

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS IPAA ACT CONFERENCE SESSION 4 “REFLECTIONS AND SUMMATION”

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Virginia H.: First and foremost, I just want to reflect again on the answers to the polling questions that we had. If we can just bring up the very first question. We had four questions. I think it's quite interesting because it was live and it was anonymous. It's very interesting as to how you answered these.

The first question which was what are the most significant factors impacting the public service over the next five years, and the strongest vote there was for public trust, as we've touched on. We know that's something, we all know that's something that we need to work on. Public trust in government and the public service. The others were pretty close actually, but the next highest one was budgetary and economic challenges. Well, I guess that's not a surprise.

The last time you had an out of the box idea inside or outside the workplace what did you do? Now this one I think is, personally I think this is a little worrying. Told someone about it was the highest vote at 48%. Ran with it and still running with it at 44, that's good. Did nothing 4%. That's great. Wrote it down and didn't take it further 4%. It's the told someone about it, the 48%. I'm assuming that in that is a lot of passing it on, possibly feeling this is a great idea but I'm not empowered to do anything about it, I will pass it on. Interesting.

Then, the next question was are you concerned by gaps and underutilized capability in your agency? 61% said a little, we have some gaps but we are working to build the capability we need. That's positive. 33, though, that's a third of you, yes, as in I am concerned, we do not have the capability we need and are not addressing areas of concern. I think a third is quite high. I think that's worrisome, and 3% for not at all, and 3% for unsure.

Some interesting thoughts. Now, George, as I said, I put you on the spot, so please forgive me, you're a journalist though, it shouldn't hurt, we're used to it. Your overview. We've heard a lot of talk, but your overview of what you've heard today.

George M.: In the overview, because we're all in the room and we've probably taken out different messages, but my perspective thinking about how a session like this two years ago might have run. There would have been a lot of recognition of problem and a lot of complaining. A couple of years back we may still have been talking about how hopeless they are up on the hill, what are the structural reasons for the volatility in the political marketplace, why do we keep flipping governments over. The fact that we've moved on from that and, Virginia, you've done a lot more of these than I have, the fact that we've moved on from that and we can have a very intelligent conversation about how to operate, how to see opportunity within a permanently disrupted environment.

Now the idea of assuming more risk or finding a way to assume more risk tells me that you're now viewing the world that we're operating in as something that is not just to be managed anymore, but something where some creative

impulses are coming into the discussion. That is an interesting development for me, say taking a snapshot even of last year's event and some IPAA events I've done a couple of years earlier.

The concerns, and these concerns are ever present for me and I'm going to address the elephant in the room, the media, because I think otherwise Virginia was going to ask me, she was just going to flick it to me as a former journalist. The concern is that the relationship between firstly politics and the public service remains strained, and I think both public service is adapting to politics re-imagining of what the role of the public service is. I think the political system still hasn't figured out what it wants from the public service in the 21st century. Whilst I'm encouraged that the public service is beginning to think again about what its role in the 21st century is, you still have that primary problem of figuring out what the boundaries are between the political and at the sharp edge their ethical decisions, ethical dilemmas.

More generally speaking the problem you have as public servants knowing that you're in a volatile political environment, whilst we're less stressed about it than we might have been two years ago, it is still a concern. The fact that you're thinking about it in a much more productive way is an encouragement for me.

One of thoughts, and I flagged this earlier. One of the things I think we need to think long and hard about is how the volatility in the political system is harming the continuity of public policy. A lot of work goes in to say an infrastructure space, and I'm boring people now by reciting the Victorian example, but the interesting thing about the Victorian example if you take the example of the Metro Tunnel, which was first mooted by Rod Eddington in 2008, came too late in the cycle for the Brumby government to action it. Again our 2010 election was the priority, they lose the election, the other side thinks their priority is not our agenda, we've got a long list of election commitments to implement. They get back to it eventually have a look at it, completely change the priority and by 2014 are doing a road not rail. Six years have passed before any work starts and you know what happened in the intervening six years in a city like Melbourne as the migration program exploded.

I've been thinking about this. How do you get around that? Now, in Victoria they're trying to deal with it by trying to set up an infrastructure advisory group that has recognised independence and can do a lot of scoping and both sides can access this information, but I think the more critical issue here is in the way politics is contested now and the way oppositions function. Most oppositions in the first term after an election loss will think, I could be back within a term, at the outside two. All I have to do is disrupt the government of the day. I don't need to think about public policy in the short term because when the grown up gets back into power, everything will be okay.

