

TRANSCRIPT OF EVENT

2021 ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE: WHAT DOES AUSTRALIA NEED FROM THE APS IN 2022?

Aunty Jude Barlow (Welcome to Country)

Director People Services

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Philip Gaetjens (Guest)

Secretary

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Leitita Hope (Guest)

Deputy Chief Executive Officer

National Indigenous Australians Agency

Peter Woolcott AO (Opening remarks)

Australian Public Service Commissioner

Australian Public Service Commission

Dr Steven Kennedy PSM (Host)

Secretary, The Treasury

President, IPAA ACT

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JUDE BARLOW: Yuma, everyone, which is hello and Ngunnawal, and as the Ngunnawal people's gift to you all. So please use it when you are on Ngunnawal country just say good day, hello and hi. (SPEAKS NGUNNAWAL LANGUAGE) Jude Barlow, and I am an honorable woman. My family are Wallabelowa people. A family group within the Ngunnawal nation. And it is a pleasure to be here with you tonight, representing my family and my ancestors.

Now I'm really lucky, I get to live and work on the land of my ancestors. And I get to work in possibly the most rewarding job of my life, and that of Australian public servant. And over the years, and as you can tell by the grey, I'm up there. I've seen many changes to the service in my time. And much of the time they've been great changes, but there is one change, which I think has happened by stealth.

And that is loss of opportunity for lower-level staff to learn to write. To learn to write for ministers, draft important submissions, or write briefings for the heads of their agency. Now, as an APS3, back in the 1990s, I was drafting ministerials, and I often wonder why we don't do that anymore. We don't offer opportunities to entry-level staff to grow these important skills that will carry them through their careers. And we need lower-level staff to not only progress and grow their careers, but they need to have the ability to support their managers, to ensure the BAU is done well and with confidence.

We need managers to invest time and energy to develop their staff, which will be better for all in the long run. And for me, this is particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, our APS employees. I've seen far too many fail because they do not have the basic skills that will stand them in good stead, so that they can blossom and shine in their careers. So they can manage working in two worlds, balancing their cultural obligations, as well as their work lives.

I would now like to welcome you in the language of my ancestors, the language once thought dead, but we know that it was only sleeping. And I, and the work that we do and the Ngunnawal language group, we are waking it up.

(SPEAKS NGUNNAWAL LANGUAGE)

And this means... Today, we are all gathering together on Ngunnawal country. And this country is my ancestors' spiritual homeland, and we are keeping the pathways of our ancestors alive, by walking together as one. Welcome to Ngunnawal country.

STEVEN KENNEDY: Thank you, Aunty Jude. Grateful for you to be here on the country. Thank you very much for that welcome. Good afternoon, everyone. And welcome to today's event. *The 2021 annual address to the APS. What does Australia need from the APS in 2022?* My name's Steven Kennedy. I'm the Secretary of The Treasury. I'm also the President of IPAA ACT and I'm glad to be your host, here this evening.

I would like to welcome today's speakers. Firstly, we've just heard from Aunty Jude Barlow, who gave us that welcome, wonderful, welcome to country. And as I said, we very much appreciate that welcome, and I thought it was a great a challenge about to the APS about being a training or a learning agency, an agency that, or an enterprise that doesn't seek just to bring in those who are skilled, but also seeks to bring in those

and skill them, which is something myself and other Secretaries were just talking about recently. A wonderful challenge.

We have three speakers today, Phil Gaetjens, who's the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, will provide the *Annual Address to the APS*. Then we'll hear from Letitia Hope, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the National Indigenous Australian's Agency will give us her perspectives for 2022. And Peter Woolcott, the Australian Public Service Commissioner will provide the closing remarks. And then please stay and join us for some refreshments and networking out in the reception area. It's great to be here in person, and it's a wonderful opportunity for us to come together.

Now, of course, since we are coming together, there's a few COVID safety things that we need to do. And so, we'll be doing it all safely. I hope you all checked in as you came in and will operate in accordance with COVID 19 guidelines. Those of you who didn't check in, please don't feel the need to go back out now and check in. You can do that later. I can see a few of you worrying now, but don't worry. I didn't monitor you.

