

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd
John Paterson Oration
Australia New Zealand School of Government Annual Conference
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I acknowledge the First Australians on whose land we meet, and whose cultures we celebrate as among the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

It is an honour to be delivering the third John Paterson Oration - following on from the previous addresses by former Prime Ministers John Howard and Helen Clark.

While the Australia New Zealand School of Government is still in its early years, it is already building a tradition of helping to shape the next generation of public service leaders on both sides of the Tasman.

One of the important traditions it is creating is this oration - an excellent occasion to advance public debate about future directions for public administration and the public service.

The oration is named after John Paterson, a great leader and a greater reformer, a man who in particular led the way in reform of community services, health and infrastructure in both NSW and Victoria.

John was no Sir Humphrey Appleby.

He earned a reputation as a restless intellect, a person of great compassion and yet a tough-minded reformer.

He once said that more could be learned about organisational change from the literature on revolutionary war than from the teaching of business schools.

Paterson said that in the battle to change institutions - and I quote:

"...peace only becomes possible when you have captured all the territory, re-educated all the prisoners who are willing to become loyal citizens, and put to the sword those who remain unreconstructed."

John displayed what could be described as a firm approach to public sector management.

He clearly encountered some obstacles in reforming the regional water board of the Hunter Valley in New South Wales - but he also showed a capacity to see the challenges he faced in a much wider context.

The task of public service reform confronting leaders like John Paterson in the 1980s was to modernise large, powerful and sclerotic public sector organisations.

In the simplest terms, the task was to make the public service genuinely serve the interests of the wider economy and society, after decades in which many government agencies had become increasingly managed for the purposes of serving themselves.

Today's challenges are not the same as those John Paterson faced.

But they are equally important - broad in scope; deep in complexity, and confronting us a time when new global, national and local forces of change are blowing across the shores of Australian public administration.

These are challenges that will require a new generation of public service leadership, a new standard of public service excellence and therefore a new era of public service reform.

The Government I lead came to office pledging to reinvigorate the Westminster tradition of a merit-based, independent public service committed to the highest-quality policy making.

We chose the word reinvigorate carefully.

We did not say "reinvent", because the APS is a strong, professional public service that has served successive governments very well.

The professionalism of the public service has been evident since the first day after the 2007 election, when I received the first handover briefings from Dr Peter Shergold and other senior departmental secretaries.

The quality of that briefing, and the work of public servants to ensure a seamless transition to government in the following weeks and months, was testimony not only to the competence of the public service but to the value it placed on continuity.

And I note that my predecessor, Mr Howard, made the same point when delivering the Garran Oration in 1997, and I quote:

"That power can be transferred in this calm, understated way is a supreme asset."

This is truly one of the most remarkable features of the Westminster tradition, and it is one we should not merely take it for granted.

Its success is in part the result of the sweeping reforms to the public service a century and a half ago, in another era and in another place - through the Northcote-Trevelyan report in Britain in 1854.

That report not only created the modern British civil service but laid the foundations of the ethos of the APS almost half a century later.

At the time, Britain was undergoing major economic changes in the wake of industrialisation.

The Empire was expanding, people were on the move and Europe was alive with revolutionary foment.

And the British civil service was riven with patronage, incompetence and corruption.

The recommendations of the Northcote-Trevelyan report - a response to crisis in its time - helped create a civil service that was independent, impartial, recruited by competitive examination and promoted on merit.

In time, its impact stretched to the Australian colonies, where both Victoria and Queensland sought to limit political patronage by introducing competitive entry exams into their public services.

And it profoundly shaped the culture of the APS after its formation in 1901.

But Australia never simply copied the British model.

The APS never recreated the class structure in the way the British civil service did, with Sir Humphrey's Oxbridge-educated administrator class unfailingly at the top.

Instead, some of Australia's leading public servants have been the children of builders, boot makers, railway station masters and refugees, or they left school at 15 to be telegraph messengers and bank clerks.

What counted was not their modest beginnings but their fitness for the job.

Take Sir Roland Wilson, our longest serving Treasury Secretary and the son of a west coast Tasmanian builder.

Or another former Treasury chief, Sir Richard Randall, who worked for eight years as a wool classer.

Or another, Ted Evans, who worked for 10 years of his early life as a PMG linesman.