The difficulty you have in the public service is you can't sit there and continue

to advise the opposition about why this government is doing that job. That is the government's job to explain to the community, but there is something I want you to think about; and I don't know how you do it, but at some point in the caretaker provisions, at some point they've been in an election year whether it's possible and it may involve the setting up of independent policy advisory groups, so the opposition has a little heads-up into what some of their policies might look. I know at the parliamentary budget office they're trying this already so they can put them into a black box and do some costings.

The reason why I mention this is I think a lot of energy is burnt at the change of government in the head butting between the government, the incoming government, and the public service. They're trying to suss you out, trying to figure out whether you're going to be loyal or not. Depending on which group is coming in and depending on how long they've been out of office, they'll spend a fair bit of time marking off the ones they thought were too close to the government and you know a lot of you, most of you, pretty much all of you in this room, don't even think this way, but they do. In a funny way, you're going to have to find, as you think through some of the problems in the 21st century, you're going to have to find a way to help politics relearn what the role of the public service is.

Am I making sense on that? This is the most tricky area. I don't have any practical advice other than you need to start thinking about how the stuff the information that you have can be shared in a bipartisan non-political way to make sure that an opposition knows what the agenda is. That doesn't necessarily have to be the government's agenda. I understand you serve the government of the day, but there is clearly for some departments the role, part of informing the public becomes information game with the opposition.

I've sort of gone a bit off script here to talk about that particular point, but this is something I think we need to think about. Media. Let's talk about media briefly. Now, we've described changes in the 21st century in terms of technology, demography, aging of population, global shocks. The things that's happened to the media in the last fifteen years, and Virginia and I have lived through this, we are now no longer in a position to be an intelligent contributor to deep public policy debates. The example I've quoted this a few times, and forgive me if some of you have heard this before, if you take the lift out that The Australian produce, and I've captained both these lift outs so I know what the inner workings of these two lift outs were. If you take the lift out that was produced on the day that the new GST system package was released, August 14, 1998, you'll find a sixteen page lift out that reads like a very well explained what's in it for you kind of document. It reads like a budget lift out.

On the first page the story is framed around what the GST package involves, and you have to get to the end of the story before you get a single quote attributed to the opposition leader, Kim Beazley. You have a picture on the

front, which basically explains how the GST is going to affect the median voter. You have a comment piece from Paul Kelly, and then all the way through under individual sections of each individual elements of the package you have some very thoughtful pieces. We were quite proud of the work at the time, but I can tell you, we had one year's worth of backstory there.

The government was running, remember how the government ran that debate, they spent a year talking about the problems in the old wholesale sales tax system. I and a few other journalists at The Australian had pretty good access to government and pretty good access still then in those days to the public service. When we sat down and wrote the list we'd been war gaming this lift out weeks in advance, we were quite confident of what was in the package.

Do your fast forward to 2010. A few people in the room would have worked on both packages. The response to the Henry Review. Remember on that day, we got all the paperwork, a thousand pages worth of work came out the same day as that little document that Wayne Swan released which basically cherry-picked six or eight ideas. Do you know how we handled that lift out? We literally couldn't repeat the exercise, even though there was lot, even in the small response to the Henry Review. There wasn't anything really we could do because most of the stuff was a surprise to us. We kind of knew they were going to something in the resource rent area, but we didn't really know that much more. There was something on superannuation, there was something on infrastructure, there was a couple of other things. What we did is we did the best we could with what was available.

The page one story began with the first three paragraphs almost identical to the first three paragraphs of the '98 tax package. First three paragraphs explained what's in this mining tax package, you know big re-election gamble. The first quote, which appeared in paragraphs four and five was attributed to Tony Abbott. Not Kevin Rudd or Wayne Swan or Ken Henry. The first quote was attributed to Tony Abbott and it was the quote that said we were opposed.

One of the reasons why that happened wasn't systemic bias at The Australian. One of the reasons why that happened is that lockup went into a new media age. This is '98 is pre-internet. In 2010, Paul Kelly, myself, Dennis Shanahan, would step out of the lockup, and we'd do media. We'd go up and down the corridor. Martin Parkinson did observe this. He said that you guys looked like, because he'd been away for a while, he said, "You guys looked like the treasurer on the day after the budget, just running up and down, and you're journos talking to each other." We knew that the thing would go live on the internet. We knew that there was Sky and 7:30 would do some special program that night. We knew that the story would be so far advanced by the time people picked up the paper the next day that we had to predict a political. We were already one step ahead of the story, and we denied the reader the basics, what's in the package.