Please ensure you respect physical distancing protocols and use hand sanitizer in the rooms as required. Just to let you know, the event's being live streamed and recorded and will be made available to view on the IPA ACT website.

It's now my pleasure to introduce Philip Gaetjens. Prior to Phil's appointment as Secretary to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on the 2nd of September 2019, Phil was the Secretary to The Treasury. Phil has more than 40 years' experience in the Commonwealth and state public sectors, including working in the South Australian Department of Treasury and Finance, and as the secretary of New South Wales Treasury. There are a few that can claim to have been heads of Department in the states, and then here, though, we have another one here, Michele, here at the Commonwealth level.

Phil has very deep expertise in the public sector. Something we see him bring to many of the conversations we have in Secretary's Board. In 2008, Phil was appointed as the inaugural Director of the Asia Pacific Economic Corporation Policy Support Unit in Singapore. As I said, Phil brings great experience to the public service. We've seen that through some difficult times. I'm very much looking forward to his address. Please join me in welcoming Phil to the stage.

PHILIP GAETJENS: I feel obliged to say Yuma. And I learnt the language through the Diplomatic Academy, but I will do it no justice after hearing you speaking. But I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay more respects to the Elders past and present and extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders present here today. I would just like to start, again, I think in Steven's acknowledging your challenge. I remember writing ministerials. Every now and then—and I'm sure we had a lot more time in those days than we do now—but every now and then, it was a challenge and it was a delight sometimes to actually formulate, how can I respond to this letter? And it also reminds me of the Prime Minister saying to us in Prime Minister and Cabinet, last week, when he came down to the department, we got 160,000 letters this year.

And I made the deliberate point at that meeting when I welcomed the Prime Minister to say that we actually manage correspondence, we do not process it. And one of the reasons I said that, is because quick action for one of those pieces of correspondence, saved a life. So it is an important job. And it means a lot for people who write in and it means a lot that they get a decent response when it comes back. But learning to write is a fantastic ability, and it is certainly something if I see writer on someone's CV, I value them even more highly, because it is a skill. And I think it should be learned by all of us in this country.

Again, I repeat Steven's comment. It's great to be here in person today. I feel like I need for my glasses, those extra little wings you put on with a room like this, that people put on trucks and big cars for caravans, but I'll see if I can reach out to the whole audience.

And today, I do want to spend a little bit of time reflecting on the year that's been, but more than that, want to look forward to our aspirations for 2022. We know it will include an election. And while positive vaccination numbers have shifted our focus on reopening consistent with the national plan, the Omicron variant is an emerging risk.

But first, let's look back at this year 2021. This event does provide an opportunity for the APS to celebrate what we have done this year to improve lives in Australia. It's been another challenging year. Marked by lockdowns, separation from loved ones, the numerous challenges that come with continuing to serve our country through the pandemic. I pay respect to your hard work and dedication and on behalf of the APS, recognise the privilege and responsibility we all have, to advise, implement and deliver to make a difference to people's lives.

These are the things that bind us together to drive through these extraordinary times. I want to highlight a few achievements in cross-cutting areas that demonstrate the value of one APS.

On COVID: The vaccine rollout is one of the largest logistics exercises ever seen in Australia's history. Close to 40 million doses of vaccines have been administered in Australia, 88 and a half percent of people, age 16 and over are fully vaccinated. And it's well over 90% in the ACT New South Wales in Victoria. This would not have been possible without everyone in the APS, both in Australia and working at our posts overseas, working together with the states and territories, and with all the many health and service providers, that at the pointy end, who put jabs in arms.

On climate change: The announcement of a target to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 was historic. An enormous effort was made within the Industry, Science, Energy and Resources portfolio and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade along with others in the APS and beyond, to enable Australia to take a position to COP26 and to shift from a decade long caustic climate debate, to tangible action and quantified goals.

In our global strategic position: The foundation of our global positioning is a focus on increasing domestic resilience, including through establishing the office of supply

chain, resilience. Building on this domestic foundation, we are expanding and leveraging our international relationships by cementing strategic partnerships like AUKUS, the Quad and the G20. We, again, participated by invitation to the G7 Plus. We also continue to promote international rules-based order, to ensure access to markets for Australian goods and services. And an outcome we can be extremely proud of in 2021, is Australia being the first country to lock in a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with ASEAN.

