What we’ve Heard so far...

Trusted and Respected Partner

### Below is a selection of the reflections we’ve received that have informed our thinking on why it is important for the Australian Public Service to develop trusting and respectful partnerships, and what can be done to achieve this outcome.

“Expertise outside of the public-service is rarely brought to the table when programs and services are being developed, leading to poorly designed, ineffective responses that do not achieve the government policy goal. Despite rhetoric to the contrary, this situation is perpetuated every day across the public sector.”

- **Community Council for Australia submission**

“The public service is for the benefit of the community at large. Therefore, giving the community a say in the development and delivery of public services is vital. Currently less than a quarter (23 per cent) of people feel that their voice is heard by Commonwealth Government.”

- **Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) submission**

“Following on from the proceedings of the 2017 IPAA Conference Thinking Differently Building Trust our expert group expressed the view that the APS has a fundamental role to play in building trust with Australian citizens. Three clear strategies for the APS were identified as a means to build public trust: 1) communicating with authority and influence to counter fake news through ongoing conversations with citizens and stakeholders; 2) ensuring that citizens are at the centre of policy, program and service design creation; and 3) authentically engaging with all government jurisdictions, the business and community sectors and broadening the axis of trust and policy learning beyond the usual suspects.

This will require new methods of doing public service production that enable (e.g. remove barriers to citizen participation through digital enablers), empower (e.g. through co-design of projects, programs and services), engage (e.g. working with and through community-based organisations and trusted intermediaries) and mainstream a culture of seeing like a citizen (see Stoker and Evans, eds., 2016).”

- I**nstitute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) submission**

“A recurrent impediment in the relationship between policy makers and researchers is the failure of the latter to appreciate the imperatives and the constraints influencing the work of policy makers. Too often, researchers expect to gain access to influence solely on the basis of expertise. They regard the significance of their findings as self-evident, needing little further argument or justification and heedless of context. It is hoped that changes to research and higher education policy incorporating impact measures, which enjoin researchers to work more closely with partners in industry, the community and the public sector to gain impact, will provide ongoing incentives for more consistent social engagement, including deeper relationships with the APS.”

- **Academy of the Social Sciences submission**

“Significant emphasis is being placed on the APS engaging with innovation, citizen centric approaches and cross sector collaboration. However, effort to date has failed to respond to the expectations of government or meet the needs of the community and business. This is particularly the case when it comes to cross-sector, crossdomain challenges. The APS continues to see itself at the centre, and at times the arbitrator, of what is formulated for government consideration.

There is no place in our 2030 future for traditional binary or adversarial thinking, approaches or practices.”

- **Reason Group submission**

“Australia would benefit from tapping into the knowledge, policy ideas and solutions already available in other jurisdictions, and thus reduce the risk of overly optimistic expectations of policy approaches that have previously been embraced in Great Britain. There is considerable, relevant experience in countries such as Canada, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, and the United States, as well as from the European Commission, that can be drawn on.”

- **The University of Queensland submission**

“Many of the policy issues the APS is facing are global challenges − the ageing workforce, future of work, technological disruption, cyber security − that will require it to work with other governments, the non-government sector and the private sector to develop solutions.

Mechanisms like roundtables and workshop helps facilitate information sharing, but more needs to be done to embed a deep and constant culture of collaboration across all levels of the APS.

When silos occur within departments, there is a real risk the work environment will stymie work or result in suboptimal outcomes. Conversely, innovation is more likely to occur when ideas and processes cross-pollinate.”

- **Business Council of Australia submission**

“To the extent that the public service will retain specific institutional structures, these should be made more flexible to encourage partnership with other entities such as universities or private sector firms in achieving public goals.”

- **Brendan Sargeant submission**

“A single ‘client facing’ government approach is needed to streamline the number of touch points citizens have when dealing with government. This requires a new way of thinking to empower an agency to deal with all of a citizen’s issues across government, including different levels of government (for example issues relating to tax, social security, veterans’ affairs and licencing). This would require a whole of citizen view to both using citizen data and engaging with citizens. While a long term goal, this approach would solve a major irritant for citizens, making interactions with each of the systems they must deal with seamless.”

- **Australian Taxation Office submission**

“It has been suggested that the Freedom of Information Act has had an adverse impact on the culture of the APS, undermining ‘frank and fearless’ advice and contributing to risk averse behaviour. I am not so sure. For the most part the FOI Act has had a very positive impact on the APS ensuring greater accuracy of records and imposing more discipline on decision-making to ensure it follows due process; it has also rightly brought to light cases of improper use of resources. The fear expressed is that the law is requiring public access to confidential policy advice thereby inhibiting the frankness of advice and the capacity of ministers to consider issues genuinely in the public interest without the public looking constantly over its shoulder.”

- **Andrew Stuart Podger submission**

De-politicise the APS – the politicians, i.e. ministers, have far too much influence/power over APS leaders, policy-makers and program implementers. Fewer and fewer of those ministers accept ‘frank and fearless’ advice, and good policy is too often ignored, dismissed, or otherwise trashed by pollies wanting quick wins in their electorates and on social media.

- **Anonymous submission**

“The policy advisory systems surrounding Ministers has undergone remarkable change in the last 30 years, with the 24-hour media cycle, the increase in power and influence of ministerial advisers, as well as the proliferation of lobby groups seeking to influence government. The APS no longer has the monopoly on policy advice. The insertion of these new groups into the policy advisory system has disrupted the traditional bilateral relationship between the APS and their Ministers. It is my opinion that the interaction with the APS and ministerial advisers and lobby groups could be better regulated through:

• External enforcement of guidelines for the interaction between APS staff and ministerial advisers; and

• Legislative regulation of the interaction between APS staff and lobby groups.”

**- Yee-Fui Ng submission**

“Ministers make policy decisions, not officials. At times, slower moving regulation and program delivery responsibilities can abate faster moving policy development. The APS provides advice including outlining key strategic risks to enable Ministers to make an informed decision. To better improve policy design, the APS can work towards better gauging ministers’ appetites for risk across their portfolio. Better understanding of risk appetites can lead to increased policy experimentation, increased speed of advice and consistent regulation.”

**- Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities submission**