Now, we didn't know enough to be able to tell them anyway, even if we wanted to, but the media environment had sped up so fast that something that had so much work go into it was lost literally on the day of release because the next day we were doing the politics. This is how both sides of politics have been federal, the current government, well the previous Abbott Hockey government had the same experience with the 2013 budget. It was being assessed politically almost the day after. No one was actually going through the detail of what was in the budget. There was scare campaigns. That is the world we're operating in now.

How do you, as a public service, and do your ministers ever permit you to do this? How do you recreate in this world, the backstory that's available for the public? When The Australian goes full press new poll, or The Daily Telegraph goes dog whistling to the Hansonites, how does the public service put public policy out there, in a way that the public can consume at the speed that they still want to consume it? Now, I've texted the pollster for the liberal parties says that in the general community people still want the information about what it means and what's in it for me, and it isn't as selfish as it sounds they are still processing public information at the same speed they always did.

What has changed is the speed at which the political cycle operates. Mark did explain this to me, he said one focus group somebody said today politics sounds like a cab driver flicking through the radio. You're the customer. Cab driver's flicking through the radio. You hear a snatch of something that you want to listen to, but he's already bored and he's flipped off to something else. That's what politics sounds and this person was ... describes it that's what politics sounds like to them.

I don't think a lot of what we do in this space has changed, but I think the tools, the dissemination tools have changed, and the cycle has sped up for us. Leave that as a bit of a personal thought. I think it is true that media itself because it's been sort of stripped of its, we talk about corporate memory in the public sector. Fairfax for a few years now has been offshoring its editing. Most news organisations and this is print to digital got rid of their photographers, so editing photographic deep, deep sources of corporate memory in a news organisation have gone and then of course some new reporters.

They sort of waited in the redundancy round for the senior reporters to last, but if you look at The Australian today it isn't The Australian of even three or four years ago. I'm not saying because I'm no longer on it. A lot of the colleagues that have gone with me were specialists. A lot of the ones who remain on this paper, and they're still doing quite well compared to everybody else are political commentators that's all that's left, and I think that applies across the board. Michelle's not in the room. Michelle Guthrie's not in the room. I think the role for the ABC is try and keep the standard up as high as possible. That is

an absolute market failure at the moment. Political and policy in mass media.

One final thought. It's interesting that she's able to innovate through iView. We're no longer in a position in the media to be able to innovate. We know where the reader is, we know where the audience is, but it's almost impossible at the speed of which we're operating to catch them and hold them. We can get their attention quickly, but we can't catch them and hold them. We can't get anything back from them either other than abuse because abuse tends to come back to us.

Anyway, I've probably gone a bit off script but we did mention media in the end, and I think we need to understand that the environment we're operating in is a multiple of the stresses that you're working under at the moment. You look at where we ended up, and you think, in fact I'll want not to end up where we ended up, but we are part of it. I think we are part of the problem, but the question for all of us is then this is the culture we're operating at the moment, how do you think your way out of it?

Virginia H.: George, I think that's fantastic, and I'm glad you've focused on the media too, because as you say the question is how do create backstory. How do you create backstory for the media? This is one of my great contentions is that there is a great of fear of dealing with the media. It is part of life and it is certainly where government, politicians, the Prime Minister, staff around him, advisors what have you are focusing to get a public pulse. Sorry, I think I'm dropping in and out, but they take the public pulse from daily media, and that is why it is so important to not only create your backstory but to be getting it out there.

George M.: There was a comment made on the previous panel about how politicians react to media perceptions what it is you've done, and then they overreact. You can't step out of your neutrality. You can't go into the media and try to manipulate it, but you can try and inoculate yourself from a lot of these misunderstandings by finding some way to use the information that you've got to put it out there. I know that New Zealand is well ahead of everybody at the moment. Their almost now in a full disclosure regime. Isn't that right?

Gordon D.: Yeah.

George M.: They're hiding everything in plain sight, so if something blows up they say, "But it was already there, didn't you know about it?" That apparently that's the way they now try to cope with a lot of the twenty-four hour media storms because nothing's hidden with them, but of course that doesn't necessarily make for better public policy, but it is a way to cope with some of the stresses you're under at the moment.

