarding the sharing of knowledge.

- **Keep knowledge workers happy** with: competitive remuneration; ensuring jobs are challenging and interesting; providing for professional/managerial development; providing performance based recognition and promotion; supporting a climate of collaboration and knowledge sharing; valuing and leveraging the strengths of diversity; ensuring good physical conditions; engendering a sense of belonging; and optimising organisational communication.

- **Encourage processes for knowledge creation and sharing**: note that knowledge creation involves both dedicated individual pursuit as well as collaboration with others.  Give people space and responsibility for individual pursuit but also provide opportunities to collaborate such as through communities of practice and other forums such as: morning teas; evaluations and peer reviews; management meetings; lectures; seminars; mentoring; and supervising.  Examine ways to retain knowledge from people who exit the APS by holding exit interviews and maintaining contact, including through mentoring and forums held by the Institute of Public Administration Australia and the ANZSOG Institute of Governance and Policy Analysis.

- **Improve ways to make existing knowledge accessible**.  These methods include the use of uber-filing though IT solutions as well as other methods that alert people to the presence of knowledge such as boards, committees, advisory groups, roundtables, lectures, courses, staff emails and tools for improving the quality of some products without people needing to develop their own expertise eg briefing templates and organisational guidelines and processes.

One aspect of the knowledge management approach advocated by Pasher and Ronan (2011) that is particularly appealing, is that where possible, it advocates building on what already exists and what works.  It is about supporting and resourcing existing decentralised efforts to grow knowledge and develop processes which are: driven by local demand for better outcomes; leverage the knowledge of people who have already earned the respect of their colleagues; and build on existing networks, or communities of practice, that have stood the test of time because they are useful and maintained by people who care. It also provides opportunities for managing critical person risk associated with investing in human capital only.  An obvious application is to start thinking about is what knowledge may be lost when the baby boom retire and how the APS can mitigate this risk.

# 3. Updated management strategies

Updated management approaches are needed to support an APS workforce that is more expert, innovative and adaptive. The following sections elaborate on the following suggestions:

- developing a strategy to manage the APS workforce that anticipates the effects of automation and artificial intelligence;
- growing the capacity of the APS to use information technology and interpret data while implementing quality controls
- adjusting management and leadership approaches to provide an environment in which innovation can thrive

Some of the material is a bit undeveloped and is perhaps best seen as a conversation starter.

## 3.1 Whole of APS workforce planning

The nature of APS work and its workforce is expected to change.  We are expecting some of our rule-based work (or algorithmic work such as call centre work) to become automated and the remaining work to involve greater technical expertise, more creativity and skills in collaboration.  However, currently there is considerable conjecture and debate about the likely size, nature and timing of changes to the APS workforce.

Perhaps this is already in train, but if not, the APS Review may like to consider requesting that each agency undertake an audit of the type of work currently being conducted by its officers (in terms of whether it is algorithmic or heuristic ) and whether it requires technical expertise (by field) and how this may be affected by expected changes to automation and artificial intelligence.  These studies should also take into account predictions for future separation rates since these are expected to increase as the baby boom retires.  Through no fault of their own, some agencies will be less well positioned for the future than others.  If these studies use the same methods, their results could be combined across the APS so that strategies can be developed at the whole of APS level that provide good value for money and enhanced services to the taxpayer while softening any upcoming blows to existing staff.  The earlier this is done, the more scope there is for developing acceptable solutions.

Available solutions are likely to involve hiring fewer ongoing staff and the use of more non-ongoing employment arrangements.  Now that non-ongoing staff have been more prevalent for longer in the APS, it would be useful to know more about their contribution compared to that of ongoing staff.  Workforce strategists would benefit from knowing more about the relative costs and benefits of ongoing and non-ongoing staff by type of employment arrangement and field including: efficiency and effectiveness (to the extent this can be determined); skills used; flexibility; reliability; engagement; effects on frank and fearless advice; financial costs; and gains and losses in human capital (non-ongoing staff may bring specialised skills but they leave with on-the-job experience).  Such studies will also need to be sensitive to the constraints experienced by the hirers of non-ongoing staff and their reasons for hiring (eg staff caps, budgeting, skills needs, legacy issues).