And given that his replacement, current Treasury Secretary Ken Henry, is the son of a New South Wales timber worker, it is clear that the APS principle of promoting merit over privilege is alive and well.

And there is a second lesson from history that particularly resonates today.

As I said before, the periods of most active public service reform have been periods of rapid change and even upheaval in the wider society, times when change has forced the public service to develop new structures and skills, and find talented new people.

In the 1940s, the all-out war effort, followed by the huge post-war nation-building program, created a generational change in the APS. For the first time there was an influx of brilliant outsiders to manage great wartime enterprises, to staff the departments of Treasury and Postwar Reconstruction and to establish the new foreign service.

At the time, the public service was a closed shop - the idea of outsiders joining was intensely controversial. So much so that when the economist, Roland Wilson - with doctorates from Oxford and Chicago - was recruited to the Bureau of Census and Statistics as the first government economics adviser in 1932, the staff of the Bureau went on strike!

The new public servants laid the foundations for decades of post-war prosperity and better living standards for Australians. They were among the first in the world to see and

seize the opportunities of Keynesian economics and an active economic and social role for the post-war democratic state.

They managed the government's commitment to full employment and the development of a modern social security system, to a large immigration program, to enormous infrastructure projects such as the Snowy Mountains scheme, and to the beginnings of our national university system.

In other words, they were nation-builders - with their own professional public service tradition - with a sense that the words "prosper the Commonwealth" were etched deep in their intellect, their imagination and their sense of duty to the nation.

Nugget Coombs, a railway station master's son, is perhaps the best known of them - a man who earned his place in any catalogue of the greatest Australians in our nation's history.

In his appointment to head the Department of Postwar Reconstruction, he was given an explicit brief to promote a much more activist role for the state.

And it was Nugget Coombs who, a generation later, chaired the famous Royal Commission into Australian Government Administration in 1974.

Nugget's broad vision for the role of the public service was reflected in his remark after releasing his report, that in the modern world the bureaucracy:

"...is not 'an island entire unto itself' but a living part of Australian society, reflecting the strengths and weaknesses of the society."

The Coombs Royal Commission came at another turning point for Australian society and Australian history.

The long post-war boom - in large part made possible by the reforms of the 1940s - created huge national wealth but also in time a culture of self-satisfaction, complacency and rigidity in the public service, in the broader economy and to some extent in society at large.

Public service structures created 30 years earlier struggled to cope with a time of profound economic and social change.

The Coombs Commission identified themes that have shaped the development of the APS ever since.

It argued that the public service had to become more responsive to the democratically elected government of the day, more efficient in its operations, and more diverse in the composition of its workforce - reflecting the growing diversity of the wider society.

Critically, it concluded that government administration was excessively centralised and excessively hierarchical.

It recommended greater devolution of management authority and of service delivery - including the idea of one-stop shops for citizens to access a range of services in the one place.

It found that - and I quote:

"better decisions will be made and better service given to people if authority and responsibility are devolved to officials close to where the action occurs."

In that idea lies the foundation of our modern, decentralised public service.

The great themes of the Coombs Report were reflected in a decade and a half of reform from the early 1980s onwards. The public servants of that era - John Paterson among them - undertook a fundamental rethink of what government should do and how it should do it.

In difficult economic times, they helped to internationalise the Australian economy and to move beyond the policy complacency of previous decades. They were partners in a long-term reform agenda, whose central organisational principle was the enhancement of Australia's global competitiveness.

Within the ranks of the public service, they forced their colleagues to focus on efficiency, transparency and accountability to government, because taxpayer dollars were scarce and economic reform also meant the reform of government itself.

They were modernisers. They had to be. There was no turning back.

In those years, all the major legislation governing the public service, some of it dating back to the early years of Federation, was completely rewritten.

The budgetary, structural and other public service reforms of the 1980s and 1990s were as large in their time as those of the post-war reconstruction generation. They helped to produce Australia's long period of economic growth and they positioned us well for the challenge of the global economic crisis.

These were also the years when Coombs' vision of a more diverse public service, more representative of the Australian population, began to be realised. For example, in 1999, women outnumbered men for the first time and today account for nearly 58 per cent of the APS. More than one in three members of the Senior Executive Service is female, and while we have further to go, the proportion is rising.

That is just one example of how the APS has continued to change and evolve to meet the needs of its time.