On our own capability: APS reform continues in a practical way through the Secretary's Board and the APS Reform Office. And in July this year, the APS Academy was launched to invest in the capability of the APS, so we can keep on delivering and be a modern and attractive workforce.

We have done all this, of course, while adjusting to shifting conditions and a working environment. We've had to cope with a tenfold increase in digital demand, so we've massively increased our APS digital infrastructure capacity. We've also improved our cyber infrastructure to meet a significant increase in cyber risks. These improvements have allowed us to focus on delivering government priorities, regardless of workplace, circumstance, location, and whether decisions are face to face or virtual. I'm proud of the strong progress we made during this remarkable time. Each team and each division throughout the APS, will have their own stories to champion, whether serving a key role as part of the response, or business as usual, both are critical to keep our country strong.

And just as we rolled up our sleeves for vaccines, we also rolled up our sleeves to keep the economy going. As well as macro measures like JobKeeper and JobSeeker, we increased flexibility in the economy through a microeconomic and deregulatory initiatives, like removing curfews for trucks so shelves could be restocked overnight. Like making it easier for nurses to come back into the workforce. Like enabling AGMs to be conducted online, to name just a few practical examples. Through National Cabinet, we also drove longer-term micro reform through starting a new national scheme to allow workers to use their existing occupational licenses, to cross borders for work. We also committed the Commonwealth and states to a wide ranging reform agenda to address the burden of overlapping regulations. Within the APS, we are improving the accountability of regulators through setting clearer expectations of performance, as well as providing greater support through the regulator leadership cohort.

These are practical and sensible reforms that will generate income growth whilst also protecting Australians. Another quiet reform that has progressed this year is the New Payments Platform and reforms to our payment system. The Treasurer announced this today, and it ensures our financial system remains world class, supports innovation and encourages competition to deliver better outcomes for Australians. Talking to Steven Kennedy earlier, it reminded me, it was because of the New Payments Platform, that in fact, the payments put out by Services Australia were received by some, in minutes. It's a very pro-competitive and enabling piece of architecture that does not sit at the forefront of people's minds, but it is the backbone of the exchange system in the economy.

Looking forward, the last days, again, with the last days of 2021 approaching, what's in store for the next 6, 12, 18 months? With the budget scheduled for 29 March and an election due by May next year, we already have a couple of large milestones in next year's plans. In the accompanying caretaker period, we must maintain service to the community. Consistent with the long standing conventions, which apply to the APS in the lead up to an election. That caretaker period is also a time for us to finalise preparations, to support whichever government is elected, so that we are in a position to understand and implement the promises made.

My preface this next forward looking section of my remarks by acknowledging that many of the priorities I refer to, will probably remain after the forthcoming election, but some may change. And that will be recognised and managed through the caretaker period, as just mentioned.

Currently, and the foreseeable future, we will be focusing on how we can live with COVID. Including through learning more about Omicron. With high vaccination rates, more knowledge about track, trace, isolate, and quarantine. More knowledge about public health measures, medical treatments. We have shown it is possible to manage cases without overloading our health systems. Hopefully, shutting domestic borders is largely behind us. And subject to Omicron, we can continue reopening our country and manage the opportunities and challenges that come with that. I am cautiously optimistic about our economic output, notwithstanding complex global economic and strategic trends. Our domestic resilience is underpinned by strong business and consumer confidence data.

The prospects for employment are good. Data shows that household savings and business balance sheets are strong, and they too, will also support a rapid rebound. Supporting the social recovery from COVID 19, has and will continue to focus on gender equality and eliminating violence against women. The New Cabinet Task Force committed to Women's Safety and Economic Security, is already working on the successor of the current National Plan to End Violence against Women and their Children, and that Plan will commence in July 2022. It will also be important to deliver already announced mental health and suicide prevention reforms in 2022. These reforms focus on comprehensive consumer focused and compassionate support to benefit Australians.

We are committed to the safety of children and young people, through the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse, that was launched in October this year. And in 2022, the National Office for Child Safety, along with a range of other Commonwealth agencies, will begin implementing measures from that National Strategy. Many of which are world firsts.

