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TRANSCRIPT OF EVENT

PUBLIC SERVICE MEDALS – SPIRIT OF SERVICE

Aunty Jude Barlow (Welcome to Country).

Virginia Haussegger AM, Journalist (Host)

Caroline Edwards PSM, Associate Secretary at the Department of Health and IPAA ACT Councillor (Panellist)

Paul Way PSM, Director General at the Department of Defence (Panellist)

Dr Ros Baxter PSM, Deputy Secretary at the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (Panellist)

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VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: My name is Virginia Haussegger and I am absolutely delighted to be your emcee here this afternoon. Although I keep saying this evening, but it is this afternoon. I'm going to lead here today what I hope will be a robust and inspiring panel discussion. But first, I would like to invite Aunty Jude Barlow from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to present the very important, welcome to country. Aunty Jude.

AUNTY JUDE BARLOW: Thanks, Virginia. Yuma, which is hello in Ngunnawal and is the Ngunnawal people's gift to you all. Please feel free to use it. When you say hello, or good day to colleagues, neighbours, or friends, or all of the above. [Kalanga] Jude Barlow, and I'm an honourable woman. My family are Woolobaloah people, a clan group within the Ngunnawal nation, and it is an honour to be here today, representing my family and ancestors. I pay my respects to my Elders past present and emerging, especially on my dear old dad, Eric Bell, and the work he did for reconciliation. I also pay respects and honour the memory of Eddie Kochi Mabo on this Mabo Day, which commemorates his successful efforts to overturn the legal fiction of Terra Nullius.

Now I'm an Australian public servant, and I'm proud to be one. I'm really proud to be here today at an event which honours public servants. Now I had a dear old foster dad, Peter, a farmer from coral water in New South Wales. Look it up. He was one of those who paid no compliments to public servants. According to my dad or fathers I called him, he paid our taxes and we did nothing. As you can imagine, I was none too pleased to hear him carry on about how slack public servants were and that we were just pencil pushers, whose contributions to our nation were less worthy than other Australians, but as one does as an honourable and respectful child and good public servant, I remained calm, but firmly explained to him the work we do in the public sector. Who knows if I was able to convince him, but he never mentioned his views on public servants to me again.

I, as I said, am a proud public servant. I love the work I do and in firmly of the school that believes public service is a calling. I love that I get to contribute to something bigger than myself. So rewarding these contributions of remarkable people is a great thing and I think can go some way in expelling the many myths about us. I really, really, really feel proud to work at AIATSIS where the good public servants there contribute by advising on Indigenous culture and by helping to reawaken lost or asleep languages, such as my own language Ngunnawal. I would now like to welcome you to the land of my ancestors in the language of my ancestors. I thank a recent recipient of the PSM, Dr Doug Marmion for giving his time, his expertise and his incredible knowledge to my community in the re- invigoration of our language.

[Welcome to Country spoken in Ngunnawal] This means today we're all gathering together on Ngunnawal country. This country is my ancestor spiritual homeland, and we are keeping the pathways of our ancestors alive by walking together as one, welcome to Ngunnawal country.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: Thank you, Aunty Jude for that very beautiful, very warm, warm welcome, and to Ngunnawal country and how lucky we are to be those who have been the recipients of your ancestors looking after this beautiful country that we are now meeting on and living on. Now before pondering the PSM and the spirit of service

that these distinguished awards represent, I would first like to warmly welcome those PSM recipients who very graciously have agreed to come under the hot spotlight today and be interviewed on our panel. Caroline Edwards, PSM, Associate Secretary from the Department of Health and IPAA ACT counsellor, Paul Way, PSM Director General, Department of Defence and Dr. Ros Baxter, PSM Deputy Secretary of Department of Education Skills and Employment. Thank you to all of you for agreeing to come along this afternoon. Now, let me tell you a little bit about IPAA for those of you who are unfamiliar with the IPAA ACT, it was established in 1953, and it's a professional body focused on the promotion of excellence and professionalism in public administration.

IPAA as you would know, is a not-for-profit and nonpartisan organisation, which among other professional development services and supports perhaps most importantly, it provides a platform for debate and discussion about public service in Australia. Those of you who attend IPAA events, and I know many of you do, and I've certainly joined many of you at those events here and around Australia. You would know that a great deal of thought leadership emanates from IPAA forums. A call the focus of these efforts and intellectual pursuits is all about improving service and striving for excellence. In addition to growing and sustaining Australia's world-class public service that takes pride in its impartiality, accountability, commitment to the community, and it's focus on respect and ethical leadership. Now I'm sure many of you have a finely attuned ear for all those APS values that you just heard. It's also attuned to the fact that the PSM, the Public Service Medal is one way, but a particularly important way in which some of the most distinguished actions and leadership of service to the public are acknowledged.