Today, the APS again confronts a changing world, and the need to prepare for these future challenges. I do not believe the changes required involve a revolution. Instead, the APS requires continuing reform.

As the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Terry Moran, said in a recent speech, "the APS is not broken - it is not a renovator's opportunity".

Cast your eyes across the governments of the world, and consider the quality of public administration that has been achieved in Australia across the 108 year history of the Australian Public Service. It is not completely without its faults or failings, but any fair-minded person would agree that Australia has been remarkably well served by the APS, and it has been remarkably stable, impartial and free from corruption.

It is no surprise that a British report last year reported that 87 per cent of Australian citizens expressed satisfaction with Federal government services. Or that the same report listed our public service third in a long list of similar countries - ahead of Canada, New Zealand, the USA and the UK - for its independence from political interference and in its capacity to give impartial advice.

Likewise, an assessment of the quality of e-government services and products of 192 UN member states in 2008 ranked Australia eighth in the world.

These are impressive results for a comparatively lean public service of just 160,000 employees - or just 1.5 per cent of the Australian workforce. But in the face of the challenges facing us in the decade ahead, it is not enough for us to say that the APS is doing a good job and therefore the status quo is fine.

In my address to the Senior Executive Service in April 2008, I spoke of the need to develop a culture of policy innovation and enhance the strategic policy capability of the APS. This means becoming more creative, and not just reactive.

It means the APS being bolder in its thinking, and doing more to consider the big picture - transformational policy change, not just piecemeal reform.

It means strengthening the APS's ability to deliver high-quality services and linking policy creation more closely to program implementation so that lessons learnt on the front line of service delivery feed back into the agencies that formulate policy.

Public servants, from portfolio Secretaries in Canberra to front-line workers at Centrelink, work tirelessly to put the citizen at the heart of everything they do. And critically, that the APS does more to attract, train and retain the very best people.

The APS must have its proper share of the nation's most talented people, because as I said last year to the SES, the challenges facing government are as tough, intellectually demanding and important for our nation's future, as the challenges facing any of our businesses or non-profit organisations. It is the view of the Government and the heads of the APS that only by hiring and promoting the best people can we solve the great challenges of our time.

From health reform to the education revolution; from our climate change strategy to dealing with national security threats; from tackling Indigenous disadvantage to building a globally competitive 21st century economy.

We are facing challenges so complex in their causes, so shifting in their natures, so contentious in the arguments they provoke and so radical in the solutions they demand that they cannot be addressed with business-as-usual thinking.

Some social scientists have coined the term "wicked problems" to describe these challenges. However, as a former member of the APS, I know that public servants don't believe in wickedness. Instead, I suspect they are more comfortable with what we might call "systemic challenges".

Challenges that might even call for courageous policies.

Whatever the label, these challenges often have these dimensions:

* First, they emerge from external factors that are often global in scope.

- * Second, they require not just policy change from government and the public service but often behavioural change from the economy, society and individuals.
- * Third, these policies must be implemented comprehensively in complex and changing circumstances - so that policy implementation is seen as important as policy innovation.
- * Fourth, these challenges must be tackled under the full media spotlight.
- * Fifth, given the present economic crisis and the need for sustained fiscal discipline, they must be tackled in a context of constrained resources.

And to restate the theme of this conference, they require governments and public services to govern, manage and reform in times of crisis - what Allan Fels has called "high velocity environments."

Such problems defy conventional approaches. They require new, collaborative approaches to policy making across departments, across Commonwealth, State, Territory and local governments. They often require partnerships with the private and community sectors. Increasingly, they also require us to work with governments abroad. Above all, they require innovative, urgent and practical policy thinking - great ideas, but also ideas grounded in the real world.

These are the profound challenges that face the Australian Public Service, but I believe the APS has the capacity to meet them. Based on what I have seen as Prime Minister and on what I know of Australian history, I have every confidence in the ability of the APS to address them.

Consider the challenges we have confronted since the global financial crisis escalated so dramatically one year ago this month.

Australia has weathered the global recession better than most other countries. Australia - unlike every other major advanced economy - to date, has not fallen into a technical recession. In fact, Australia is the only advanced economy to have reported positive growth over the past year.

