

TRANSCRIPT OF EVENT

APS Leadership: Rising to the Road Ahead

6 September 2022

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Well, good morning, everyone. Welcome to this IPAA event on APS leadership: Rising To the Road Ahead. I'm Carmel McGregor, and I'll be your host and facilitator today. I've had the pleasure and privilege of working in many parts of the Australian Public Service during my career, and have also had a long association with IPAA, so it's great, and I'm delighted to be here to bring today's event forward. And I'd also like to start today by acknowledging the Ngunnawal people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and to pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

I'd also like to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and contribution that they make to the life of this city and region. Could I also extend the acknowledgement to traditional custodians of the land if you're watching from today and pay my respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. Today's event will explore great APS leadership, what it looks like, how we nurture it and how it helps us deliver great outcomes. You'll hear from some of the most senior leaders in the Australian Public Service about what matters most on the road ahead and what they want to see from leaders at all levels.

These speakers will reflect on the leadership behaviours that have helped the APS rise to the challenges of recent years. The role leaders will play in future APS reform and how they themselves navigate leadership challenges. And our speakers will also discuss how we bring adaptive systems leadership to life in a modern APS and crucially how you can apply these ideas in your own roles. It's my pleasure now to introduce Professor Glyn Davis, and I'll just give you a bit of an introduction and touch lightly on his career.

He was appointed as secretary of the Department of Prime Minister in cabinet with effect 6th, June 2022. Prior to his appointment, Professor Davis served as the CEO of the Paul Ramsay Foundation. Australia's largest charitable foundation with the mission to break the cycle of disadvantage. In his academic life, Professor Davis has served as vice chancellor at the University of Melbourne and Griffith University. And until recently distinguished professor of political science in the Crawford School of Public Policy at ANU. Professor Davis is a public policy specialist with experience in government and higher education, and he delivered in 2010, the Boyer lectures on the theme Republic of learning. I could go on, but that's just a taster. Can you please join me in welcoming Professor Davis.

GLYN DAVIS

Thank you, Carmel. And I'm very impressed by an audience that goes quiet exactly the right starting time. Thank you. Can I join Carmel in welcoming everyone here, and I join colleagues of course, in acknowledging the original owners of this unseated land, where we meet. And thank the IPAA team for the

invitation to say a few words, and it will just be a few words to open this session. Now I confess some unease on learning that this event was swiftly sold out. I've been back in the APS just a few weeks. What useful could I sell an audience of committed, experienced, battle hardened APS professionals, people who lead teams both small and large?

It was a relief to learn that it's a panel event and you'll actually hear from some of our best and brightest sharing their APS leadership insights with us this morning. And I'm very much looking forward to hearing from Natalie James, from David Fredericks and from Peter Woolcott, each an ethical person, each with a sharp mind and a deep commitment to public service. The breadth of the agencies represented on the panel is a reminder that public service takes many forms, from policy advice to service delivery, from helping the disadvantaged to addressing climate change, shaping industrial relations, or given where we are making brilliant art available to every visitor to Canberra.

And such art, as we find here at the National Gallery of Australia, offered free to the community, sits in this extraordinary building, a reminder that the public service contributes to the fabric, the physical fabric of this city and beyond. And indeed when the National Gallery of Australia opened, it provoked a really lively debate about whether government should use architecture to make grand statements. Not only was there a debate about blue poles in the building, but there was also a debate about the building itself.

Now, if you want to experience that debate, you won't find it here, you have to go into the original wing, go upstairs and have a look above you at the extraordinary constellation of tessellate in concrete triangles built into the roof of this building. You'll see how the triangle patented built into honeycomb, multiplying into tetrahedron and octahedrons, replicating what the then commissioning architect, Cole Madigan called a timeless order. In fact, a designer of this entire original building before this extension was added, was based on triangles.

The architect was inspired by Plato and Euclid and by Pythagoras. Cole Madigan wanted the epic geometry of his design to express as he put it, the infinite evolution of human knowledge expressed as philosophy, and religion, and reason, and science and art. Knowledge said Madigan in his architectural design statement makes prodigious journeys. It seemed to me that's a lot of weight for a government building to have to carry. And geometry tells us a whole lot about knowledge, but about leadership not so much. For strict lines and spatial order and the logic and the cold beauty of pure form are a vast distance from the rather messy contingent unceasing business of leadership.

No one has to marshal triangles or tell them what to do. Tetrahedrons are always well behaved, they stay perfectly still. Octahedrons can hold up the ceiling, but they can't make much anything else happen. But leadership is about people, not the abstraction of geometry and people not easily locked into place, not easily held indefinitely in attractive shapes. People have minds of their own, they have ambitions and understanding which demands and deserves attention. Emanuel Kant wrote, and I quote, "Out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made." [Foreign Language 00:07:25], out of the crooked timber of humanity, no straight thing was ever made.