## 3.2 Enhanced use of data and IT technical expertise

Technical expertise is very important to the APS now and into the future, since it is key to utilising the opportunities posed by increasing availability of data and technological advancements to improve security, service delivery and policy.

The costs of poor use of expertise have been demonstrated by past IT failures in the APS, of which there have been many and they have been disastrous both financially and in terms of poor service delivery to the Australian public.  Hopefully, the establishment of the Digital Transformation Office/Agency has been a major step forward in addressing this problem.

The APS needs to invest very carefully in how it organises itself to ensure it uses expertise over the coming years to the best advantage.  Depending on the outcomes of work on predicting future needs for expertise (described in the previous section), a proportionate approach could

be developed.  This could involve a clutch of tactics taken from the Knowledge Management approach including:

- **Determining what departments need to know** to enable digital transformation and use of data to improve policy and services.

- **Creating a culture that rewards use of data and technology** this includes recent efforts implemented under the Data Literacy Program and by the 2018 APS graduate cohort who have formed their own data network.

- **Keeping knowledge workers happy** for which solutions might include:
    - Developing a cadre of expert officers, perhaps separately for the fields of IT and data analysis, who are responsible for managing, contracting and undertaking work of a technical nature.  This would provide support for operational and managerial staff, some of whom work in technical isolation, including:
        - information sharing about new data releases, analysis methodologies and software
        - mentoring, coaching and development opportunities for people early in their careers
        - best practice standard procedures (such as standard approaches to metadata and processes for checking data before it is released)
        - opportunities for peer review of projects with the possibility of choosing reviewers from a large array of possible experts (eg depending on the nature of a research project, it may benefit from advice based on detailed expertise in the areas of: social research methods and design including evaluations and longitudinal analysis; indicator development; statistics and sample design; cost-benefit analysis; econometrics; demographics; computer science (particularly for database production, access and dissemination); and no doubt, others.)

    - Seeking to hire and retain APS officers with exceptional technical expertise, which might involve hiring people at pay rates and levels considerably higher than an EL1 despite not having managerial responsibilities[4].  This would have to be subject to the proviso that such senior technical staff would be expected to share their knowledge and develop processes and build the skills of others to reduce the extent to which they are a critical person risk[5].

- **Encourage processes for knowledge creation and sharing** such as improving quality control processes for obtaining outputs and value for money for both internal products and those delivered by contract.  The processes of the DTA might be more broadly

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[4] Note that this is contrary to ideas of spans of control but consistent with hiring practices for IT contractors.
[5] Ie a work area becomes dependent on a particular person for their expertise and finds it difficult to function when that person is absent or leaves.

applicable and could be reviewed for understanding what works and where risks remain. Expert peer review will need to be an element of future quality control processes.

- **Improve ways to make existing knowledge accessible** which includes the recent IPAA ACT events on *Artificial Intelligence and the Public Sector* (20 March 2018) and *Behavioural Insights; Global Perspectives* (28 June 2018).

The UK has similarly sought to improve its Data, Digital and Technology (DDaT) function. They have established the Government Digital Service Academy, a Professional Capability Framework (that describes IT related jobs) and various schemes to attract and develop talent.[6] There are many potential learnings from the UK approach which might be leveraged by the APS.

## 3.3 Adjusting APS leadership and management

Leadership and management are critical determinants of staff engagement and productivity. As a matter of course, the APS needs to continually invest and update approaches to these.

There is also pressure to adopt management practices conducive to supporting a workforce that is expected to be undertaking more complex work, involving greater levels of expertise and autonomy into the future. Such leadership and management practices are also intended to support entrepreneurialism and to lead to greater innovation.

*Adjusting the APS leadership style*

As Mr David Thodey mentioned during his panel presentation at the ACT IPAA events, *Doing Policy Differently* on 22 March 2018, there is 'a need for a different leadership style to before…and that authoritarian, hierarchical organisations are [only] great if they work..'

This is consistent with a groundswell of support for changed leadership as discussed in contemporary future-oriented management literature such as Sinclair (2007)[7] and Pink (2010)[8].