That is what we're going to celebrate here this afternoon and applaud. Little about the PSM. It was established in 1989 after a split from the Imperial Honour System modelled on Britain's Public Awards. The PSM recognises outstanding service by public servants at all levels of government and of course in all jurisdictions. From the awards, service excellence to the public, innovation in programme or project or policy development and leadership, including as a member of a team, all the achievement of more efficient processes, improved productivity or better service delivery. This afternoon, we want to pause to both celebrate and applaud those outstanding Australians who've been honoured with a PSM, which for the recipients is perhaps akin to a metaphorical badge for outstanding life achievement.

Now, I know that might sound like a little bit of a stretch life achievement because naturally, some of us or many of us perhaps migrate, nurturing and growing our families or other aspects of our personal life, as our biggest life achievement. For many that would be the case. But the thing I believe about the PSM is that it doesn't just reflect professional excellence. Those who are awarded a PSM are people who aren't just good at doing their job, the people who have gone beyond doing a job or performing a role to actually become outstanding examples and indeed role models for all of us, of people who bring their whole selves to their working life.

They're people who imbued their leadership with personal ethics, values and commitment to others. At times as we all know, public service can be a complex challenge. Indeed, as we move into the third decade of the 21st century, I think that's putting it mildly. Who would have known that we would be where we are right now a decade ago, even a few years ago. I think in fact, most of us are

probably watching events unfold in Victoria right now with dismay and even with sadness. Tinge with anxious anticipation about what might happen next.

At complex and strange times such as these, I hesitate to say unprecedented, but we know they are unprecedented times. Unearthing the right and the best response to the diverse competing and urgent needs of our community and our public is extremely difficult. It's at times such as this, that the formidable strength of Australia's public service shines and it has, and every public service leader should be very, very proud of that right now. But that doesn't mean the challenges of a global pandemic and all the myriad, myriad ramifications of that on every aspect of Australian's lives have been overcome.

The complexities of those challenges for public service leaders is extraordinary we all know that, and the demands are incredibly tough as you all know that too. That complexity and toughness goes on, but nevertheless, it is terribly pertinent I believe to stop and pause and to celebrate and commemorate and celebrate and applaud those who have been doing outstanding work. The same evening this afternoon, we'll hear from three recent recipients of the PSM about their distinguished public service journey.

Yes, I'm also looking forward to them sharing a few of their gems of advice. I've been asked at this point to also share some of my own reflections on being a recipient of an Australian honour, which in my case was always an AM. I was made a member of the order of Australia in 2014 for services to the community, to women's rights, gender equity, and the media. The fact that I actually had to look that up this afternoon to remind me of what the wording was, I think there's something, I think it probably says a lot about how those who received such honours really are just getting on with what they do. I must admit when I was notified that I was to receive an AM, I was genuinely shocked. First, very embarrassed then genuinely shocked and very, very humbled.

I was amazed that anyone had noticed anything that I was doing outside of my professional paid job at the time, which was as a news presenter and journalist. But the award that I received, I know reflects the work that I have done beyond that. For me as to why it was important or why the award, and it has increasingly become important in my life, is because it's a reminder of a validation, of the issues that I cared deeply about, and it's a validation that those issues and the community in which I work matters. That's for me what the awards said that not the work or my efforts were at the centre, but rather the work I do, those, I work with the community I work for, and with that's what matters and the issue matters. That meant a great deal to me and it still does.

I recall being interviewed on the night of receiving my award and by the ABC. I recall, I did say when asked what it was like I said, "It feels like a shot in the arm" and what I meant by that I could see the reporter looking a bit confused, but what I meant by that is that because of that sense of validation of what you do, what you believe in, I felt really motivated. In fact, and I actually remember feeling, God, I have to work even harder now. But felt motivated because others also shared a view that these issues mattered. They were telling me that the work I had done had been noted, I felt even more motivated to go on doing that sort of work. I think it will be very interesting to hear from our panellists today, how they responded when they heard that they were to be recipients of the PSM.

But I think it's different for everyone. Let's bring them up on the stage right now before I actually introduced them. I'm going to ask Caroline Ros and Paul to come up and take a seat while I tell everyone a little bit about you. There are name tags on them, but you can sit wherever you like. It's okay. Now let me tell you first about Caroline Edwards, Caroline was appointed to the position of associate secretary of the Department of Health in August, 2020. She's held, of course I just cracked a ridiculous joke to Caroline a moment ago saying I'm sure she's been very unoccupied of late, being with the Department of Health. Caroline has held several positions within the public service, including as the deputy secretary of Department of Health, deputy secretary for social policy, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, deputy secretary of the Health and Aged Care Group at the Department of Human Services, chief advisor in the revenue group of the Treasury and many other positions too numerous to name.