And Kant said there's not in despair but is a recognition that people don't follow neat lines, they don't stand in silent order. His practical point was that we need to recognise the contingent nature of working together. We need to avoid restricting people in all their difference into illogical or organisational straight jackets. While

in an art gallery, we can express knowledge through form, leadership requires conversation, and negotiation, and dealing with flesh and blood. Leadership must take an abstract goal, a mission, a task, and then cooperate with others to make it happen.

Now, I know we organise ourselves into neat structures into agencies with clear departmental hierarchies and apparently all leaf flows of accountability, but we all know that's not our entire lived reality. If you have to rely on an organisational chart to demand attention, you're not much of a leader. But if regardless of formal lines, you can share ideas and you can empower others, and you can draw on diversity of opinion and experience to achieve a shared goal, then you're exactly the type of leader we need in the Australian Public Service.

Of course, working from the material at hand implies an uncomfortable truth that there's no single and simple formula for good leadership. People and circumstances shape what's possible, leadership is adaptation, it's improvisation, it's not a neat line of triangles arranged as a symbol. Now I know our panellists this morning will help us see that leadership can be found everywhere and in everyone, it's about judgement, it's about values, it's about a unique personal style that complements and contributes to a collective effort. And this aspiration to share values, but acknowledged personal differences, I think is expressed very well in the new Secretary's Charter of Leadership Behaviour, which you'll find conveniently on your seats, which David and Peter and many in this room worked really hard to shape.

It is itself a collective effort. And the charter of course contains many of the qualities and leaders that I admire and inquiring mind, a positive attitude, active listening, and treating people with decency and respect. These are values, but they can also become lasting habits. Let me finish where we start in this extraordinary place. Next month, it'll be 40 years since this building, the National Gallery of Australia opened. It took nine years of construction, but there was a grand event here on the 12th of October 1982. 1,000 special guests waited to hear her majesty the queen declared the building complete and open to the public.

Sadly, I didn't make the rarefied guest list on opening night, though I was in Canberra and I recall the excitement at seeing the National Art Collection finally on display. Indeed as the gallery opened, I'd just taken leave from my doctorate doctoral work at ANU to begin my first APS job as a research assistant grade one, a classification that no longer exists. I spent long hours working in the library of the Public Service Board, an organisation which no longer exists, to inform a review of the APS, the read report, which has been long forgotten.

Nonetheless, it was a great introduction to this huge enterprise, which is the APS. A first glimpse for me at the extraordinary people and commitment which animate public service. And in the decades which followed, I returned in 2010 to work on a review of the public service commissioned by Terry Moran and in 2018 to join the independent review of the APS chair led over 30, where I worked with my good colleague Gordon Brow. And each of these reviews revealed for me, the complexity, the challenge of delivering nationally consistent programmes across the continent.

I saw so many different missions threaded together through the sector and just an extraordinary underlying commitment to serving the public, which I found in every agency. And I saw, and I continue to see the values of the leadership charter as lived practise. It was a real unexpected honour to be invited to return to Canberra

in June 2022, in fact, on Queensland Day, and to become one more piece of crooked timber in the collective effort, we call the APS. I'm delighted to join all of you in this prestigious journey and together to support the people of Australia, a task that's never finished, but it's always worth doing, a task that needs leaders. And so Carmel to our distinguished panel. Thank you.

CARMEL MCGREGOR:

Well, thanks, Glyn. And I'm delighted that this crooked timber of humanity can now join the other panel members. And I'll just give a bit of an introduction. Moving now to the panel session, could I firstly just give a bit of a background on both David, Natalie, and Peter, and then ask David to come forward, firstly, but the rest to join us here on the stage. David Fredericks was appointed secretary of the newly created Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. He's had extensive senior experience engaging on policy and budget within the APS and ministers offices, as well as secretary experience in both the Department of Industry Science and Resources and the Department of Environment Energy.

He has experienced at the deputy secretary level at the Attorney General's Department and Department of Finance. He has held ministerial advisor roles at both the Commonwealth and state levels. And prior to that, he served in the Solomon Islands Ministry of Treasury and Finance. Natalie James, welcome Natalie. Natalie was appointed secretary of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations on 11 July 2022. Ms. James has an extensive career in the public service and in employment and workplace relations.

From 2005, until 2010, she was chief council at the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and later a state manager of the department in 2010. In 2013, she was appointed the Fair Work Ombudsman for the Commonwealth. And recently, Ms. James has been a partner at Deloitte Australia. Peter Woolcott, I'm going to give you a very brief intro of Peter, everyone knows you. He joined as the APS commissioner in 2018, prior to that had distinguished career in the Australian Public Service in senior diplomatic positions around the world. Can I ask the panel to join me and then I'll ask David to firstly, take us through history marks. Thank you.