Part of Australia's resilience is due to the success of our policy response. We acted early and decisively across a range of policy levers to strengthen the banking system and support economic activity. Australia was one of the first countries in the world to announce a bank guarantee. Australia rapidly implemented a comprehensive stimulus package that will save over 200,000 jobs over the next two years.

Overall the Government's response to the global economic crisis has so far been positive:

- * In terms of early problem diagnosis and management.
- * In terms of rapid and creative policy response.
- * And in the context of the enormous complexity of policy implementation, in a very short time frame.

On all three fronts, many challenges still lie ahead but so far the APS has performed well.

The Australian and many overseas governments worked together through the G20. Federal and State governments worked together; public sector agencies worked together; staff put in long hours; multiple challenges were managed simultaneously.

The threat of global financial institutions collapsing; credit markets failing; the private economy grinding to a halt - this has been a test of crisis management, and so far the APS has performed extraordinarily well.

When we needed to make decisions swiftly, the APS was able to deliver first-class advice within very short time frames, and when we needed to create a new structure of Commonwealth and State coordinators for the implementation of the Nation Building for Recovery programs, the APS delivered, although the rollout will continue to be challenging given its scope and urgency.

Their task was to work swiftly, work across boundaries, work together and make sure the job got done - and they are getting the job done. More than 30,000 infrastructure projects worth more than \$20 billion have been approved. Construction work has begun at more than 5,000 schools, and we expect every Australian primary school to have new infrastructure by early 2011. Construction has begun on nearly 1,000 new community and defence homes, and we expect at least 15,000 homes to be built by the end of next year.

Through the work on the Nation Building plan, I have seen a public service filled with capable and committed individuals, able to perform under intense pressures.

The government I lead came to office committed to renewing the movement for reform while at the same time maintaining the continuity that is among the great strengths of the APS. We removed no department heads. There was no night of the long knives.

But we believed that over the preceding decade the critical lines between politics on the one hand, and the public service on the other, had become blurred, so we set out to restore them.

We made merit-based selection mandatory for most agency heads and statutory office holders. In conjunction with senior public servants, we held induction sessions for incoming ministerial staff on the roles and responsibilities of the public service.

We introduced a code of conduct for Ministerial staff that sets out standards of professionalism, integrity and behaviour, including in their relationships with public servants. We introduced tight guidelines for government advertising campaigns, so that no advertising campaign worth more than \$250,000 can proceed without a report from the Auditor-General.

We have introduced legislation abolishing conclusive certificates under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 and the Archives Act 1983. We introduced a Register of Lobbyists to regulate contact between third party lobbyists and government representatives including ministers, staff, public servants and defence personnel.

Our Government 2.0 Taskforce is also looking at ways to use information technology to build a pro-disclosure culture within the Public Service.

These were the first steps in our plan to reinvigorate the Westminster tradition in an Australian setting, but the larger challenges still lies ahead, and that is to move forward with a vision to make the APS the best public service anywhere in the world.

I believe that is an entirely reasonable and achievable aspiration for the APS - if we take the right actions now.

To achieve that goal, I believe the APS must perform five tasks:

- * Provide high-quality, forward-looking and creative policy advice;
- * Deliver high-quality programs and services that put the citizen first;
- * Maintain a culture of honesty, impartiality and fairness, with a focus on retaining public trust;
- * Provide flexible, agile responses to changing realities and government priorities; and
- * Be effective and efficient in all its operations.

We have a strong APS, but much needs to be done to achieve these objectives.

Firstly, while the APS ranks highly in global terms for providing independent and impartial advice, we must ensure that this advice is also creative, innovative and outward looking. Public servants should not shy away from big ideas or be afraid to be bold. As I have said before, we cannot afford a culture where the public service only tells the government what it wants to hear.

Over time, the APS has begun to create policy through taskforces and teams that are formed not from single divisions or departments but include policymakers from across government and from the private sector. In my Department, the new Strategy and Delivery Division is breaking new ground in creating teams of diverse policy officers to produce high-quality, collaborative, evidence-based work.

Nevertheless, the 2007-08 State of the Service Report showed that the APS is still far from having a culture of innovation. More than half of APS employees surveyed were ambivalent about whether new ideas were encouraged in their workplace. The vast majority said they were keen to try out new ideas but many felt they had limited support to take them forward.

A second area in which the APS must renew its efforts is in the delivery of citizen-centred services. The relative success of Centrelink and Medicare in delivering frontline services focussed on the customer is testimony to how far the APS has come in this field, compared to 30 years ago, but we need to go further.