Virginia H.: The sudden fires too. The other way too that we sort of touched on today is that now with the proliferation of new technology, and I think Michelle Guthrie

touched on this a little bit too. It is so broad the number of ways and platforms that we can use to tell stories that departments can be doing it themselves and bypassing traditional media. I sat at a Walkley Conference many, many years ago when Malcolm Turnbull was sitting on the stage and he was the very first politician to have his own website, this is going back a long time ago, and he had his own blog. At the time everyone thought it was a bit silly, but he actually said, and those were his words, "I will bypass all of you people," and we scoffed. What he was on about was actually quite correct that you can now produce, tell your stories, your backstories, your narratives through all sorts of means without necessarily going through mainstream media, but mainstream media is hungry for content and we'll pick it up.

We might move off the media now, though, because there are a number of other issues of course that have been raised today. Carmel, I'll throw it over to you. Just firstly your overview of what you've heard today.

Carmel M.: Well, thanks for that. It's a bit of a hard act to follow George, thanks very much. I think you said this morning, Virginia, that the mood felt sombre because of what had happened over night, and I think that's not a bad way to have a conference to be in a reflective mode because what came through very clearly early on, one of the challenges we're all facing about the volatility. I think there was gains and optimism as the day went on and I always get excited at the end of these IPAA conferences mainly because I'm thinking, well, what are we going to do next time. I really loved the first session in particular the discussion around trust and it was quite a mischievous question really, but it was well answered and well argued in the panel about the expert and the question by Helen Sullivan, but that for me it threw up and I was delighted really when I reflected that the Tasmanian award winners were actually practicing everything that the panel had said this how you get ahead of it.

You actually do have to connect and communicate. Experts will be told by non-experts exactly what needs to happen and the arrogance will be taken out because that just won't be tolerated. That has all the bi-plays is what we've seen with Brexit, Trump, and all the rest of it, and it's a warning to us that unless we get ahead of that we're into that similar sort of territory even though as George mentioned the Hansonism is the sort of 8%, but there is a disenchanted group that governments want public servants to connect with, so it goes to the craft, and this part of the toolbox now, and it goes to your point about communications. There is a role around the media, as well, but just to pick up on that I think just in the dilemmas that face the public service and its interface with the media it's all changed. I do remember those bit like Finn, the good old days, but a lot of public servants would be too frightened these days though with respected jourmos, they're looking for-

George M.: They wouldn't know who to talk to a journalist because they partly you don't trust them to do it.

Carmel M.: You'll have ministers who say, "Butt out of that." People have worked in departments where there's been great comms people, and invariably when the ministers change they say, "Well, thanks very much for that. Over to us, and you deal with the bad news, and we deal with the good news." Invariably it changes back when they see the value add. I mean, look what Hank Jongen it's a case in point, but when you then are out of practice and this goes to another point which I thought was terrific from both Catherine Livingston and Blair and Helen about practice and routine, in a way the public service is out of practice and now with all of the mediums that you need to engage with and there's a bit of a thing called a day job, they're not really going to engage with that. They'll run a mile and try to defer to experts, so it's a sort of a self-defeating problem, I suppose, but that was it.

I did want to pick up, I thought there was almost like a master class from Catherine Livingston in that execution, and it threw up that we all and you posed the question a couple of times about the risk adverse nature of the public service, but I think there were lessons there about how you do manage risk and the parallels with Apple as she talked about the culture of execution and I think that the difference was and we have had governments push public servants to deliver when the advice was we're not ready, she was saying you manage the hazards, you absolutely nail it, you pick up what the other's said, you think pilot, you practice and you execute, but with that absolute precision on execution. I thought there was some sort of bits when we came, then we came the full circle for what's the capability and what are the things that the public service needs to build to stay ahead of the game. That's probably where ...

Virginia H.: A lot of great talk about talent too, and talent development and identification. Gordon, you're over there. Your take of what you've heard today.

Gordon D.: Thank you Virginia, I think it's been a great day. I'll maybe make two points. One is going to that issue of how do we build up the public trust in government, and then the second is on capability and maybe what Catherine Livingston was talking about, strategic capability. Just in trust in government, I think we've all got a sense of that, and you've talked about that but that's not the end of the story. It's what do you do about it. I think that there are very practical things that public servants can do. We are currently responsible for it, and we can also be partly the solution to it.

I think a number of things are being talked about, including around all of technology, but I'd highlight two bits in particular. It's the nature of engagement of public servants with the public, and then it's also the way we communicate, the way we talk. The nature of engagement, if we do it the best way, so how do you get the public to trust government? It's that we talk and engage directly with people and with businesses, with communities, or with NGOs and others. You talk about what the issues are, what the problems are,

what are we facing, what would be possible, what would be the characteristics of solutions to those problems, not necessarily what the solutions are themselves, but the characteristics of the solution that you're looking for. Then, maybe specifically, what do you think are those solutions?