DAVID FREDERICKS:

Thank you very much for that very kind introduction. And Lynn, thank you very much for your opening remarks. And can I just say, this is my first opportunity publicly to welcome you to the public service again. And to thank you for taking on what I know is a very difficult role, a very important role and role in which I can say to everybody here in this audience, Glyn has already manifested for us as secretaries the leadership behaviours that we are talking about today. So I'm very grateful for that.

Can I just start by saying, you'll have to forgive me, I've got a bit of a lurgy as as you can hear. Can I just start by saying I was really grateful to have the opportunity to contribute to this discussion today on the panel, because I am quite proud of the work that was done in creating the Secretaries' Charter of Leadership Behaviours. I must at this point recognise the work that a good friend of mine, Simon Atkinson did. It was a joint effort between the two of us and he really was the driving momentum behind the charter. And I'm very, very grateful to Simon for that, and we all should be.

And I should also call out Ashley Sedwick as well, who did a magnificent job of supporting us in that journey. It is a really nice opportunity, I'll be relatively brief, because I know people will be wanting to ask questions, but this is a nice opportunity for me just to say that I personally engage very strongly with the

development of the charter and all secretaries did. I can talk a little bit more about that, because certainly my lived journey as a leader through the public service in ministerial offices was that I think that I am the leader that I am today for all my good and bad, by and large, as a result of my observation and learnings from the behaviours of others.

That's not to decry the importance of intellectual learning, of discipline around values, around development of skills and attributes. These are very important qualities, both for all of us as public servants, but us as leaders as well. But I do think that when it comes to leadership that I personally developed most of my characteristics as a leader from observing the behaviour of others and I can be Frank, there are people in this room who have been part of the education of me as a leader.

And if you reflect on life more generally, if you reflect on how we grow as kids, how we conduct ourselves as teenagers, how we conduct ourselves in clubs, in communities, that learning that you get from observing of others and making your own judgement about what's good and what's bad, making your own judgement about what works in terms of your own personality, I think is the secret source of learning how to be a leader. And so in many ways I often say to my leadership cohort and this applies to everybody in this room who is in a leadership position, whatever it is and where it is, your teams, your staff, your people will always be watching you, always.

They will always be learning from you, they'll always be taking their cues from you, they'll always be making judgements about you and that can either be a burden or it can be a wonderful opportunity. And for me, one of the great joys I now get out of being a leader in the public service is I know I get to influence good people to be the best possible people they can be. And the Charter of Leadership Behaviours is an attempt to say to leaders across the public service, these are the type of behaviours, these are the positive behaviours that we need you to exhibit because we need your staff to see these behaviours.

We need these behaviours to be reinforced, we need them to be lived, we need them to be praised and we need them to become part of the DNA of the Australian Public Service at all levels. That's what drove the creation of the Secretaries' Charter of Leadership Behaviours. And can I just say the reference to secretaries is very, very important, because at the end of the day, I was incredibly proud of the extraordinarily personal commitment that each and every secretary took to the development of this charter.

Simon and I had conversations with every secretary in order to get their judgements, their views about what are the behaviours that they wanted to see reinforced. That was important because we were drawing on this wonderful source of life experience and work experience and personalities. I'm a collectivist, and to be able to draw on that great collective in order to generate this charter was a wonderful thing. But frankly, more importantly, it meant that each and every secretary buys into the charter, lives the charter, owns the charter and therefore you have every right to expect us to exhibit those behaviours.

I hold myself accountable for those behaviours, every secretary holds themselves accountable for those behaviours. And can I just say to come to an end, I've certainly been determined subsequently both in my previous department of DISR and now in DCCEEW, to ensure that we have a really strong effort at driving these behaviours through my organisations. And so I've gone out of my way to make sure that all staff in my departments and all staff in my portfolio agencies

have very strong visibility of the behaviours and a clear understanding that they have the right to hold their leadership accountable for those behaviours.

And I deliberately went to the whole department because I just want to be clear. This Charter of Leadership Behaviours applies to leaders everywhere in the Australian Public Service at whatever level. It is not an SES Charter of Leadership Behaviours, it is a leaders Charter of Leadership Behaviours. And as you all know, there are leaders at all levels of the public service, because at the end of the day, all of you in one way, shape or form are role models for others in your organisation.

I've also ensured that I've impressed upon our SES to ensure that they understand the critical importance of this. And lastly, we are now in the process of making these leadership behaviours part of our formal systems, leadership systems, as well as our performance systems as well. I'll leave it there, but can I just end by saying obviously very happy to take questions but last I do just want to reflect on the fact of how grateful I am that there is such a wonderful attendance here today. I know there were some people who weren't able to come, but for me it shows that people in the public service have a thirst to understand and learn from others. And to be really honest with you, I think if you have that thirst, you're not going to go wrong. Thank you.