We need to create more customer-friendly services and make more services available through single locations, and not only does the APS need to know more about what customers of public services want but it has to do more to feed that knowledge back to policymakers.

In 2007-08, only 54 per cent of APS employees thought their agency had good feedback mechanisms in place between the service delivery and policy development areas.

Thirdly, there is a clear need for a stronger collective identity within the APS. In 2007-08 only 40 per cent of Senior Executive Service employees -- the leadership group - saw themselves as part of an APS leadership group rather than as leaders of their agency. What is more, if public servants are to see themselves as part of one APS, and if the APS is to be more flexible and agile, mobility rates across agencies must improve.

Only three per cent of APS employees moved between agencies in 2007-08, according to the State of the Service report. Movement between the APS and external employers is higher, but is still too low. There are still too many impediments and disincentives for employees moving between agencies, or between jurisdictions.

This kind of mobility must be encouraged to enrich the ability of individual public servants to provide cross-cutting advice, including on matters that transcend Commonwealth, State and Territory boundaries.

Finally, and critically, the APS must renew itself through investment in its greatest asset - its people. This is particularly urgent when the proportion of the APS workforce aged over 55 has doubled over the last 12 years, when more than 70 per cent of SES employees will be eligible for retirement over the next 10 years.

And when, as the Audit Office has pointed out, the APS faces a big challenge to attract and retain talented staff.

To overcome that challenge, the APS needs to invest more in developing the right people. Last year three-quarters of agencies that were able to estimate their expenditure on learning and development said they invested less than two per cent of their budgets in their people.

Of those, 39 per cent of agencies reported that they spent less than one per cent of their budget on learning and development, and in 2007-08, fewer than one in three APS employees rated the effectiveness of their learning and development as high or very high in terms of helping them to improve performance.

These figures are just not good enough for a professional public service.

I believe the next stage of renewal of the APS requires more than just piecemeal change. We need a more sweeping reform driven by a long-range blueprint for a world class, 21st century public service. That is why I am pleased to announce today that the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Terry Moran, will be establishing and leading an Advisory Group to develop a blueprint for reform of the public service.

The work of the Advisory Group will proceed in two parts.

First, the Group will oversee the completion of an international benchmarking exercise to compare Australian performance with leading bureaucracies around the world. That is because the APS needs to know and be honest about its current performance, so that it can understand how it can improve.

Second, the Advisory Group will use the benchmarking study, along with other inputs, to develop the blueprint for reform. As part of the development of the blueprint, the Advisory Group will seek the input of the APS, and the broader community, about the APS's future and possible reforms.

Before the end of this month Mr Moran will convene the Advisory Group and release a discussion paper seeking public and APS input. When that happens I encourage you all to let the Advisory Group know what you think about the future of the APS.

By early next year the Group will advise the Cabinet Secretary and me on the further steps we need to take to rejuvenate the APS. The Group will consider reform of the internal structures of the APS to ensure it provides the best policy advice to government.

And importantly, it will assess the core challenge of how to strengthen service delivery and measurement, how to foster a greater sense of cohesion and esprit de corps across the APS, how to attract the best people from outside the public service, and how to make the most of the great talent inside the service.

A specific priority will be a renewed and major investment in education and development of staff, in order to build strategic leadership across the APS.

To enhance the capabilities of the APS and its future leaders, we will need a renewed focus on learning and development in the public service, and on building close relationships with experts across the community. This may mean forming new relationships with universities, industry or other non-government groups.

It may mean government working closely with existing institutions, or creating new institutions, to build public service capabilities.

As I said in my address to Burgmann College at the Australian National University last week, for too long in Australia, thick walls have existed between places of research and learning, and places of policy making and implementation. Those thick walls do not enhance either the quality of public administration or the quality of academia.

They are in stark contrast with the United States, where the flow of experts between government and academia sharpens expertise in both. The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University exemplifies this approach.

Formed in the 1930s on the back of the Great Depression, the Kennedy School is now a collection of eminent social science research institutions, comprised of 15 institutes and research centres and over 30 executive education and degree programs. Together, these institutions draw on the resources of the entire University to make the School a centre for training enlightened public leaders that attracts some of the best students from across the world. At its core, this approach is the aspiration of both the Crawford School here at the ANU, and ANZSOG across Australia and New Zealand.