That's kind of ideal engagement. It's not stakeholder management which I think is one of the most disgusting phrases that's come into the lexicon because they're not stakeholders. They're people, they're communities, they are businesses, they are NGOs, so they're not stakeholders, and they're not things that we manage. Stakeholder management connotes control and limiting, and how do we make them do what we want them to do. The ideal practice of engagement is that open proper conversation, and you can have and we do have proper serious conversations with people about the issues. That sort of conversation, though, that's taken as the norm in which the way the public service engages, and some of that's private, then that can help provide confidence in public administration.

The other is the language that we use. What we've developed, unfortunately, we've developed a dialect. It's our dialect, and no one else understands it. If we start to use language of ordinary people, people out there. We don't use jargon, no acronyms, we don't go to that. We have active language. We don't have passive language. We use that sort of language, then I think people can, it resonates. You can see it how people suddenly that their eyes glaze over once they hear sometimes the way public servants write, or talk. That's become a dialect and it becomes self-reinforcing, and I think it's something we just pull back from. Trust in government is something that's in our control, we can influence it, and the way we engage and the way we talk matters.

The other is just one strategic capability. Catherine mentioned that, and I think it's very important. We've talked about a whole range of capabilities, but the strategic capability is understanding the forces of play in the world, be they in any, I'll talk to you about some of the dimensions, but then what do you do about it? How do you position for it? What does it mean for government, for policy, how you tell the story, and how you basically create constructs of people to understand the events of the world or the events of the day?

What we see it's kind of an extraordinary position, and this is very unusual. I'm trained as a macro-economist, so you talk about where are the risks. We've got multiple risks. We've got real economic and typically they relate to budget and debt. We have financial risks that relate to poor financial balance sheets. We have defence risks, genuine security risks. We have political risks. We have a lot of uncertainty. We have a massively changing world over time in terms of climate and environment and degradation. We have all of these things, and demography that George has talked about. Many of them are negative and many of them are occurring in many economies, many major countries at the same time. The United States, parts of South America, China, North Korea,

Europe. We have all of these. We have a conflation, we have a high risk environment, and we have a conflation of these risks.

Our language and our analytic tools of thinking about this are poor. We tend to separate the risks. We treat them as independent, separate and they're not. Our language especially the bureaucratic, the language of public policy forces us to separate them. We identify strategic risks as just being defence, or foreign policy. Frankly, strategic risks are all of these things. They're all risks. There's a lot of discussion to be had internally around what we see happening in the world that it's related to what we do, it may not be everything we do, but it's related to what we do, especially if there's more political uncertainty or changes, then it's incumbent on us to have those conversations very directly amongst ourselves, so we understand what's going on, we have our eye on the prize, we have a very clear perspective.

I'll stop there.

Virginia H.:

You can go on for hours. I was enjoying that. Gordon, I actually just want to touch on something though with you in regard to risk, and it sort of goes back to what George said at the beginning about we've doing, or he and I as journalists have been going to conferences and events like this over many, many years, and that's true, and I certainly have. I feel quite buoyed by what I've heard today, because I am feeling a genuine difference. I have been listening, journalists speak a different language to public servants. In fact, it's taken me years to realise it's not actually Chinese or a completely different language, and you know I've been frustrated by that over the years, but I'm now feeling like there's genuine movement. It's not just stakeholder talk, but I'm hearing of great things. I'm hearing of great innovation, of great programs.

Also, seeing a change in culture, and I think that's what's come through today, which is positive. As George said, some years ago you'd go along to these events and they would be whinge fests and mostly an attack on the government, and that hasn't been the case today. It feels to me like we've gone beyond that, and we're taking greater responsibility ourselves, and that's a very important thing.

I want to touch on the issue of risk with you, though, because this is a deeply important one I think about. Do we, can we really believe what we're being told from higher up about be flexible, agile, courageous, and not risk averse, but get out there and take risks and make mistakes? As we've touched on this today, mistakes are made and then people told heads will roll et cetera et cetera. Now, I don't want to embarrass you, but I want to bring up an example last year when year-end Senate Estimates and this very thing came up where you were involved in a major mistake and you were asked for a scalp. Now, can you share with us what actually happened, and what you said because I think it's important that people know that these discussions are being had. It's not just rhetoric on a page, but these discussions are playing out in real life. Just

without giving us all the detail and naming names, just what happened?