CARMEL MCGREGOR:

Well, thanks so much, David, it's wonderful to hear how this has all come about and we'll explore some of the themes you've touched on in the questions. And similarly, the challenge Glyn brought out about empowerment, sharing ideas and all of those things which seem embedded in the behaviours. Could I now ask Natalie to reflect and it will be very interesting, I think perspective given Natalie's just re-joined the APS, but it's also brought that experience from outside the public service. Over to you, Natalie, thank you.

NATALIE JAMES:

Thank you very much Carmel. And it's a pleasure to be here today. I must admit I haven't been back very long, even less time than Glyn and I'm sometimes still waking up thinking, where am I and what is it that I'm supposed to be doing? But Carmel mentioned the fact that I'd been out in the private sector for a while in this other planet, particularly a different planet. And I used to say planet Deloitte of professional services. And so it's interesting the public service is known for being hierarchical, and I am feeling that having come back this kind of hierarchy with all of its benefits, but it can also be even when you're at the top of it, allegedly a little bit stifling. Feel a bit strange because Glyn talked about, if you're relying on your position in the org chart, then you're not really a leader.

Well, in professional services, there is no wall chart. You've got no idea what all these people are doing. Everyone's called a partner, there are hundreds of them. And one thing I will say about my time in Deloitte is, I certainly observed much more junior people carrying a lot more responsibility than perhaps what we are used to here in the public sector. And one of the things I love about the charter is its focus on empowering people. And I think within a hierarchy that that can be tricky because I must concede and it makes me a bit uncomfortable.

Since I've become secretaries of the new Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, I have been spending most of my time with deputy secretaries and first assistant secretaries. And as I connect with and reconnect with some old colleagues who are lower down the hierarchy, I get so much from it when I reconnect with these people and hear their perspective. And so part of leadership is very much getting out there and connecting with everyone, which

can be hard because we are called upon as secretaries to manage many stakeholders, the most significant of course being ministers.

When I was asked to reflect on leadership, there are two words that came to mind to me, inspire and support. It is your job as a leader to inspire your people, why should they follow you? Why should they do what you say? Because of your position in an org chart? No, it's got to be a perspective and a style that is about being with your people as much as being in front of them. And to my mind, the listening piece is really important that value others and listen. One of the things I think some of my folk have found a little bit disarming is they will often ask me what I think or want to do. And it's very common for me to say, what do you think?

You should always have an opinion, and as a leader, it's my job to understand what that is and to bring that out. And if you don't feel confident in sharing that, that's a leadership failing on my part because you are more expert than I am in whatever it is we're talking about. With the support piece, I think in the last few years, we've talked a lot about support and sometimes support means words of support or hugs when we're allowed to do that, or pats on the head. But sometimes it means tough things too, tough talk, honest talk, direct talk, openness, but being prepared to say difficult things. It is important I think to always reflect on the small and large ways in which we can have an impact on people.

And at Deloitte, their mantra was to have an impact that matters. And I mean, of course their mantra was also their business to make money. And I was in a very commercial environment, which took some adjusting too, but one of the things, one of the ways they translated that impact piece was, when it came to performance discussions in this kind of business there's metrics, right? And it is about money, utilisation, revenue, margin, and people have targets. But the impact piece was an equal part of the assessment of how someone was travelling.

And so people were assessed based on the impact they had had on their team members, on their clients, on the business, on the practise. What impact have you had? And I think as leaders, it's always really important to reflect on that. Sometimes we might not feel like we've had much of an impact or maybe not the most positive impact, we all have days that aren't as good as others. And so while it's important we model these behaviours, I feel like part of modelling these behaviours is also there's an element of self-care or knowing your limits or boundary setting here as well.

I think it's really important, and I've learned over time that you need to take care of yourself before you can take care of others. I've been spending a lot of time on planes, it's a little bit like the oxygen mask, right? But if you are not in a good place, how can you support and inspire others? I know I find that difficult, I'm not good at faking it. And I think part of leadership is being able to be authentic, and sometimes you do need to push past how you are feeling on the particular day. But I do think it's important as leaders that our people see us prioritising a degree of self-care.

And so there are lots of different ways in which we can model that. We can model that by telling our people whose lights are green late into the evening to go to bed. We can model that by leaving work at a decent hour or saying, if you need me, you're going to need to call me because I don't sit on my emails all night. That's my wind down time. There are lots of different ways and we all have our own things I guess, but I do think, and it is are you okay day this week.

And we've spent a lot of time in the last two years asking people that kind of question. It is important as leaders to ask ourselves that question, because sometimes we're probably not. And as leaders sometimes it can be hard to recognise that, acknowledge that and even harder to work out what to do about it. Look, I'm going to pause there because I think that's a fairly discursive reflection on my thoughts on leadership. Re-entering the public service and I'm looking forward to hearing your questions and thoughts and the comments of others.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Thanks for that. That's terrific Natalie, and each of you have really touched on things that are expressed and within the charter. And Glyn, right from the start where you talked about regardless of the formal lines, the sharing ideas, empowering others, each of you have touched on that. Also thrown out some challenges around the hierarchy, inspiring having that sort of... And each of you treating your people with such decency and respect. They're terrific messages that you've imparted today and also thrown a challenge out to others to live those very behaviours and values themselves. I guess it leads me and my first question to whoever would like to answer, how are you now that this has of been agreed and secretaries have embraced it as well, how are you bringing these behaviours or this charter to life in your own organisations? You're the architect, David, you might, well-

DAVID FREDERICKS: I was going to say, I mean, I touched on that.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: You did.