Early conversations show us that these measures are already changing how policy makers approach child safety issues on the global stage, by taking a public health focus on education, prevention, support for victims and survivors and data and research. We have a critical responsibility to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's peoples. I will draw specific attention to priority reform number three of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which commits us to transform government organisations to identify and eliminate racism and improve cultural safety.

This will require effort from all of us. And 2022 will see us starting the implementation of the \$17.7 billion package of support, provided in response to the final report of the Royal Commission into Age Care, Quality and Safety.

On the fiscal outlook, I would expect future budgets to require the APS to change focus from the supports underpinning the pandemic response, to wider prioritization that takes into account preparing for future shocks.

We will continue to shape and enhance Australia's strategic national interests. We will be working closely with the AUSUK partnership, to progress nuclear powered submarine arrangements, as well as AI, cyber and quantum initiatives under the orcas partnership. We're already preparing for a Clean Energy Summit in Australia in 2022, as announced at the QUAD leaders meeting in Washington. And we will finalise the FTA with the UK and continue negotiations with the EU. On critical technologies, we have set the vision and outlined that in our efforts, in the recently released brief blueprint. We'll work with industry in the states to progress projects that will facilitate economic and jobs growth, improve our health outcomes, enable our energy transition and strengthen our defense forces.

Finally, in keeping with this moment of looking back and looking forward, I wonder for reflect a little own career and look forward to my aspirations for the future of the service. I arrived in Canberra on ANZAC day in 1977. I was a grad fresh out of Flinders University, and Canberra was about a fifth of its population now. Over the 44 years, since then, I've served in several roles whilst in the APS, including line departments, working in Parliament House as a Senate Parliamentary Liaison Officer Chief, teaching staff to two Treasurers, as a Diplomat with APEC in Singapore. And while on leave without pay, I also worked in the South Australian and New South Wales governments. In each role, I've enjoyed ups and downs, but all provided for rich and positive experiences and memories. I've been fortunate to lead a State Treasury, the Australian Treasury, and now PM&C.

And in these years of leadership and in prior roles, I have always tried to put systems in place or institutionalise things to make the public service stronger, to support the values of the APS and to empower us as public servants, to give frank advice within a respectful workplace. Collectively, and individually, we should always call out behaviors, which undercut these values.

Most recently, there have been comments made with the intent to undermine the public confidence in the APS, through personal attacks on public servants, and accusations of politicization. I will always call out inaccuracies in these types of comments and reiterate the importance of our impartial and committed public service. Most recently, the Public Service Commissioner and I wrote to the President of the Senate to raise concerns on exactly those issues. That letter was tabled in the Senate.

In South Australia, I led a team in The Treasury and Finance Department that developed a shareholder performance scorecard of government business enterprises, if they're here or listening Stephen Wills and Paul Duldig might remember those days, Stephen is now working in PM&C, Paul's, I think, over at ANU. Just doing that was a

surprise to Ministers and the senior executives in the utilities at the time, because they previously reported directly to the relevant portfolio Minister.

There was no understanding of the difference between policy and shareholder advice. And there were direct dealings between the utility and the portfolio Minister. I think all states and territories in the Commonwealth have built up their shareholder arrangements since then. And it was something I was involved in here in about the late '80s, if I remember rightly. As Secretary of New South Wales—and noting a State Treasury is more akin to Finance here in Canberra—I had to restore trust between treasury and the line departments in the budget process. After a lengthy period of poor financial management, where growth and expenses far outweighed growth in revenue, a CFO Network was established and after a tentative start, it developed to become an open cooperative forum that played a key role in achieving the budget surpluses that New South Wales has since used, to fund state infrastructure in conjunction with funds raised from asset sales and Australian Government grants.