Perhaps the shortest and clearest description of the need for different leadership and what it involves has been provided by Mr Allan Hawke AC, a former federal Secretary who 'sets out some people principles honed over almost 40 years of reading, thinking about and practising

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[6] A list of current initiatives is at: https://digitalpeople.blog.gov.uk/tag/digital-data-and-technology/
[7] Sinclair, A (2007) *Leadership for the Disillusioned: Moving beyond myths and heroes to leading that liberates*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney
[8] Pink, D (2010) *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*, CanonGate

leadership' in a series of articles which were published in the Australian major daily newspapers entitled 'People matter'(eg *SMH, 3 December 2013*).

Hawke (2013) draws on the work of a former employee, Dr John Evans, to argue that *command-and-control leadership style* that is autocratic and authoritarian causes instability by progressively changing volunteers (ie people who are happy and volunteering to undertake work) to whingers/survivors and finally to prisoners (unhappy people doing the minimum amount possible while actively undermining their boss), '...through:

- being autocratic and authoritarian
- communicating continual crises
- focussing purely on results
- giving inadequate or unclear instructions, and sometimes asking different subordinates to do the same task
- assigning blame
- freely offering criticism disguised as "feedback"

By contrast [he argues that] '... the preferred *captain-coach style* facilitates volunteers by communicating in colour, with all the fervour of a first date, and leading by example ie:

- explaining causes, strategic decisions, plans and goals
- focussing on why these are important and how to achieve them
- defusing any sense of crisis
- giving clear specific instructions
- supporting and nurturing team members
- acknowledging and reinforcing each individual's identity
- helping others grow and develop perceptions of self-worth
- taking part in the field of play by rolling up their sleeves and pitching in, rather than demanding that others deliver the goods by themselves…'

Sinclair (2007) unpacks the cultural biases that have contributed to the popularity of the image of a 'strong authoritarian type leader' and gives reasons why the model doesn't always work.

Pink (2010) argues that 'command and control' type leadership practices involving carrots and sticks (extrinsic rewards) are effective only for routine, rules-based work. New leadership approaches are needed for more complex work which is constantly evolving, less routine and less directed (ie knowledge work). Knowledge workers are argued to be motivated, not by extrinsic rewards but by providing them with a sense of purpose, autonomy and opportunities for development as provided by the 'captain coach' model.

The 'captain coach' model is better suited to supporting the entrepreneurialism needed for innovation (ie devolved decision making that enables continuous improvement) and is better suited to critical thinkers and creative types who don't respond well to being told what to do.

However, as detractors will point out, it has its limits. It works well with ambitious and motivated people but is less effective with staff who have disengaged, found other things to do at work that they find rewarding, don't have the skills or are prevented from working owing to chronic personal pressures related to mental illness, drug and alcohol dependence, caring duties or domestic violence.

It would be interesting and useful to have an open conversation in the APS about the leadership models that are preferred by managers and staff, when they work and why. Perhaps this would extend our leadership toolkit further and help with understanding each others' behaviours (both managers and staff) including that related to supporting high performance and that relating to managing under-performance.

*Developing a clearer model of good management*

The APS is already active in seeking to improve staff management. The APSC conducts courses that teach management skills and the Integrated Leadership System includes reference to managerial behaviours. However, this does not necessarily involve a clear model of what is good management and I think the APS would benefit from one, so that managers have a better idea of what is expected of them and staff know what to expect.

To get a possible discussion of 'good management' rolling[9], I have provided a first brush attempt below. It is consistent with the approaches of Charan, Drotter and Noel (2011)[10], Covey (1998) [11] and that recommended by Coombs (1976)[12].

- Managers avoid directly producing their unit's outputs but rather, support their staff to do the work, by ensuring they[13]:

  - use and develop systems to ensure that they meet their obligations under the APS Act, the PGPA Act (including risk management), Privacy Act and Work Health and Safety Act

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[9] despite being mortified by memories of my past management mistakes

[10] Charan, R., S. Drotter and J Noel (2011) *The Leadership Pipeline: How to Build the Leadership-powered company*, Wiley and Sons, San Francisco

[11] Covey, S.R. (1998) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, The Business Library, Melbourne

[12] Paragraph 3.2.12 describes the Commission's recommendations for ensuring efficiency

[13] An example of a practical guide to this type of approach was included in the former Secretary Ms Lisa Paul's Departmental blog (8 December 2011) which described best principles for delegation. This is provided for information at Attachment A.