DAVID FREDERICKS: But just to reaffirm that, I've certainly, as I said, I think the important thing about the charter is that it was designed in order to be able to speak to leaders in the public service wherever they are and at whatever level they are. To pick up Natalie's point, we wanted to push past hierarchy and talk to leaders where they are. And so for me, therefore, my focus in driving this through my organisations has been as a whole of department exercise.

And so I've talked to both of my departments about the charter, I've emphasised the criticality of it in the culture of the organisation and that's really important. In my view at the end of the day, these behaviours are about culture and to Glyn's point, it's not about org chart, it's about culture that leaders exhibit. And so I've taken a whole of department approach on that basis, and as I say, I've also now going to formalise it through our formal learning and development and our leadership frameworks as well.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Thank you. Natalie or Glyn, would you like to comment as well?

NATALIE JAMES: Yes. Look from our point of view, we are a new department and we are just beginning in amongst all of the things that need to be done when you create a new department to talk about culture. And to my mind, I absolutely agree. This is about the culture of how we operate. And I would like to think that many components of the charter are already alive and well in DEWR, but I also think we've got the opportunity with the new department to really set that culture and perhaps set some different ways of operating.

I think when I look at these behaviours, I think perhaps the empower piece might be the more challenging for some of our more senior leaders, because we are used to carrying a lot of responsibility. I mean, who is it that the minister or the chief of staff calls, if it's me, then I feel like I need to be responsive personally. And I think there is this peace and risk, I suppose, involved in enabling the full range of people in the hierarchy to participate fully in the work we do. And perhaps more fully what I would say, particularly having come out of a world

where much more junior people are, they're not only operating with more responsibility, they're expected to.

I have seen what people with much less experience perhaps than some of us in this room can do when you ask them, when you expected of them, when you give them the space. But that involves risk, that can sound a bit scary to a leader who by and large, we get promoted based on our ability to deliver things ourselves. There's this weird dissonance because you got to let go of that. And I guess, one of the reasons, I'm not saying I'm great at it, but because I've had some very different jobs and I've gone into jobs where I've not had the experience, I've had to rely on others. As a state manager, I didn't know what these programmes were. I was a lawyer and then I was a state manager, you learn you've got to trust others. And so the empowerment piece, I think possibly requires more work and discussion about what that looks like. What does that look like? I think is a question we need to put to our people.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Glyn, just for you to comment. But I was also then wondering on how will you know that your secretaries are all living, breathing these behaviours as well when they're sitting around your secretary board?

GLYN DAVIS: An important innovation that starts in 2010 and rolls through maybe 2011 is the secretary's board. And it's eventually captured in legislation and the legislation requires secretaries, not just to work together, but actually empowers them to make decisions which are binding on across the APS, which is different from previous regimes. And that's important because it requires the secretaries to work together around shared goals in a way that may not have been as apparent before.

And I think that's going to be for us the test of whether the values in drive are captured in the way secretaries behave when they're working with peers, particularly when asked to make decisions that they may not agree with. And that's going to happen and natural it's going to happen. And when you're asking people to give up authority in a particular area in order to get to a shared outcome, that's just part of the consequence. I think the secretaries board will be a really good test of whether these values have pervaded.

My experience as Natalie's, that I arrived in a department where I could see these values very much in evidence already, but empower is probably the difficult one, because empower and hierarchy don't go together all that well. And how you do that in an effective way is really a problem. And we have a system that tends to aggregate authority upwards, and we have a rhetoric that says we want teams to be able to work and make their own calls. That's a hard thing to reconcile and there isn't going to be a neat solution, it's going to be a constant battle. That's where I think we should be held to account for, did we achieve that part, that most difficult part of the secretary's charter?

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Now I'm just going to empower the audience now and we will have people roving with mics. If there's questions, can you please raise your hand and we'll get the mic to you.

IRINA KALACHOV: Carmel, just over here.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: We'll go up firstly there and then I'll be...

IRINA KALACHOV: Thank you. I took first place. Thank you. Irina Kalachov, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. We often hear in interviews when senior leaders interviewed and ask about their leadership style, they respond, "I'm an

inclusive leader." And I heard some responses about what does it mean to be inclusive leader, particularly in this concept of empowering other people, but not to just do lip service, but in practical sense, what does it mean for you to be an inclusive leader?

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Who would like to have a go at that Nat or David?