The COO Committee we have here in Canberra today, in the APS, was inspired by my experience in New South Wales with the effectiveness of that CFO Network. Bringing the COOs together in Canberra has helped meet key individuals together to work organically, sharing information and experience with a one APS purpose, and lift the level of focus from a single department to the APS enterprise level. I'm pleased that Peter Woolcott, in his role as Head of Professions, has also adopted a network approach to the HR, Digital and Data Professions, to strive for excellence, to attract, stretch, and retain our talent, to offer opportunities for all of us in our own careers, as well as improving the capability of our delivery power as one APS

And in conjunction with the Secretary's Talent Council, I'm also proud that we're making sure we have a strong pipeline to fill senior APS roles through succession planning, matched with capability development. The Talent Council, in conjunction with all Secretaries, no longer talks about succession planning in general terms, but takes a more evidence based approach to identifying individuals who show potential to be Secretary. This brings private sector best practice into the APS to assist in the selection of Secretaries, which under the public service act, is the domain of the Prime Minister. Our partner, who helps with that, I was speaking to them just earlier today, they think amongst their global contacts, that the way we are looking at this succession planning, is if not global practice, but very close to it. So I'm very pleased to hear that, that we're actually paying a lot of attention into that. And I thank the Secretaries and the people involved for all the work that is being done on that. It is a true foundation for the continuation of the leadership of the service.

It's natural for us to feel reflective as the year draws to a close, and I encourage you to consider what you have achieved and to be proud of it. While you recharge over the summer, think about what will inspire you for the next year ahead. What would you like to share with your teams to inspire purpose and meaning? How can you keep the Australian people at the heart of what you do?

But for now, it's time to look forward to spending time with loved ones and reset for the new year ahead. Let's look forward to new opportunities and challenges to work together, to remember our strengths, to work together as one APS and deliver for all

Australians.

All the best, happy Christmas, have a good break and a good evening for you all.
Thank you.

STEVEN KENNEDY: This glasses thing is really problematic, but I'm not ready to go to those graduated lenses just yet. Thank you, Phil. It is really revealing to hear you reflect on the year end look forward. It's been just another remarkable year by the Commonwealth and state public services, I would say. Never a stronger sense of purpose. People living through a period of history, really, and the public service playing a most remarkable role. I think it's reflected in the interest in coming to the public service, now that's never been stronger from what I can see, and something that you should all be proud of in your contribution to it.

I'd now like to introduce Letitia Hope. Letitia is the Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Policy and Programs at the National Indigenous Australian Agency. Letitia is a proud Bundjalung, Torres Strait Islander and South Pacific Islander woman. The Bundjalung area is the Northern rivers of New South Wales and an area I happen to know well. Letitia's 28 year public service career has seen her cover social policy development, program management and service delivery across human services, housing, health and community services, veteran affairs and indigenous affairs. She's passionate about the art and science of public sector leadership, serving the Government with impartiality and diligence, and is one of the inaugural members of the Australian Public Service Academy Faculty. Letitia holds an Executive Masters of Public Administration through the ANU, and a Graduate Certificate in Public Sector Management through RMIT. Please welcome Letitia for her perspectives on the APS.

LETITIA HOPE: Thank you, Steve. Yuma, Yuma. Can I join my respects with that of the others and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians on the lands on which we gather, the Ngunnawal people. Thank you, Aunty Jude. Thank you for your warm, heartfelt, welcomed. And while we did not collude, I think you will find my remarks tonight to be of one accord with you.

Can I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, for their continuing custodianship of country, knowledge and culture. And of course, I extend that respect to all my Aboriginal Torres State Islander colleagues here today. And of course, to you all. Can I also acknowledge Steve, Phil, Peter and the IPAA crew for putting on this great event. It is so good to be able to join and gather together. I know we're all a bit, ooh, COVID protocol, but it's really good to have people together. What a great energy.

And so, it's a really great privilege for me to be able to speak with you and share just a few thoughts on the APS and where I believe, or what I believe, the APS should offer the Australian public in 2022. And so, for those who don't know me, I am a proud Bundjalung, Torres Strait Islander, South Pacific Islander, Viking, Irish, Scottish woman. And so, tribes run in my family. And so I also have the privilege of being part of this tribe, the tribe of the APS, and serve as one of the Deputies for the Australian Government. And although we are working very hard to change this, I am one of the very few indigenous Australians who work as a deputy in the Australian Public

Service. And my indigeneity is very important to me, that art and craft of ancient stewardship, but it's only part of my identity.