Caroline was awarded the public service medal on Australia Day this year, for her outstanding service in the development and implementation of health and social policy. Paul Way is the Director General, Defence Community Organisation for the Department of Defence, a position that he's held since 2011. Paul has also co-chaired the ADF transition task force and has worked closely on the veterans employment programme initiative, and also spearheaded the ADF transition for employment initiative, which is a fantastic initiative. Prior to this, Paul served in the Royal Australian Air Force. Paul was awarded the Public Service Medal also on Australia Day, this year for his contributions in the development of programmes to support current and transition Australian Defence Force members and their families.

Dr. Ros Baxter, Ros joined the Department of Education Skills and Employment as deputy secretary of the Early Childhood and Childcare Group in February, 2020. Her previous roles include the deputy secretary of Integrity and Information at the Department of Human Services. First assistant secretary social policy division at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and group manager of the Families Group at the Department of Social Services. Ros was awarded the PSM in 2019 for her contribution in the design and implementation of social policy programmes to improve the lives of vulnerable Australians. Now I have skirted through pages and pages and pages of CVS of all three recipients, just to try and keep it short. Would you please give them a very warm welcome.

Well, welcome to you all. Now, as I said earlier, first and foremost, I want to hear what it was like that moment you found out. You were told either by letter, or you were told, or however it came to you that you were to be the recipient of a Public Service Medal. Now, Paul you're closest to me. I'll start with you.

PAUL WAY:

Thanks, Virginia. I guess my first reaction was how about just being scammed by email. Because that's how the advice came through from the government generals. I was thinking, is this really me? There was that aspect of Public Service Medal and how much it does mean to individuals and to the team.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER:

Did you find yourself checking the name on it?

PAUL WAY:

Oh, I was checking very carefully is it Paul Way or Paul Wade or et cetera. But then you get that feeling, as you mentioned earlier, you get a feeling of that your work has been recognised. Indeed from my perspective, it was the work of the team as well. How do you ensure that the team has worked with you so closely to

deliver various outcomes are actually also recognised and then also reflective outlet about the family involvement. We all have that journey with our families and within my role, I have very much a focus upon support for the families of defence force members and my own family contributed greatly towards the other PSM as well. In fact, Sue, who's my wife, will tell you that PSM doesn't stand for Public Service Medal. It stands for Primarily Sue's Medal.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: Good of you Sue.

PAUL WAY: That's exactly what it should be.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: I think all partners and spouses here should receive medals too? Caroline, now Paul received through an email, I'm assuming you might've too. I know I received a letter and I must admit when I saw it was a letter from the Governor General's office, I assumed it was an invitation to something and I actually left it sitting on the table for a day. Because I actually thought I knew what it was. We had a UN women's event coming up and I just assumed that's what it was. When I finally got around to opening it, I did a double read as well I must admit. What about you, Karen?

CAROLINE EDWARDS: I got an email as well. The truth is I dealt with the email in the same way I deal with the other 1,500 emails I dealt with on that day, that with sorts of other things is tick and flick. It's because a bit like Paul, I'd had the conversation earlier, and I think I'd been on my high horse with my husband one day saying "Bloody honours, they're not diverse and they go to the wrong people. Those people get paid a lot." I said, "If I get the award the answer is definitely no." And my husband said, "No, it's not. It's not because someone's put you up for it. Because you've got to respect the work you do, because it's a team. And also because I want it," he said a bit like Sue. "And so do your kids for all of those days that you weren't with them, and you were at work."

We'd have that conversation and I got off my high horse and said, "Well, it's actually not about me," in the same way. Also as public servants, the Public Service Medal is probably one of the only times it's actually about us. We spend all that time in the background and behind and and so on. So it is something to celebrate that public service can be celebrated as something in itself as a special and unique thing. But the day it came in, it was really in, out, tick, flick, because it's been a bit like that lately.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: It's interesting that you say... In a moment you had said, "If I got one, I wouldn't take it. I'd say no." I must admit I had been through that thought process myself years ago. I interviewed a recipient of the AM, Professor [Jocelyn] Scott, who was a barrister in Victoria at the time. She actually sent hers back after receiving it, over the debate about the republic consent. She sent it back and she asked for it to be put on hold until Australia becomes a republic. I was interviewing her just recently actually, for my podcast and I asked her about that. She lives in Cambridge now, she's in London. I said to [inaudible], "I'm really embarrassed to say it, but I actually received one and I took it."