DAVID FREDERICKS: I'll have a crack of that one just to start with, It's a really good question, can I just say in many ways it does at least assist in answering the conundrum about empowerment that Glyn and Nat have exposed, which is, at the end of the day, I said earlier that I'm a collectivist and I fundamentally believe as a leader that I will come to the best outcome where I've included as many people as I reasonably can in a decision making process. And so inclusivity works at a number of levels.

First level is just the basic task of ensuring that as many voices as possible are brought to a decision making process. Now we know how to do that institutionally through stakeholder management and things like that. But at its very core as a leader, I certainly look for opportunities to receive as many views as possible as I can on the basis that the more advice I get, the more views I hear, the more likely we are to arrive at the right outcome. And can I just say something that Nat said that I practise, which is, when I am looking to make a decision and drawing on a collective, I'm the last person to give a view or I try to be the last person to give a view.

Because I have learned on the hierarchy piece that someone like I give a view, then it probably will restrain good people from wanting to provide their views as well. As Nat said, what do you think? My formulation is to sit quiet, to ask questions, draw as many views as I can, and then have a reasonable effort at achieving a consensus position or else a position that's been well informed by views that I arrive at. I get great joy out of leading and making decisions in collectives that I establish. That's often the executive board of my department, sometimes it's an informal group of the five people who have been working on a particular policy issue.

Again, irrespective of rank, for me, I get valuable input to my decision making from all manner of people in my organisation, my job and my responsibility is to pull those people together, empower them to have a voice, empower them to talk to me and be part of a decision making process. For me, that's inclusive leadership. For me it achieves a number of goals. It allows me to have the strength of opinion that it's the right decision. It gives people the sense of making a contribution, it develops them as future leaders and future decision makers because they're being called on to make a judgement, and it means that decision is collectively owned by all.

To really put it simply, I've lived my life and I've led on the following basis. I've always found people who I innately respect. I then ask them their opinion without exposing my opinion. If at the end of the day my opinion is the same as theirs, then it's going to be right. And I back it 100%, that in many ways is how I get the strength to be able to make hard decisions is off the back of an inclusive collective, which to the fullest extent possible is blind to hierarchy.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Thanks, David. Natalie.

NATALIE JAMES: I just wanted to emphasise often when I say, what do you think? It's because I legit don't know. I'm yet to form an opinion, I've made so many decisions that day that I'm too tired to make anymore. So can someone else please carry that load for a moment or two while I try and work out what I think. But I would say part of

being an inclusive leader is so we talk about different points of view and seeking out different points of view or being told... I think it's on us to seek out the difference, because sometimes even before we've said anything, I can see the room trying to work out what I think so they can reflect what they think, I think to me.

Sometimes you've got to work like this is the piece about the old spot on the org chart. In a hierarchy, sometimes you've got to work pretty hard almost to overcome your authority, to draw out that different view. That can be hard to do when we are operating in a screaming hurry, but I think particularly for important decisions, sometimes you've got to slow down to speed up or to get to the right place. And I do think seeking out the different point of view can be really important.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Great. Now that was a great question. I think there's a few more itching to say something, Glyn, would you-

GLYN DAVIS: No.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: All right, did you want to say anything, Peter? I've got one for you a bit later, Peter.

PETER WOOLCOTT: No, look, I agree very much with the way David and Nat were framing this, it's about having contestability for advice. I mean, our advice now we don't have enough on advice going up to ministers or the prime minister. And it has to be in a way battle hardened, it has to be actually tested with stakeholders in the wider community. And you want to have people challenging any sense of group think. And I think one of the real talents of a leader is to build a team around him, which will actually challenge his thinking obviously in a respectful way.

But you really want that, you don't want people basically trying to second guess you and what you're thinking and then just putting that forward. For me, inclusion is about well-rounded advice, which reflects different angles, the wider community, and by having people who reflect that wider diversity in the community, as well as part of your team, I think that's a crucially important part of providing really strong advice to government.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Great. Thank you for that. Now over here, Gary with the mic. And are there any other... Okay, we've got more to go. Thank you.

GARY RAKE: Thanks Carmel. Gary Rake, Australian Building Codes Board, part of the Department of Industry Science and Resources. And Natalie, another reform Deloitte partner. Natalie, I think you're right with one of the challenges being on the empower element. And I'd be interested in this fast-paced environment. And as Peter said, not having a monopoly on advice, advice coming to ministers 24/7 from all sources. In this fast-paced environment, reflections from the panel on how we balance out trusting and empowering people, not doing their jobs for them, being ready to help them pick up and clean up if they make a mistake. How do you judge how far to let people go down a path where they might make a mistake before you either step in and do their job for them or let them make it and learn it?

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Wow, who's going to take that one first. Glyn.

