What we’ve Heard so far...

World-class policy, regulation and delivery performance

### Below is a selection of the reflections we’ve received through our workshop consultations and submissions that have informed our thinking.

“[World-class] is about thinking outside the box and sharing successes more broadly.”

* **Workshop participant**

“Having a world-class public service sparking world-class community and private sector innovation is a crucial capability for the future of our country”

* **Submission, Reason Group**

“Current and future leaders in the public sector must be equipped and willing to recognise new ideas, take positive well-assessed risks, embrace measured disruption and implement effective innovative policies, for its functions to be delivered….Understanding the potential of data and digital transformation is important for the APS. Making better use of data can lead to more informed policy, better service delivery, better management of public resources, and better outcomes for Australians.”

* **Submission, ANZSOG**

“A well-trained, well-staffed public service is not only important for service delivery, it has substantial positive economic and social benefits for the wider economy such as higher levels of labour market participation, a greater feeling of community and higher social outcomes for disadvantaged Australians.”

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

“There is also a broader question as to whether there is a sufficient critical mass of APS staff with expertise in research, evaluation and performance measurement. This is not a recent question – senior public servants have previously expressed a view that key skill sets in research and analysis and evaluation within the APS are in short supply. This may reflect both a capability and capacity issue, possibly arising from the trend for several decades – across all levels of government – for staff to be ‘generalists’ who are capable of and can be deployed to undertake the wide range of tasks often required of public servants – while specialist expertise is often purchased or procured. While this has provided the APS with flexibility, it may also have led to some costs.”

* **Submission, Australasian Evaluation Society**

“[World-class] is not about choosing the cheap option – but the best option”

* **Workshop participant**

“The capability of the APS depends upon its access to rigorous evidence that can strengthen the quality, innovation and productivity of its policy advice. While experience, knowledge and practitioner wisdom coming from within the APS itself are essential, much of the expertise on which it must draw comes from other sources—most importantly, we contend, either directly from major research institutions, or indirectly from them (as mediated by consultants, think tanks and ministerial staff).”

* **Submission, Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia**

“World-class policy needs an evidence base, and to be focused on outcomes   
and the needs of citizens. It also needs to utilise good evaluation and review practices.   
But all of that’s only any good if you resource the evidence base.”

* **Workshop participant**

“There is no consensus on what good public-sector performance actually means. It is possible to argue the case that over the long-term (decades) the Public Service has been one of the nation’s treasures, in that it has brought stability to government and contributed to nation-building. However, this is not the criteria that is used to either understand or judge performance in the contemporary environment.”

* **Submission, Brendan Sargeant**

“Dealing with major, unanticipated incidents is a key deliverable for the department, and the ability to foresee and respond to incidents contributes to important public outcomes. In the current geopolitical environment this is likely to become more important. Improved strategic foresight capabilities would enable the APS to better anticipate major changes in, for example, consumer preferences, trading conditions or weather/ climate risks and to respond more effectively.

Building a greater strategic intelligence capability and embedding it into systems and culture would help to mitigate or avoid the impact of such incidents when they arise and strengthen the long-term custodian role of the APS. CSIRO’s ‘Global Megatrends’ report provides guidance as to what such foresight exercises could look like. A key challenge would be to do this in an operating environment where short-term imperatives can easily prevail.”

* **Submission, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources**

“Fears were expressed by a large number of focus group participants and online survey respondents about the capacity for government staff to develop strong, evidence based policy documents. In particular, with the push for self-sufficiency across the public service, there were major concerns about how policy makers were actually obtaining the information they were working with. Increasingly tight time pressures meant that departmental staff are no longer relying on trusted, authoritative sources, but just “doing a quick Google search and copying text from Wikipedia”.

* **Submission, AGLIN**

“A key component in maintaining and further developing the quality of policy advice is through the development of a range of internal and external sources of advice. A high-performance APS will maintain and develop its own sources of advice through, for example, investment in internal expertise and the development of research hubs/centres. The APS also needs to maintain and develop the capacity to procure high quality advice, where needed, from external sources. To continue to provide, commission, and develop high quality advice, continued investment is needed in learning and development across the APS.”

* **Submission, ANZSOG**

“Australia regularly ranks highly in OECD reviews of regulatory discipline… however the gap between the system in theory and in practice is significant.”

* **Submission, Paul McCullough and Tom Reid, The Treasury**

“Contracting out of APS work needs rigorous assessment. A principal issue for the review to consider is how the public service can ethically, efficiently and effectively work with private sector partners in the provision of public services. The public service has devolved from unified ownership and delivery of end to end services into a role, which whilst still ‘owning the outcome’, has many partners in the delivery of the service. Close relationships between individuals is often a key driver in the maintenance of these business opportunities. From policy development to service implementation and governance there are now partnership arrangements with multiple suppliers of goods and services. There needs to be more rigorous assessment of their purpose and value.

* **Submission, Tax Officers' Branch ASU Tax Officers' Branch**