But it was really interesting having that conversation because I must admit I did a lot of that, as a journalist I think does too, thought about, "Is this right? Should I? Shouldn't I? What does this mean to me? The reflection itself is very, I think, very useful. Ros, what about you?"

ROS BAXTER: I think that we were away for a weekend and I think I was actually having a glass of wine. I was pretty chilled space. And someone was opening our mail for us, I can't remember who, but rang me and said, "There's a letter here from the Governor General, do you want to open it?" I was like, "Oh yes, please let's find out what this is." And all the kids were around. I've got four children. Youngest was then six, they're all around me. They all got initially disproportionately really excited. I realised afterwards that they thought it was like a Logie or an Academy Award. I think they were imagining television-

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: But it is! It is.

ROS BAXTER: That was actually reinforced because on the day I went to get it, Hugh Jackman got one at my ceremony.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: More than a Logie.

ROS BAXTER: They weren't at all interested in what I got it for, but they actually were kind of pushing me out of the way to get a photo with him. Then my two eldest boys who were probably a couple of years, 14 and 15, got a photo with Hugh Jackman and them and me and my husband and photoshopped us out and put up on their social media. The whole thing, that was kind of the first reaction was a bit of it's some sort of Logies, Academy, caught up in that.

Then afterwards, because I'd been on holidays and was having a little rough I did get a little bit emotional, but I think it is that thing people have talked about, about the service, how you feel about the service and your sense of privilege and pride. Then I think this particular award came off the back of doing the National Redress Scheme for survivors of child sexual abuse. I had a little bit of a moment of thinking about those people that I'd worked with, the stakeholders-

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: It does come back to that feeling doesn't it, of validation? You know what you do is important obviously or you wouldn't do it and you wouldn't work so hard at it, but it's a validation, isn't it? It is important.

ROS BAXTER: Well, and a validation, I guess, of them too, because that scheme, we did it, the public service kind of pushed it, but it wouldn't have even been a thing if all of those people hadn't kind of gone out and told the terrible stories and put themselves through a tremendously personally difficult thing.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: I look forward to seeing the Hugh Jackman photo.

ROS BAXTER: Ill find it. Yeah.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: I must say at my investiture, The Seekers were there, they were receiving medals as well. I must say for me, that was a really big deal. I couldn't wait to get photos with them and send them to my father.

ROS BAXTER: Hugh Jackman actually responded to them when they posted it as well.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: Oh wow.

ROS BAXTER: Because they tagged him in it. Then he responded. I think after that, they thought it was going to be a relationship, but it ended-

PAUL WAY: Cut it off very quickly.

ROS BAXTER: They thought it was a proper friendship.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: Now I want to ask you all about public service itself as a vocation, as a career, as a lifelong commitment. The obvious question is why? Why public service, when I'm sure all of you could probably make squillions working in the private sector. But you have dedicated yourself to public service and I'm interested in to know why. Caroline.

CAROLINE EDWARDS: I grew up in Canberra. My parents were living in Melbourne. My father was blind and so had a lot of trouble as a journalist and finally got a job in the public service, having worked on the weather desk at the Herald Sun or something. Anyway in the public service. We moved to Canberra and I grew up here and I eventually moved back to Melbourne to go to university. Again, I remember, today's going to be full of things I said that didn't come to pass. I said, "It doesn't matter what I do in my life. There is no way I'm going back to Canberra to be a public servant." I was absolutely adamant that that wouldn't happen.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: Just like you said you wouldn't accept a PSM.

CAROLINE EDWARDS: Yeah so really I'm letting myself down here. Then I actually fell into it by accident. I had to come back to Canberra because my mother was unwell. I said, "Oh, well, I better get a job." I was working as a corporate lawyer. Can you believe in those days seems a long time ago. And I rang up somebody who was advertising a [SOG See] you remember those? And said, "Hey, I'm going to apply for this SOG See," legal SOG See or whatever it was. But have you got any photocopying or something in the meantime because I really need to come quick. Like five minutes later, I sort of had the job on a temporary basis. It was all a bit of a drama because when I arrived, I realised afterwards the staff network had a meeting to complain about the bad merit process and everything.