GLYN DAVIS: I think David gave us a really nice formulation here where he said you learn to trust people and the more you can trust them, the more you can empower them. You start with an assumption that they know what they're doing. And as long as it's endorsed by events, you go on trusting them and you go on empowering. You do always run into situations where it goes wrong. And I've found in my

experience with ministers, if you fess up pretty fast and say, "I know we said this, but now that we know more and now that we've had more opinion, frankly, we probably gave you a wrong steer. Let's now give you further advice."

People are human, they understand that they're pretty good about responding to it and about letting it... But of course it does raise the question next time someone sends up. In the Queensland government, I got advice from a colleague about an aspect of tree clearing legislation. He assured me that it was understood by farmers and would be no problem when we flew that weekend to Winton for a community cabinet. And on that basis, I signed off the cabinet brief and up it went, there were only 1,000 protesters. And I remember as we came in, seeing them and saying to the premier, that advice we gave you about tree clearing, it just happens.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Thank you, any further comments? David.

DAVID FREDERICKS: Just very quickly. Yes, two points, one, I think it's really important that the public service and all of us consistently fight the urge or consistently maintain a stance against the punishment culture through our organisations. To be fair, the public service is forever under the spotlight, because of a necessary relationship with ministers, because of set estimates. And so at the end of the day, there is a great deal of accountability and therefore pressure on all of us as public servants to avoid making mistakes.

And I think I would hope that in the past and only in the past that has manifested to a degree in a punishment culture. I regard punishment culture as a cancer in any organisation, because at the end of the day, the starting point is we all make mistakes. And mistakes as we all know, can either be a cause for punishment or a constructive opportunity to learn and to try to do things differently. And so as leaders, I regard myself as needing to hold conch to find constructive opportunities where mistakes are made.

And can I just say again, I've got to live my career on this theory. You can all take this or leave it. But my view is, in positions like ours and that includes the people who work with us. If they need to make 10 decisions, I reckon intelligent people like us again, get it right seven times out of 10. I think two times out of 10, we're going to get it wrong. And it really isn't going to matter that much. It will be manageable, very easily manageable.

One time out of 10, we're going to get it wrong, and it will require a substantial effort to manage that mistake. I've always taken the view that I'll run the odds thanks, and I will back people to make decisions and I'll back myself to make decisions because seven times out of 10, I'm going to get it right. Two times out of 10, I'm going to get wrong, but I'll manage it. One time out of 10, I'll have a problem. I'd rather have a crack at nine positivity's and deal with the one mistake.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Great, thanks for that. Just over here for a question. Thank you.

RUSSELL AYRES: Thanks Carmel. Russell Ayres, University of Canberra. I research public service agency and impact, and I also teach young public servants. And as I was listening to the panel, I was thinking, what would the young public servants want to ask you? And I think they'd want to ask you, why should they stay in the public service? What's the future for them given where you are seeing the public service and particularly the role of you leaders and their aspirations as young public servants?

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Great, thanks for that Russ.

- GLYN DAVIS: Thank you, Russell. You stay in the public service because you care about serving the public. You stay there because what we do is worthwhile. A conversation I have with my children all the time about the jobs they do and why it's always worth taking the job that has impact but matters to other people over the one that's well paid. And there are fewer worse things in life than being bored and doing something for which you're well remunerated and fewer more powerful things than doing something where you can see the difference you are making for others. And there aren't so many opportunities in our community to have those sorts of jobs and to make that difference that you would likely give them up. And the fact that we have a room full of people who are here and a whole lot of people who couldn't get in because they care about what they do, it does suggest that it's not a hard sell.
- CARMEL MCGREGOR: Great.
- PETER WOOLCOTT: And Glen, if I can just add to that, there's also just an extraordinary array of different jobs you can do in the public service, the diversity of the public service and the array of ways in which you can serve the community is unmatched in any other job out outside of the public service. That's another huge aspect to this. And so that mobility is also a critical part of working in the public service.
- CARMEL MCGREGOR: Thank you. Any further, Natalie.
- NATALIE JAMES: Look, I mean, Glen, you and I came back, so there must be something to it. I do, I absolutely think it's the ability to change the country for the better where else get the... There are lots of jobs where you can make a difference in lots of ways, but I'm here now because I could see that I could make a contribution right now in this moment with what was being asked of me, with what was being put to me, that that would make a difference to the country for the better. And how often do you get that opportunity? And I will say that I think going out and doing other things is good. I think the public services, and I would say, look, Deloitte was full of lifers too. We need to get better at bringing people in from the outside, and there's nothing better to help you do that than having gone out and come back. I wouldn't say be a public servant forever, but there's a reason Glen and I are back.
- CARMEL MCGREGOR: Excellent.
- DAVID FREDERICKS: And just one different reflection for me. I certainly, and I say this publicly, whenever I'm talking to my organisation, I want my department to be the best possible place for people to come and work. My value proposition to young people is come into my department, come into the Australian Public Service and you'll come into a first rate working environment, where you will feel included, where diversity is celebrated, where you are not judged, where you can bring your best self, where you can be your best self.
- For young people that's a very important proposition for them to know that they're coming into a workplace where they'll feel safe, they'll feel accepted, they'll feel included, they'll feel good about getting out of bed in the morning and walking through those doors into JGB. That's what I aspire to. And once they're there, they then understand that they have this magnificent opportunity to make a contribution, to be influential in giving public advice, to be the voice for evidence, objectivity in giving advice to ministers.
- To be delivering programmes that help their families, help their communities, and all against the background of them acquiring the understanding over time that there's this magnificent choice of careers ahead of them. I always say the Australian Public Service is the only institution in Australia where in a lifetime of