- provide a clear enunciation of the strategic aims of the work unit, (the 'mission') based on input from staff themselves, upper management and other relevant stakeholders.  It is ok for the mission to change and evolve, so long as this is explicitly acknowledged and communicated, noting that it is easier for staff to achieve a stationary target
- develop clear roles and responsibilities for each team member, taking into account operational needs, staff preferences and capabilities which support autonomy, responsibility, devolved decision-making and innovation
- provide necessary contextual information to enable their staff and stakeholders to contribute appropriately
- build the capability of staff by providing on the job coaching and development opportunities
- hold team members to account for delivering on their responsibilities and performance manage accordingly
- ultimately, seek to make the work unit sustainable into the future allowing the manager to leave without harming the output of the unit (ie make yourself redundant).

Such a model would help to address the commonly reported management problems[14] that include managers doing the work of their staff, that institutional memory is being lost, people are overworked or underworked and the common belief that management is about doing more, rather than about doing things differently.

## Rewarding good management and leadership

Nothing I have mentioned in the last two subsections is particularly new.  However, there is variation in the extent to which captain-coach leadership and 'good management' is adopted across the APS.

Partly, this is because we tend to reward managers based on their outputs and not necessarily how they were achieved, nor what they could have been[15].  Often good management is synonymous with good output, but not always.  Sometimes, good outputs can be achieved by managers doing the work themselves, using key staff unsustainably or inefficiently.

The managers of managers need to be aware of and reward good management.  This requires a greater knowledge and transparency around what is happening in work units, which currently, can be difficult to determine (and is a warning sign in itself).

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[14] Eg Transcript of proceedings from Gordon de Brouwer's Valedictory Speech, 7 September 2017
[15] Eg the 'Can-do manager' as described by the Shiny Bum Singers in *Seize the Day: A public service opera*, performed on 1 July 2018 at the Holy Trinity Primary School, Curtin, ACT.

Maybe the APSC or another body could undertake a consultation process with APS staff about what they consider to be good leadership and management practice as a means of developing a culture that recognises, values and holds managers to account for good management and leadership while dispelling unfair expectations of what managers reasonably can do (and the dissonance between valuing a strong authoritarian type and wanting a captain-coach style). This could result in clearer models of good management and/or increased tolerance for a range of models.

Depending on the outcomes of this consultation, further work could be undertaken to embed desirable leadership and management models as staff and external stakeholders consider necessary.

## 4. More productive relationships

As discussed in the introduction to this submission, more open government has been wanted by the community and discussed in most reviews of the APS since the 1970s. There are many reasons driving this including:

- demand for greater accountability
- the need to co-design policy and programs taking into account citizens needs and knowledge
- the desire of various groups and individuals to influence policy
- the belief by some that our political system is insufficient to fully represent citizens' needs and wants and the belief that this should be supplemented by some form of participatory democracy.

There has been considerable headway in improving open government since the 1970s, which includes publication of extensive information on Departmental websites and employment of more people from outside the career service to develop government policy and programs. Recently, this has included strategies to develop and implement actions relevant to the Open Government Partnership Australia and considerable investment in research related to understanding citizen perspectives including through behavioural economics and citizen-centric design.

My submission makes a couple of minor niche comments relating to possible additional efforts that might improve relationships between the APS and the community leading to greater respect and transfer of knowledge.

## 4.1 Managing expectations during consultations

It can be very frustrating for community members to devote time and energy to consulting with public officials and then find that their input is not represented in implementation approaches or government decisions.  This applies to people who participate in advisory groups, people appointed to undertake reviews, people who make submissions to reviews, people who are chosen or volunteer to be interviewed by APS officers and people who choose to approach government and/or officials for lobbying purposes.

As APS officers know (because sometimes, their advice lacks influence also), this is the nature of government decision making.  Many people will have different views which need to be weighed and prioritised.  Significant decisions are made by Ministers, or by Cabinet if warranted, and these decisions are often made to address a number of agendas and are based on advice from many sources.  Often, public servants are unaware of all the factors taken into account by a Minister in making a decision.

While most APS officers know and accept that the Minister may have his or her own reasons for not accepting their advice, it can not be assumed that members of the community will know this. Instead, the community has been known to blame their lack of influence on the APS, sometimes believing the APS does not care about their views or the APS is incompetent at seeking, understanding or conveying those views to the Minister. Sometimes these criticisms may be true but it is not necessarily the case.