I all came in and everyone looked at me a bit strangely because they'd all be agitating, but it was sort of too late. The temporary contract had been signed. So I arrived with no idea what... In fact, I don't know about other people. I've never started a job in my life that I had any idea what it was going to be when I got there. But anyway, I quickly got into it. This the office of indigenous affairs at PMNC back in the day when Paul Keating was the prime minister. I quickly came to find that really there's nothing quite like it. Having worked in a little bit in the university and in private practise and so on in terms of the complexity of ideas, and your capacity to influence, the thought process that go on the team, the networks you can make and the capacity to really have the good of the nation as your aim, wherever it is, no matter what little part you play.

I've thought many times about leaving the service over the years, but there's probably nothing quite like that, that I know of anyway. So it did become a vocation. An interesting thing about that, like in 20 whatever years, I was reflecting a long time now. I've been a specialist about 10 times with never actually having a specialty. It's funny people only remember the last two years of what you did. Now I'm a health expert, for many, many years, I was an Aboriginal affairs expert. Very briefly for six months I was an international tax expert. If you meet anyone from that period, they still think of you as that. It just shows that public service is really about this enormous adaptability. Although we always need

specialists everywhere we go, actually those general skills are incredibly transferable and people say they're transferable also outside the public service.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: Absolutely they are. Ros, what about you? What got you into public service?

ROS BAXTER: I think service was probably a bit of an ethic that we grew up with in my family. I came from a working class family that believed in education, really strongly in education and also in being busy, in working hard and in doing things particularly for other people. My mother in particular had a lot of adages that she would say "No one's a drop in the ocean. Everyone has to make a difference. What will you do," she had this kind of thing so I think that idea of service, even for... I have one sibling who's been very successful in a sort of corporate-y, I don't know IT computer thing. But even for him, this kind of ethic of service goes through a lot of what he does.

For me, it was initially as a social worker. I started life as a child protection social worker, and then a social worker working with refugees. Then I think it's not a long hop, skip, and a jump from that to public service because you start to make that calculation. If you're thinking about the ways you're spending your hours and your days about, okay, I'm seeing the problems that I'm working on one piece at a time here. How do we kind of lift up a step from that? Other jobs I had like sitting on the social security appeals tribunal as well, where I used to keep a little secret book of all the laws I would change if I was ever in the right position. Hide it in a desk drawer. I think it's that exactly what Caroline said that there's, once you're there, there's nothing like it.

Sorry to keep talking about my children, I've got a child who's now currently in grade 12 and has a group of friends who don't seem to have a home. They just live at our house and they often will ask "What should we do? What do think we should do?" I always say, "You should join the public service. Should think out your programme, you should..." They're frightened to come in now because I'm always talking about the public service. But I do say to them, there is just nothing like it for that sense of making a difference, the diversity of every day, but it is a very hard thing to actually explain what you do. Particularly when children are little and they say "So what do you do?" We go "Sort of talk to people about things. I kind of convince people to do things, and then I write some emails" and they're like "We're still none the wiser about the actual job," but it is this sort of incredibly interesting, diverse, impactful thing to do.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: It's certainly the diversity of work I think, is something that struck me. I didn't fully understand until I moved to Canberra 20 years ago and started working with the APS more closely, as a journalist realising the diversity of work and skills is just an enormous that's why it's, I think for young people, it's such a great place to get into, Paul.

PAUL WAY: The opportunities are just incredible. My journey, slightly different from Caroline and Ros that, I'm ex air force, as you mentioned, I'm ex two air forces. I couldn't cope with one and so I was exed from the Royal Air Force in the UK and the Royal Australian Air Force. Very similar to Ros and your family background, I came up, was brought up in a family where, service meant more than just looking after the immediate family. It was about, how do we involve ourselves in the greater community and that psychology of, volunteering. Both my parents were very much into volunteering and my uncles, aunts as well they were into volunteering

as well. I started life as an accountant and after a few years, as a professional accountant in London, in the corporate world, I went, "I'm missing something."

I was missing that aspect of, am I making a difference or not making a difference to life? And that's when I joined the air force, was fortunate to come out here in 1992 and then joined the Royal Australian Air Force. The air force as the Department of Defence does has a huge number of career opportunities for individuals. I moved from an accounting environment into security, into personnel management, now HR, and then I was offered the opportunity to join the department of finance here in Canberra into a role which I thoroughly enjoyed and an opportunity after that, to then join the Department of Defence as a public servant. I feel personally that through my public service environment, I am actually making a difference to individuals lives. The focus that we have in supporting the nation and supporting the government of the day is what really drives the majority of public servants who I meet.