service, you could have 2, 5, 10, 20 different careers. That's the opportunity the APS offers young people.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Fabulous, certainly unleashed a bit of passion in that last one. That just was quite excellent. I'd now like to ask Peter to provide his concluding remarks. Thanks Peter.

PETER WOOLCOTT: Thank you Carmel. And I'd like to thank our audience today. It's been a really excellent discussion and your questions have prompted some really thoughtful responses. And it affirms Glyn's reflections at the start that leadership is about people, respect and building teams and less about straight lines of authority. The Secretaries' Charter of Leadership Behaviours recognises that how we go about our work and how we work with others is as important as what we do. I was taken by some earlier comments by Nat James about impact.

It's a nice term, which encompasses not only the concrete outcomes of what you have achieved, but also the myriad of less tangible consequences on your staff and your stakeholders that might flow from your actions. Now APS values continue to set the expectations through impartiality, integrity, and accountability for the APS organisational culture. And they are critical in the context of our democracy and governance.

But the charter takes us further, describing the behaviours required of a modern and dynamic public service culture. One that is collaborative rather than siloed, one that invests in people, respects diversity and creates an environment where ideas can be contested. David has spoken today about how the charter was developed. He and former secretary Simon Atkinson took an idea that was a central part of the cultural renaissance pushed by both the 30 review and the more recent hierarchy and classification review.

And they worked it through secretaries and through the secretaries board in a remarkably short timeframe, given the complexity and profoundness of what was being proposed. The charter is now launched, and what we do from here is important. Through the work of our talent councils and the data we have collected on our senior leadership cohort, we know that APS leaders are highly motivated and excellent at managing complexity and scale. They deliver. They're also resilient because in large part, they haven't received a lot of support from the system and we are working on this.

However, also awareness that come up in the discussions this morning are the behaviours that we need to develop. APS leaders need to get better at enabling and empowering others. This takes time and effort in a world where we are time poor and offered under pressure to deliver results. The charter rightly zeros in on this and other behaviours to ensure a less hierarchical and more joined up public service. For secretaries, we have a legislative role as stewards of the APS to ensure its future strength.

Through the charter, we are asking each of you to hold us to account. We're also asking you to consider how you can live up to these behaviours, for we all have a role in creating an APS that is dynamic and respectful, that works with integrity and collaborates and empowers its people. Today's event has been an excellent opportunity to reflect on the importance of leadership behaviours. How the charter is used and embedded will look different across each department and agency given our diverse roles and workforces.

Already I've been pleased to hear about the manner in which departments have begun building the behaviours into the way they work, including incorporating the

charter and performance frameworks, opening up discussions about leadership within agencies. And we have seen some excellent examples of agencies creating videos of their senior leaders, highlighting how they'll embody the behaviours in the charter and building the behaviours into the leadership and management courses.

There is a role for all of us in embedding and modelling the behaviours of the charter. I encourage you to reflect on the charter and talk within your teams about how each of you can embody these behaviours in our day to day work. At the end of the day, leadership is an action, it's not a position. Understand that, and you are fairway down the road. In conclusion, thank you, Nat, David and Glyn for your time today. And thank you Carmel for your contribution and hosting such an important discussion. And please join us now for morning tea and I'll hand back the Carmel.

CARMEL MCGREGOR: Well, thanks Peter. And I'd also like to thank our speakers, Glyn, Natalie, and David for sharing their experiences with us today. It's been a terrific conversation and one great to be part of to hear about the passion for public service, but also embodying the leadership behaviours that are so necessary to take on those future challenges. And great piece of work, congratulations, particularly David and to Simon for leading this piece of work, which is now really going to be part of the ongoing conversation and also to hear from Glyn to his expectations of all of you and in your roles as leaders.

I'd also like to thank you for joining us and those who are watching later and those who proposed pretty good provocative questions and led to such a good debate or good conversation. I'd also like to thank IPAA for sponsoring this event today and thank IPAA's partners for their ongoing support, KPMG, Hayes, Telstra, MinterEllison, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Microsoft. As I mentioned earlier, recording of this session along with photography will be made available on the IPAA website. And now to conclude proceedings, I'd like to welcome you to stay and network with colleagues to continue the conversation over refreshments. Thanks everyone. And enjoy the rest of your day.