Like all of you, I am an incredibly proud professional apolitical public servant, serving the Government of the day and delivering for the Australian people. And so, that's built on five years or five generations of lineage of my family. Who've also served in the military and served in the public administration. And so, over those three decades, I have developed a deep passion to continue to learn, both the art and the craft of being a good public servant, like many of us in this room. And I really enjoy forums like this, where we get to just be a little bit introspective and consider, how do we do that? And so perhaps informed by my traditional custodial footprints, or more contemporary imprints of public service, it's fair to say that I see public servants, I see us as custodians. Custodianship is what we do.

A custodian is somebody who takes responsibility to taking care of something. And so we take responsibility to take care of our staff, our departments, our agencies, our policy settings, programs, regulations, budgets capability, and infrastructure systems that we build, the benefits and the entitlements and the services that we deliver. And also, the business of the Governments in which we serve. And so, through this lens, I see one of our key roles, now and into the future, is the custodianship of our greatest assets, our people, our leaders of today and our leaders of tomorrow. And so my first thought, for the short period of time that any one of us get to steward a role, we need to be looking at who came before us, what can we learn from them? Who is with us now? How do we harness and realise that collective potential? And towards who will come after us, and how do we invest in that, and making sure that we are leaving something for them to take forward?

And as leaders, we hold ourselves into account to be good custodians of the work that we do, but perhaps more importantly, making sure that we have prepared the next generation of public servants to be good custodians as well. So building pipelines of people who can skillfully navigate the complexities of our work for, and across government, and respectfully steward relationships that we build in Government, in industry, in sector, in community, both domestically and internationally. I believe this is one of the keys to the APS, to be able to remain effective and relevant and to continue to deliver public value, as our work ebbs and flows, and as we hand things from one to another. And so I invite you to ponder these two things. We are always leaving footprints, wherever we go. So what footprints are we leaving?

What footprints are you leaving for those who will come after you? And we are also charged with the responsibility of many things. So what care are we taking to investing in the things that we inevitably, will hand over and who are we caring for that we will hand them to? Because inevitably, we will hand them over. And it's this blueprint of custodianship that drives me, as I'm sure it does many of you to continue to learning how to be a better public servant. And it leads me to being engaged in organisations like this one, like IPAA and other APS learning forums. It's these organisations that create the necessary space for us to share, and importantly, contest our knowledge and our practice and to hone our common purpose, one APS providing a better service to Australian people. So my second thought, my second thought goes to, what

should those who are the benefactor of this custodianship, this better service, see, hear and feel about a modern APS?

And there are lots of words that we all use that inspire us and aspire us to be a modern public service. And they are words like agile, adaptive, resilient, connected, courageous, affective and citizen focused. And there are many examples of these things that we have seen together, particularly in the last two years, have come together in practice, and Phil mentioned many of them in his Address, but of all the words, all the aspirational words, the one word that I believe should be the cornerstone of a modern public service, is 'trusted'.

Trust must be the cornerstone of every public servant. And we must be in the business of forging and maintaining trust with our Ministers, with our Parliament, with our colleagues, with our agencies, cross jurisdictions, with our staff and with the Australian people who we serve.

Now, this isn't a revolutionary idea, and I certainly can't claim it as my own, but I do believe it is foundational to what we do. The independent review of the APS, the Thodey review, made it very clear. Everything we hope to achieve will flow from a position of trust, and at the National Indigenous Australians Agency, we have actually baked that into our vision. And that is a vision that, that is thus. The NIAA, is a reliable and trusted partner, contributing to improving the lives of Indigenous Australians.

So we want governments to trust our advice and the advice that we provide, and rely on us to deliver with professionalism, timeliness, and integrity. We want the public to trust us with the appropriations, the entitlements, and the services that we steward, and rely on us to be effective, efficient, ethical, and eliminate all and any administrative buffoonery. And we want Indigenous Australians and their communities to trust and rely on us, to work respectfully in partnership, to listen and hear their aspirations, to do what we say we will do, and not over promise things that we can't deliver. And most importantly, value and add value to their lives. The Edelman Trust Barometer, which I'm sure you're all familiar with, has shown that trust in Government has continued to decline this year. Despite our hard, fought efforts during the pandemic, businesses and NGOs are more trusted than Government. And measures of competency and ethics place Government in the lowest quarter...rather alarming for all of us who hold ourselves to the highest standard of integrity.