It disappoints when I read negative personas about public servants. That I think is where I try to have those discussions with those individuals who may have that persona or that perception, and actually discuss with them the vast majority of deliverables that we deliver across the public service and how we're supporting the government and how we're driving and importantly, how we're the stable environment. With the election cycle that we have here, it's a fairly brief election cycle, but what is stable is the public service that is there maintaining those initiatives and maintaining those outcomes.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER:

You remind me of something that Aunty Jude said about criticism of public servants and we all hear it. Certainly I know in the media we've been responsible for it at times. That must hit harder. I want to ask you all about this. Because at times it must hit hard, particularly when it enters the public discourse through mainstream media and it's wrong as just outright wrong. Yet you are very restricted in what you can do or what you can say in response to that, if anything at all. How do you deal with those sorts of challenges? Now, I'll come back to you Ros. How do you counter that sort of attitude?

PAUL WAY:

My husband used to get really annoyed with me taking taxi drivers on about it, because if you ever tell a taxi driver what you do, they go, "Ugh, lazy public servants." And so actually what we do is my team is [inaudible]. But you'll get it everywhere. And there are generalisations about all sorts of occupations. As I said, my brother, who's an entrepreneur will often say to me over Christmas dinner, "Do you actually sort of do anything?" I go, "Yeah, we do things."

But I think like anything it's knowing the worth of what you do. I think the theme that I've heard as we're all talking is one of this kind of sense of this amazing thing you do, but that you do as part of a team. Not just the people you work with in the public service, but the people you work with, out in communities to kind of form part of that broader team, particularly when you're working on change on a particular piece.

In a funny sort of way, sometimes the relationships you have as well with ministers and decision-makers where you can kind of leverage what each brings to that to try to get things done as well. I think it's just like anything knowing the worth of what you're doing and also countering your own sense of am I really doing anything sometimes? So we'll often talk at work when something goes

wrong, when you have a loss, talk about how important it is to kind of not allow yourself the luxury of becoming jaded about things. Really kind of retaining that sense that even if you win one out of a hundred, even you get one out of a hundred up, that's still a kind of better odds than you haven't gotten it done.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: What about when something is undone, something good that you've done? Look, Paul just mentioned change of government. I mean the election cycles in Australia are very short and we haven't had a change of government obviously for a long time. But when there is, and perhaps something is undone, how do you deal with that?

ROS BAXTER: Most things don't get undone. Even if they say they're going to undo them. They generally don't. They might unravel them slightly, but there aren't a lot that truly get undone.

PAUL WAY: I think part of our role is actually to explain to the incoming government what the deliverables are, the benefit and the return on investment, the deliverables are delivered. Notwithstanding what colour the government may be of the day. Our role is to support that government in delivering those longer term focus, that longer term policy aspects that generally what I've found with most ministers is that they're willing to listen. They're willing to amend their policy slightly. Some of the rhetoric might be slightly different, but underneath it, we're there supporting, and we're continuing to drive those improvements or those initiatives. I haven't found a minister yet that's gone, "I want you to totally stop that project" that hasn't been-

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: That's encouraging to hear I've got to say. I want to ask you all about challenges though, a particular challenge, perhaps that you can identify where you really felt you had to draw down deeply on those APS values to get you through. If any of you can think of an example of that. Caroline, I'm going to go straight to you. Got a feeling you've got one.

CAROLINE EDWARDS: I've got many. I think that's one of the things about being a very senior public servant. It's an incredible privilege and we get paid enormously well compared to the community, don't... We often have the comparison made towards major corporate fliers, but I don't compare them. I compare them with the woman, that wonderful woman that works in the parliament house dining area that you talk to, like get paid a lot more than her and something has to come with it.

One of the things is actually being able to have that judgement, and being able to stand up and very often, it's difficult. It's very often difficult. You have to take responsibilities for things that you didn't do and you probably didn't even know about that happened in your team, but you have to take the... And you have to shield people from the often legitimate concern that happens from a Bible from... That just comes with all of us in senior jobs, do that all the time.

If you don't do that, you're probably not doing your jobs. I think those are all sensible things, but to go back to the undoing things that you've done thing, I have been called upon to directly undo things that we did shortly before. Some people can't do it and it's because they're too invested. So one of the things you have to do first is find those staff that are just too invested and move them around somewhere else. Then going to Ros' point, it's about thinking in the language and the beliefs of the people you're working for.

Because for me, one of the fundamental things about being a public servant is humility. I am not elected and I'm not always right. Many of my ideas are not the right ones and there's other ones and actually to listen to other ideas. If a change of government or a change of minister comes and the minister says "That programme is bad, I want to change it. I want you to do something else." You often do salvage it, but you don't salvage it by explaining to them. What you've got to understand is it's actually really good. The previous minister was better than you. That doesn't go down very well.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: Don't think that'd go down too well.