That said, I believe it is time for us to think about how we can strengthen our approach here. We should aspire to building a uniquely local version of the Kennedy School's impact.

I am in the market for ways we can improve how public institutions relate here, so we make the most of the great talent we have in Australia, wherever that talent exists.

Like the approach of the Kennedy School, our arrangements must equip the future public service to excel at policy analysis and advice, as well as public sector leadership. They must also increase the depth of public policy knowledge on which we can draw to tackle the most challenging issues we face.

Any new relationships or institutions in Australia would need to recognise and build on the strengths of what already exists. The Crawford School of Economics and Government at ANU has already built an enviable reputation as a centre of public policy research excellence.

I'm proud that the Secretary of my Department, Terry Moran, is on the Advisory Council - this demonstrates the Australian Government's commitment to this endeavour. It is clear that we have one of the foundation stones for an Australian version of the Kennedy approach in the Crawford School, and its network of research institutes such as the Australia-Japan Research Centre.

Importantly, Crawford has built extensive international networks and linkages that bring students from other parts of the world to Australia, and encourage greater Asia literacy and global understanding in the Australian public policy community - and we need to strengthen this role.

Another foundation stone for an Australian version of the Kennedy approach is ANZSOG. Through ANZSOG, Australia has built a unique public policy and public sector management institution with relevant and useful international linkages.

It recognises our close relationship with New Zealand, and it is a model uniquely adapted to the Australian federal system, bringing together a consortium of Governments and universities from around the country and across the Tasman. As a result, Australia finally has high quality public sector executive leadership training and development of a standard superior to most places in the world.

ANZSOG is showing that it is capable of delivering first rate training for future leaders on a sufficient scale to underpin an improvement of overall public sector capability.

The Australian National University is a critical part of the ANZSOG undertaking, and also a critical part of the life of our national capital. The ANU holds a special place as a strategic endowment for our nation.

The Australian Government's vision for the ANU is to build on this national endowment.

The ANU is a university of national and international significance in terms of its contribution to both policy development and analysis, and in terms of training future leaders. For this reason, I believe it is time to reinvigorate the Commonwealth's relationship with the ANU and create a new partnership between the public service, ANZSOG and the ANU.

That relationship is, in my view, crucial to fostering the development of the next generation of public service leaders, and ensuring government draws on the wealth of expertise that exists across the ANU and ANZSOG networks.

Part of this could potentially entail the ANU hosting a much enhanced and upgraded ANZSOG presence through a new National Centre of Public Policy and Public Sector Management. This Centre would focus on professional development.

Public service executives could either access programs at the ANU, or at one of the other university members of ANZSOG closest to where they work. As part of this, the ANZSOG Executive Master of Public Administration would become a key preparation for a role at the level of Senior Executive Service Band One. Other ANZSOG programs could be tailored for those in more senior roles.

For the ANU itself, this would mean a renewed emphasis on tapping the broader academic base for contributions to public policy through a new internal think tank or by other means.

The Government's program of public service reform above all else is about our people, fostering a public service culture where there is a passion for public policy, people who recognise that there are few more important and rewarding professions that an Australian can follow than to forge public policy that will change and better the lives of all Australians.

Like all contemporary institutions, the Australian Public Service is challenged by the sometimes bewildering pace of complex change, but the challenge of change has been a continuing feature of life for successive generations stretching back to the Industrial Revolution.

A generation ago in 1976, the Coombs Commission noted - and I quote - that:

"changing social attitudes in our time and the increasing tempo of technological change are widening the range and intensifying the complexity of the functions performed by governments and presenting them with a different pattern of characteristic problems."

Many generations before, in 1854, the Northcote-Trevelyan report had warned of:

"...the great and increasing accumulation of public business and the consequent pressure upon the Government..."

It added that without a professional public service, the business of the government of the day could not be carried on.

Today's public service values many of the features of the public service ethos established as a result of reforms more than 150 years ago, but it also embraces change. Indeed, what marks the history of the public service is the productive tension between continuity and change.

It is precisely those organisations with a strong sense of their stability and continuity - of the strength of their culture and their values - that are best placed to change.

That, more than anything else, lies at the heart of my confidence that the Australian Public Service can aspire to be - and can be - the best public service in the world.