And in Indigenous context, this deficit is even more profound. Now, I'll leave it to others to debate whether the lower levels of trust are reflections of our elected leaders or the influence of sensationalised media or reflections on the public institutions itself. But regardless, public servants have, and will always have a major role of building trust. And in the Agency, we think about this a lot because our ability to operate and influence, hinges on our ability to maintain trust with all of the portfolio agencies across government and with the communities who we serve. Now, there's a lot more ground than we could cover on this than we certainly have time for this evening, but I wanted to leave you with three simple thoughts about how I believe we can go about building trust, both in and across the system and with the Australian people.

Now they're not all encompassing, and many of these will sound really, really obvious, but I find it's often the little things that make the biggest difference, and they are often the hardest things for us to find time to do.

So one: Listen without prejudice and observe without judgment. When we remove our judgment and our preconceptions, we start to dismantle systemic bias. We expose our blind spots, all of them, including racism. When we genuinely hear people, where they are at and where they are coming from and what their true needs and aspirations are, it allows us to take a posture of understanding and enables us to provide assistance that's dignified, empowering, and truly helpful. This practical demonstration of respect builds trust.

Two: Be of your word. Do what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it. And this involves the art and the craft of keeping things moving and not letting the bureaucracy get in the way of good, lawful, impactful delivery. We need to bring administrative options. This is our craft and broker solutions in respectful partnership. And this practical demonstration of administrative skill, commitment, and competence, that builds trust.

Three: be really clear about your authorising environment. Be clear about what you can, and more importantly, what you cannot commit to. Most people can spot inauthentic from a mile away. I can, and I'm sure you can, too. Most people understand there are boundaries and limitations in what public servants can do. In my experience, people care about having the clarity of where these boundaries are, and this authenticity takes honesty and courage, and it builds trust.

We are all part of a long continuing and changing story of the tribe of public servants. And as Governments change, and as we come and go, and we hand our roles and responsibilities to new custodians, the people we serve are constant.

So custodianship draws on the collective knowledge. Learning from the past, responding in the present to build for the future, and it is our cornerstone in the APS, must be trust.

[Indigenous language]. Thank you, farewell and safe footprints.

STEVEN KENNEDY: Thank you, Letitia. That was excellent. There are some common values, principles, things that really do make us one APS or tribe, as you mentioned. And there's absolutely no doubt in my mind, that trust is absolutely one of those. And there were three excellent insights. It is worth remembering that the most trusted people in society are public servants. Often teachers, nurses, police, people, but of which we are the same tribe of public servants. So I'm a little more optimistic that those bad results aren't about us, but they are revealing and they are well worth our reflecting on carefully. Before we move to Peter's address, we're going to watch a video showcasing our colleagues from across the service, reflecting on, what does one APS mean to you? The APS reform office at PM&C recently spoke to staff from around the country and asked them, "What does one APS mean to you?" And they had a great response.

Staff from every state and territory and from 16 different agencies, responded. They filmed themselves on their phones. I've never done that, so I don't know how you do that, but anyway, it sounds amazing. And in our own words, talked about what one APS means to them. None of it was scripted. It's a great testament to the strength of the APS, that there are so many inspiring stories to tell. Letitia told us about some of those today, about Enfield, about working together, helping Australians, and building a shared sense of purpose with colleagues across the country. So please enjoy the video.

- KAANCHI: Hi, I'm Kaanchi from Newcastle.
- MARK: Hi, I'm Mark from Hobart.
- JANA: I'm Jana from Canberra, which is Ngunnawal country.
- SIMON: I'm Simon from Brisbane.
- KAY: I'm Kay, and I work in Geelong, Victoria.
- MERAJ: My name is Meraj, and I'm based in sunny Nauru.
- ZARA: I'm Zara, based in Fitzroy Crossing. Over 3,800 kilometers away from Canberra.
- MARIELLE: What one APS means to me, is working towards something bigger than yourself.
- AMTUL: Engaging, collaborating, and sharing knowledge.
- MEGAN: No barriers between agencies.
- ROLAND: We already have a good history of coming together to solve complex problems.
- SPENCER: Bringing all of that diversity that people bring with their backgrounds.
- AMY: Through teamwork and collaboration.
- SIMON: This is one APS in action.
- ZARA: We provide face to face service support to our most vulnerable, remote, disadvantaged and indigenous customers.
- MARK: I've helped customers, the bush fire claims, with flood claims, even cyclone claims.
- JEAN: Helping Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse background.
- CATHERINE: Bettering the lives of the Australian community. Like this little guy.
- JACK: I want to have one APS that can demonstrate people, people with disability can go into leadership positions.
- SEAN: It's just been great to be part of one APS where we all work together.
- KAY: Towards a common goal as one APS.