CAROLINE EDWARDS: But if you strip it right back to get all the language and you say, "Well, what this is actually trying to achieve is this, do you want to achieve it? These are the ways we've been doing it. These are the pros and cons of what's happened so far. Which bits do you want to retain? Also really importantly, how do you want us to [inaudible] this up, belongs to you minister," and it gets back to public servants. It's never your idea. It's always someone else's and if they take it on as their idea, you've succeeded.

I think that's a fundamental part of public service what Paul was talking about of having continuity between governments is actually being able to stop and think, "I'm not elected here. This is a democracy. I believe that that's the right way. How am I going to reframe these things that I do in order to respond to who the new minister is?" Sometimes you go home and you think, "Oh, God."

But the more dispiriting thing, I think the thing you actually have to dig deeper for and I'd be interested in other people's views, is the great idea that you've worked up every three months for the last two years that's never actually got traction. That keeps on missing its moment. And actually that's the moments that the morale and stuff really gets difficult and you have to think about giving people a change. Because they'd been working on it and working on it, working on it and it never actually comes to pass. But all of us, you keep them in their bottom drawers because that ideas moment will probably come.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: I can't believe how quickly time has gone. I could talk to you for hours, but I'm going to move on to some of the questions that have been submitted. But just before I do, I would like to ask each of you very quickly. I started off by asking you about the moment of hearing that you had been nominated for PSM. Just, can you each give me an idea of what it has meant to you since, and I know it's relatively new for you, but has it changed the way you think or look at your role or your job or your commitment in any way? Ros?

ROS BAXTER: I think it's an amazing privilege. It's a privilege that I think we all think for the most part belongs to the teams who are working with you on the various measures that get recognised. I don't think it's changed the way that you do things. I think you have a sense of probably underscoring the humility you have, that sense of privilege of public service. I do get a bit, I guess, that's probably the one piece that's really activated for me is that sense of the heritage of the public service and the kind of continuity piece.

I do think a bit about what piece of my time can I try to give to that? Whether that's becoming involved in kind of service exercises that are going on. The other work that's being done, the moment about the review, what can you usefully add

to that? How can you do that in a way that takes the service forward? What do you do for new or younger people who are coming into service? It's probably underline that piece a bit for me, but I think it's mostly just that kind of celebration and recognition of the things that people you work with have done.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: Legacy is so important though, isn't it? To feel part of that long history, Caroline?

CAROLINE EDWARDS: I think it's a rite of passage that's unique to public servants. It's a bit like turning 21 or getting married, which by the way is another thing I swore I'd never do. It didn't seem to mean that much to me in advance. In a way I don't think it's changed in anything, haven't worn the medal or anything, but it did give an opportunity for all those people that I know through the service, some of whom are here to message and say what they thought and they valued the work, I remember this instance. It's a career which doesn't have those sort of things until you retire. It was a beautiful moment and so more meaningful than I expected in that way to have the recognition and so on and be able to pass back onto the staff who made it happen.

ROS BAXTER: I think that's a really good point because I also had that experience of feeling like it almost felt a bit like everyone really did feel like they own it when you got it. It felt like a very collective in those messages. That's such a good point Caroline.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: It is. It's beautiful, Paul?

PAUL WAY: Such a recognition for what's been achieved from the team perspective. That was the important thing from my perspective is that I didn't look at this as Paul Way, who has earned the PSM. It's the team supporting Paul Way is actually assisted to get that nomination. I'm still trying to find out who drafted it-

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: You're not supposed to know. Best not to know, I think.

PAUL WAY: ... but I've got about 60 people that said I started it. But the bottom line is that I would hope that none of us change as a result of receiving any award. It's great to have the recognition, but the recognition is because of your leadership style, your management style, and actually being able to deliver a particular product to lead a particular team and deliver those outcomes. One would hope that the award or the medal doesn't change that effort.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER: I'm going to move on to the... It's a bit of question, but it's [inaudible] Caroline, you made me think of it too. Don't wear the medal. I didn't wear it when I first got it, because I felt a bit embarrassed and didn't want to draw attention to it. A woman who was a great role model to me, who I respect and admire enormously noticed that at events that I didn't have it on. And she told me off, and her point was, "Virginia, you've got younger women looking up at you and they need to see that you have been awarded in this way. Because they'll ask you why and-"

CAROLINE EDWARDS: You're absolutely right. I'm just too frightened. I'll get them wrong. Because you get seven of them and they're all for different occasions.

PAUL WAY: Very quickly. I was also chastised spoke generally for the fact that I wasn't using PSM after my name came up. And one of my senior leaders sat down with me and said, I think you should be using and explain that it's not about me. It's about the

individuals then looking up and saying, "Here's something that all of us can actually aspire to and achieve at the end of the day."