It might be fairer to participants in consultations and possibly result in improved public relations, for the APS to have a standard approach to briefing participants that explains the expected process by which participants' input will be taken into account in government decision making. This is not intended to discourage people from contributing, or to shift all the responsibility to Ministers (it should be clear that the APS does filter and prioritise information), but to give participants a realistic understanding of the likely chances of their advice being adopted so they can make better informed decisions about whether they want to contribute on a particular issue. For example, community members are more likely to have influence in co-design of already decided policy and programs than in say, lobbying for programs or subsidies which have yet to be considered by government or are yet to be included in the Budget.

The APS Review panel may wish to consider the development of a simple communications piece along these lines that public servants could adjust as needed.  Such an approach would be similar to that required for ethics clearance of human research projects, for which participants' consent needs to be informed by an understanding of what is involved in

participation and its likely benefits[16].  Such a piece might also help with wider understanding about the limits of open government for achieving community influence, including the lack of ability of the APS to change this, and the logical conclusion that participatory democracy, no matter how well informed, has natural limits on its impact.

## 4.2 Being 'citizen advocates' when developing consultations

It was clear when I was working for a non government organisation that some consultations are better than others.  There is quite an art to ensuring that:

- consultation occurs at the right time to influence projects
- that participants are well chosen for their ability to represent others' views or to provide local or technical knowledge
- that sensible questions are asked of participants that they can usefully answer, and if not, that they are provided with sufficient but concise background information to allow them to make an informed judgement based on their values.

The trouble with ad hoc, rushed or under-resourced consultations is that they negatively impact the relationship between the community and the APS to the detriment of future consultations.  In the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultations, the APS is often dealing with a limited and time-poor pool of people who have been consulted many times over a long period with little apparent impact.  At a recent seminar I attended, one of the speakers who was the CEO of a successful large Aboriginal service provider said she now greeted requests for consultation by asking, 'Are you just coming to waste my time?'.

The Review Panel may wish to consider some sort of centralised stakeholder engagement approach that advocates best practice consultation across the APS and perhaps, for some critical groups, seeks to provide some oversight of consultations to ensure they are more meaningful and rationalised to greatest effect when drawing on the time of a limited pool of people who are otherwise very busy doing the public good.

A possible approach for Aboriginal and Torres Strait consultations, and other groups, could include more widespread opportunities for considering issues (with questions and support provided) on their own and then providing consolidated feedback back to government.  With the right processes, this can support the contest of ideas behind closed doors without weakening the group's bargaining power.

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[16] See NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) (Updated May 2015)

## 4.3 Providing better information to the media

As I recently agreed with a prominent former journalist, the media rule the world. The relationship between the APS, government and community is mostly dependent on how policy issues and the APS are reported by the media.

The Review Panel may like to consider whether there would be value in the APS convening a co-design session with journalists about what interests the public, the type of information they are looking for and how the APS might facilitate providing information to support discussion of topics that enhance the public good. A good example of possible new approaches is the recent podcast of Michelle Grattan interviewing Frances Adamson on 24th June 2018.

Another suggestion is to better understand the nature of social media and how to counter promulgation of misinformation. A different journalist has suggested that readily accessible factual information on Departmental websites provides a good counterfactual to 'post truth' discourse.

## 4.4 Benefiting more from academic knowledge

In the 1990s, the then Department of Families and Community Services seeded the discussion of social security policy as an academic discipline by: providing core funding to a number of research centres located in universities; producing a journal; and subsidising PhD scholarships and conferences. Later on, after these centres and a lively debate was established, the Department largely pulled out of funding the discipline leaving the research centres to find their own funding on a project by project basis[17].

In hindsight, it seems a terrible pity that this relatively small amount of funding was removed (it was less than $20m per annum compared to current annual social services and welfare expenditure of $163 billion[18]). Now the debate seems less lively, with fewer new entrants and the research is mostly concerned with (highly expert) evaluation of existing small State and Commonwealth programs rather than being forward looking and broader. The policy community is benefiting less from appointments and visits from international academics with whom sharing of ideas is increasingly important in our globalised world.