Gordon D.: Okay, Virginia. It's in the Estimates record, Hansard Record from last year, so I'll just go back. In 2013, there was a decision by the court that a particular form of advice to a government wasn't done properly, therefore that advice was invalid and the technical argument there was you didn't formally attach two documents that we think you should have attached. Now, the conditions in our brief were completely covered. All of the elements that were in that, but they weren't technically attached. In response to that, the department changed its practices, so we really tried to bring those things in, but didn't work. What happened last year was around remaking of the Carmichael Decision for Adani. The government, or the Minister, had to withdraw that approval and remake that approval because the department hadn't done the same thing that it ... We knew that the courts would say that we should have done.

Lots of anger from people around that, and an explanation of what's happening, who's taking responsibility, and I think the point is that in this case, the people had really tried to address the problem. They'd done so in good faith. They were very clear to me, this is all in my Senate Estimates, this is like being back at Estimates.

Virginia H.: Don't worry, I'm not going to grill you.

Gordon D.: Again, they had said that they were responsible, and the thing is, if I was to say, "Okay, well that's it. Goodbye"

Virginia H.: Just to be clear about this, though, you were asked for a scalp quite clearly weren't you?

Gordon D.: Yeah, yeah-

Virginia H.: You were told that someone had to go.

Gordon D.: Well, I was asked who would ... It was clear that someone should go-

Virginia H.: I think it was actually a bit blunter than that, but okay we'll accept that for now.

Gordon D.: Read the Estimates. I said no. I just said no. Look, if I do that, what do we end up with? Well, frankly, as soon as you knock off someone because they made a mistake, they've tried. It's not malfeasance, it's not negligence, it's not fraud, not that sort of a real misbehaviour. They have tried to do their job. It didn't work, but they tried. Well, the point is, what do you learn from it? If you sack people over that, what sort of culture do you end up with? You end up with a culture that's going to hide things. They're going to keep it away. No one will make a decision. Everyone is scared, and you end up, frankly, with the Cornelia Rau problems that occurred in the Immigration department in the early 2000s. That

was a culture of hiding things. That's what you end up with when you go down that route. Very expressly, and very strong support from others around this, no, it's what we learn from it, and ultimately if anyone's responsible, I am. It's my job, and I'll take responsibility.

Now, what I say to my staff then is, "I've got your back. You take a risk. You try, so have a go. Have a go. Try it." You use the system, and the system means that you test the ideas, you talk about it, you engage with others on it, and you elevate it or you talk about it if you think there's a risk to it. You don't run on your own little private frolic, that's unacceptable, but if you use the system, which I think this is what Cath Ingram was talking about, governance matters hugely. If you've got that system, got your back, and I expect my SES to have the back of their staff, as well, so that becomes a behaviour in the department. That goes to the risk thing, and what you see is then people trying things. They try things, and if something goes wrong, well again, if it's well-intentioned done properly, it's what do you learn from it? What do you gain from it? Practically, what do you really get from it?

Virginia H.: I think this is an important one just to remind people of because it is evidence that culture is changing and to hear leadership respond this way in a Senate Estimates is very, very gratifying, I've got to say. We are going to wind up, but George I'm just going to come back to you for one final observation. We've talked about thinking big. We've talked about innovation. We've talked about capability. Just, now knowing you're not a futurist, but projecting way forward, what would you hope or expect perhaps hope that a conference like this way down in the future would be discussing?

George M.: What we'd be discussing. You would hope at a conference in the future we would have, this is the content that I would be looking for, the Australian public service is able to in whatever context the next five or ten years they'd be able to say to the rest of the world, do you know going back a hundred and fifty years, we have a tradition of pragmatic social experimentation and innovation in public policy, and here's what we did in the last couple of years that fits the story that goes all the way back to the first democratic colonial governments. That's what I'd hope we'd be able to say, so that's the glass overflowing version.

Virginia H.: That's that aspiration. Thank you. I think that's a terrific thing to aspire to. We do have one final exercise for you, and this is a really quite a delightful one. Pick one word that describes today, and enter it into your device, could be a topic like innovation, or a feeling like excited, maybe exhausted, maybe over it, maybe stimulated, whatever that word might be. I think a bunch of words will come up, just type what feels right to you and those words will start swimming before our eyes just as a little reflection as you're parting and saying your goodbyes. Enjoy that, and hopefully, we'll see you all next year. Thank you.

SESSION CONCLUDED