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER:

I think it's very important. I must be the first time I did wear it when I finally wore it, I walked in and Jane Holden came up to me and said, "Love, you've got it on the wrong lapel." I felt so stupid but I was wearing it on the rush, so quickly went and changed. All right, we won't get through all the questions, but I will take one in particular, which I think this is a terrific question. Am I allowed to name the the questioner? Is that all right?

This is from Rachel Henry Pearson with Department of Health. It's a really good question, how do we take on the Governor General's challenge as a public service to expand our nominations, to better reflect our society, which you touched on Caroline, for example, while we're making progress on gender balance recipients slowly, but yes. More work could be done to recognise the diversity in contribution in our work force, across indigenous multicultural and broader age representation. Any thoughts on that?

ROS BAXTER:

I think in many organisations we're trying to get better at doing recognition at the local level, which gives people ideas then when these broader nominations come around. I think that's something practical that we can do, whether that's within your own small team, or if you have some sort of local level, doesn't have to be an award, but some way of recognising and mentioning what people have done. And thinking about the contributions that people make, not just to big, shiny things, but to the culture in the organisation, to the work we might've done with stakeholders, the person who is always the person who decorates the bays when it's Wear It Purple Day, whatever it might be. And noticing that range of things that contribute to the teams that then end up doing the work that wins the public service medals, and also changes the country. I think that sort of calling it out and you being whatever level you might be in the public service, being responsible for calling out achievements in that range of areas is something we can do.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER:

Caroline?

CAROLINE EDWARDS:

I agree with Ros, but I also think there's probably a little bit more fundamental thinking as a society about what we value. You said at the beginning, it's about people to go beyond their job. You can go beyond your job without having to be, as you say, very senior and difficult. Things we've done are difficult. But I think about those Centrelink counter people who face with a smile, someone who's very distressed or aggressive and so on every day and come back the next day and do it again. All those people who do our pay, we only ever pay attention to them when they get it wrong, which happens remarkably rarely.

You pull out the [inaudible] to make the payments over the weekend because somebody didn't do it. All those other people who do things in the public service that are absolutely fundamental, but don't get noticed. It does reflect what we value, which we value seniority. We value sort of being very articulate and doing all that sort of stuff. Which I like that you value that, but we should actually think about what it is that makes the whole piece fit together and start thinking about how we nominate those people more often.

PAUL WAY:

Yeah. I vouch for the view that we are the Australian Public Service, we should reflect the Australian public and the Australian public values and diversity. We've

got a lot more work to be able to do and to undertake in that environment. But that is something that we continue to strive to undertake where we can.

VIRGINIA HAUSSEGGER:

Yes. Beautiful answers. The issue of what we value is interesting. I know since being a recipient myself, now, I take a great deal, more interest in reading through all the hundreds of names of recipients of the Australia Day Honours and the Queen's Birthday Honours, all of them. It is fascinating, really fascinating what people are awarded for now. It has become definitely a lot more diverse, particularly in the last few years, which is lovely to see.

Now, I'm getting the windup notice because I've gone over time. Funny that. It's so easily done though, when there's such fantastic people to chat to. Look, I hope you've enjoyed this discussion and a take away a few little gems from it. I know I certainly have. And at this point I am asked to thank our guests, our speakers, Ros, and Caroline and Paul. We have some lovely gifts for you handed to you, apparently in a COVID safe way. Have to read that bit out. These are array of chocolates from the award-winning local company, Jasper and Myrtle. They are sensational. If you haven't had Jasper and Myrtle chocolates, you're crazy. Give them a go. They're just magnificent.

Now, as you've seen this afternoon, the Public Service Medal is an important element in Australia's honour system recognising public service. It's a significant recognition of public service and servants going to extraordinary lengths to administer and keep critical services going. The PSM award celebrates successfully delivering complex responses and often in rapid turnaround times. We hope that by having this discussion, short as it's been that perhaps it has planted a few seeds of inspiration among you all. Inspiration and encouragement to nominate among other things.

In fact, I really hope that is a big takeaway from this discussion that you will think of someone to nominate for the awards. It's very easy to do. In fact, it's got easier and easier over time. If you just jump onto the website, it's an honour website, which is itsanhonour.gov.au or speak to someone here. Carl I think is here, who could help with some information too. But it is really well worth doing. And particularly when it comes to diversity and gender diversity right across our community, the diversity of people that need and should be included. It's up to us to make that happen. Thank you very much for coming along this afternoon.