What we’ve Heard so far...

United in a collective endeavour

### Below is a selection of the reflections we’ve received through our workshop consultations and submissions that have informed our thinking on why it is important for the Australian Public Service to be united in a collective endeavour.

# On purpose…

“The purpose of the Australian Public Service is to facilitate the evolution of Australia”

* **APS employee workshop participant**

“Understanding purpose – the difference that the public service is expected to make – is similarly a task that has to reach beyond mission statements of public service values.

Understanding purpose is a daily task of conversation and collective discernment about the relationship between what the public service does, why, how it makes a difference and how those it serves experience that work.

A shared sense of purpose has always been a defining characteristic of effective organisations and institutions. At this particular moment especially, the need to maintain a persistent conversation across and within the public service about purpose, and therefore about value and impact, is especially important.”

* **Submission, Martin Stewart-Weeks (Public Purpose Pty Ltd)**

“…the multi-dimensional, complex nature of issues and the need to balance how best we grow the economy, ensure higher standards of living for Australians and sustainability of where we live and how we bring a more humane and civil approach to debate and policy advice, all demand that we need to reform. This starts with clarity of mission – who we serve and therefore the role that we need to, or can best play.”

* **Submission, Anonymous**

“The Australian Public Service has a vital role in supporting robust and effective Government administration and rightfully holds a position of great value in Australian society. A strong and effective public service is crucial for the good governance upon which our society relies.”

* **Submission, Australian Council of Trade Unions**

“At a whole of Australian Public Service level there is a noticeable absence of such a unifying purpose, except in a limited way within the Public Service Act (s10). The purpose has therefore been devolved to the agencies to determine individually (as set out in the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013*).

While it may not be immediately evident, it is my view that the lack of unifying purpose plays a significant role in the weaknesses the Australian Public Service has in collaboration and coordination, governance, strategic decision-making and organizational performance management.”

* **Submission, Anonymous**

“The purpose of the Australian Public Service is to work together to achieve a common goal”

* **APS employee workshop participant**

“Its core purpose has been to build policies, frameworks, institutions and systems in every sphere of life with the aim of ensuring that Australians are able to achieve their full potential as individuals and participate fully in both local and international communities.”

* **Submission, Brendan Sargeant**

“The Australian Public Service has a vital role in Government and our society. A decent society relies on good government. Good government relies on a great Australian Public Service. A great public service is a cornerstone of a fair society, one that is equitable, prosperous, stable and free.”

* **Submission, Community and Public Sector Union**

# On leadership driving unity…

“We need a united and collaborative leadership cohort so leaders are all working together and collaborating with each other.”

* **APS employee workshop participant**

“An Australian Public Service that acts together in concert across a broad range of activities will be difficult to achieve, but there are enormous potential benefits to encouraging joined up outcomes, particularly as policy problems become more interconnected and dependent on the efforts of multiple actors. A ‘one APS’ culture reflects the need to ensure the Australian Public Service remains driven by the needs and concerns of the community.”

* **Submission, Melbourne School of Government**

“We need “a collaborative fabric” that “puts the right people in the room”

* **Public workshop participant**

“The Review should explore the respective roles of the Australian Public Service Commissioner and the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). The appropriate distinction is hard to define, and some overlap is probably inevitable. My own view is that the Commissioner should be regarded as the ‘professional head’ of the Australian Public Service, responsible for overall stewardship of the Australian Public Service as an institution, and the PM&C Secretary as the ‘operational head’ (or ‘head of government administration’), marshalling the Australian Public Service to meet the demands of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.”

* **Submission, Andrew Podger**

“Collaboration makes us better off than competition”

* **Public workshop participant**

“The Australian Public Service should be striving to provide policy advice and services that are contemporary, fit-for-purpose, streamlined and integrated. The Australian Public Service needs to further embed a “culture of service, accountability and collaboration” that supports a whole of government approach to the delivery of services and the sharing of assets and resources; information, research, experience and expertise.”

* **Submission, Australian Taxation Office**

“…as one departmental secretary recently observed: ‘*whole-of-government* merely means that we are all in the room together, *integrated* suggests that we are working together’.”

* **Submission, Dr Alan Ryan**

# On stewardship…

“Public service should be based on stewardship – accountability to drive long-term outcomes ‘leaving something better off than we found it’’

* **Public workshop participant**

“As a former Public Service Commissioner said more than a century ago, one of the key responsibilities of public service leaders is stewardship; and in their stewardship role, Australian Public Service leaders and managers are fundamentally responsible for the vitality of the [service] as a critical asset – and they are accountable for this asset to the Australian Government and the Australian people. Giving time and attention to top quality leadership and management of the officers of the Australian Public Service needs to be understood as an investment for our future.”

* **Submission, Peter Yuile**

“The Australian Public Service needs to have a long-term vision and plan for policy which outlasts the government of the day.”

* **Public workshop participant**

“Stewardship and governance of policy is critical in order to drive longer-term outcomes for society”

* **APS employee workshop participant**

“The Public Service by virtue of size and history and repositories of corporate knowledge does exercise custodianship of the longer term.”

* **Submission, Brendan Sargeant**

“… the stewardship role of the public service extends beyond taking a policy view longer than the electoral or media cycle to maintaining consistently high ethical standards, possibly in the face of immediate political pressures, regardless of the soundness of the democratic process that configured the legislature and its personalities.”

* **Submission, Richard Manderson**