JACK: One APS.

STEVEN KENNEDY: Clap if you want to. And thanks to PM&C for collating those views on the idea of one APS.

In that vein, we're now going to hear from Peter Woolcott, the Australian Public Service Commissioner to make some closing remarks. Peter commenced as the Australian Public Service Commissioner on the 9th of August 2018. Has had a distinguished career in the Australian public service, serving in senior diplomatic positions. He has served as the Australian High Commissioner to New Zealand, Ambassador for the Environment and led negotiations to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Permanent Representative in the UN in Geneva, and Ambassador for Disarmament, Ambassador for People Smuggling Issues, Ambassador to Italy and Australian Council General on Honolulu and Representative to the US Commander in Chief Pacific. He spent very little time in Australia by the sounds of it. He has also worked on the hill. Please join me and welcome Peter to the stage.

PETER WOOLCOTT: Thank you, Steven, for that. And very nice, very nice video. I follow on from two fine speeches. So probably enough. And I'll be relatively brief. Can I thank Phil for his very reflective speech, including on all that we have done and have yet to do. It's been a genuine pleasure working with you, Phil, over the past year. Can I also thank Letitia. I've worked with her, as most recently, as part of the APS Academy. Through her role, advising on the Craft of Engagement and Partnership. As we all know, and as Letitia emphasised, trust from the people stems much from the Government's ability to deliver on its promises. And to a great extent, that is about implementation, but it's also about having the skill of hearing and understanding what they want, their voices, and Letitia very much exemplifies this. But most of all, can I thank all of you for the enormous commitment you have brought to forging a better Australian public service, sharing lessons and expertise, and working as one. This time last year, we reflected on how the twin crises of 2020 had accelerated the APS reform agenda.

This year tells me that we were in fact, largely laying the groundwork and the impact of what we are now doing around a more joined up mobile and capable public service, will reverberate well into the future. It's been a big year and we have delivered at pace. As Phil said, it's important to take a break and to recharge for 2022. Next year, we'll present an array of challenges, and we also have an election before the end of May. I'm conscious of the renewed energy that a new Parliament often brings to our work. One of the great things about Australian democracy is actually the way we manage transition between governments, not all countries do this quite so well. The notion of incoming Government briefs, where both blue book and a red book are prepared for whatever side of politics are voted into power by the people at election time.

These briefs set out how the APS will work with incoming Government, implement its election policies, and it sets out all the risks the Government will need to manage. The goal of the APS is a simple one, to ensure the smoothest possible transition of power between one elected government and another. It is actually something very remarkable about Australian democracy. Whatever the outcome, the expectations on us from Government and the Australian people, will be enormous. And I have no doubt that you'll all keep on delivering.

With that, I want to wish you and your teams a safe and happy holiday season. As Italians might say, 'il dolce far niente!', the sweetness of doing nothing. And I look forward to working with you all in 2022. And thank you very much for all your work.

STEVEN KENNEDY: Thank you, Peter. I plan to passionately embrace the sweetness of doing nothing in the period ahead. Looking closing, I'd very much like to thank Phil, Letitia and Peter for their remarks. They're very insightful. It was a great pleasure to hear the three of you speak this evening. I'd also like to thank IPAA ACT's partners for their ongoing support - KPMG, Hayes, Telstra, MinterEllison, Commonwealth Bank of Australia and Microsoft. Thank you all so much for coming along. And it is a bit weird with the whole thing on the side, isn't it Phil? It's great to see you all. Please stay and spend some time seeing colleagues and catching up and thinking about the year past and the year ahead. On behalf of the IPAA ACT, we very much look forward to seeing you at future events and hope you can enjoy us in the future. Thank you so much for attending this evening. Thank you.