Perhaps there is scope for the Australian Government to pull back from procuring only policy relevant research that involves collaboration and steering by the APS, to work that is more

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[17] Which was also considered to be more consistent with the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines
[18] *2018-19 Budget Paper 1*, Table 3, p6-7

self-directed by academia who are often better positioned to see policy research as a body of work (rather than discrete projects) and in the context of international academic developments.

There is also scope to provide more funding to support academics contributing to public policy, much of which currently relies on goodwill  Some academics are paid to participate on boards and committees, but many are not.  There is also scope to pay for repackaging of academic material so that is it better suited to a lay audience for reviews and other consultations, which would allow the APS to benefit more from the considerable investment in academic knowledge at a relatively low additional cost.

## 5. Conclusion

This submission is mostly concerned with improved knowledge management, which can be adopted as an overarching strategic approach or through more conscious use of knowledge management tactics.  Knowledge management can be applied to all APS functions or applied on a case-by-case basis to certain issues and situations arising in the APS, such as the retirement of the baby boom.

I also make suggestions for discussions about how APS staff, of which knowledge workers are expected to be an increasing proportion, might be managed into the future and cover issues related to: workforce strategies, improved use of technical expertise and changes to APS leadership and management approaches.

Lastly, I talk to some personal observations about how the APS might be able to leverage better knowledge from the community and academia and support better informed discussions in collaboration with the media.

I now leave this with the Review Panel (and its machine reader) to consider these suggestions and take them forward as they consider best.  I hope my ideas will generate or contribute to some wider discussion since it is through discussion and consultation that greater sensitivity to these issues will be achieved, even in the absence of any structured attempt to have them further embedded.

## ATTACHMENT A: Extract on 'delegation' from Lisa Paul's Departmental blog

8 Dec 2011

Hi Folks

I thought you might be interested in the key points from my bite sized seminar on delegation. I've put below the major themes from my seminar. I hope you enjoyed it.

Lisa

1. <u>Why </u>delegate? Delegation is good, it's empowering for everyone and shows leadership.
2. <u>What</u> should be delegated? More than you think!! Refer to the 'why'!
3. <u>How </u>to delegate:
   a. Think through how you will go about the delegation. Spend time on this, it's not automatic.
   b. Know your team: you might delegate in writing to a big introvert; or you might brainstorm the approach with a big extrovert!
   c. Be transparent about each person's strengths and roles before you start.
   d. Context: it's everything, don't stint on describing it.
   e. Be specific about what is being asked for.
   f. Discuss the end product: look and feel. Ask the team for ideas.
   g. Timing – and why the timing; or ask what's possible. Be clear about milestones when it's reasonable for you to check. Build in enough time for you to do QA
   h. Quality expectation, trade-off with time
   i. Take more time to delegate than you think you've got. Do more listening than talking. Welcome checking as the task proceeds.
4. So you've delegated successfully, now what.
   a. Firstly, do nothing! Above all, don't bug the team. Don't hassle, only check at agreed milestones. But maintain an open door.
   b. Build in enough time for you to do QA.
   c. Keep your first feedback general.
   d. Do fine edits on the second iteration.
   e. Do no more than two iterations. Control that urge!
5. Ok, now you've let your team send the work up the line with your blessing, hopefully under their name.
   a. Close the loop by reviewing the impact of the product. Was it well received, timely, hit the mark?
   b. If a mistake was made - once is ok; exactly the same mistake twice is not ok.
   c. Pass on feedback from the higher ups.
6. What stops people delegating
   a. Time pressure?
      i. Almost never if team strengths are known. And practice makes perfect Mitigation: start with something slower and less crucial
      ii. Desire for perfection. Mitigation: be clear with higher ups what quality is being asked for. Lecture yourself that others can do as high quality as you.
      iii. Needing to prove your value add. Mitigation: be confident. Market your delegation skills to the higher ups.

          iv.       Not automatically thought of.  Mitigation:  ask "what am I doing that you could be doing?"

7.       If you are the person delegated to:
   a.   Manage up strongly:  ask lots of questions so they answer all the above areas
   b.   If they do a great job of delegating, praise them but also praise them to their boss
   c.   If they do a poor job of delegating, offer gentle feedback against the formula "when you....I felt...and I'd prefer...."
   d.   Tell them if you want more to do
   e.   Ask them to ask you what they are doing that you could do