



TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS SECRETARY VALEDICTORY

MARTIN BOWLES PSM

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Dr. Parkinson:

I remarked a few weeks ago that Gordon de Brouwer's valedictory address was one of those occasions when the personal and the professional collide, and so it is this afternoon. It's always bittersweet to farewell a valued friend and a trusted colleague, and today we farewell Martin Bowles. Martin is one of the most down-to-earth, affable, and practical secretaries I've ever met. His reputation for not only being adept policy operator, able to tackle the most difficult issues, but for doing so with his signature flair, getting to the heart of an issue, harnessing the full expertise of his colleagues and staff in the process.

Let me take you back, and this is particularly for your young graduate, wherever they might be, 40 years ago, which is when Martin joined the public service ... public sector. Martin was born in Rockhampton in Central Queensland, and he joined Queensland Rail spending the next 14 years working between Rockhampton and Brisbane. Along the way, he collected a Bachelor of Business from the Capricornia Institute in Advanced Education. As I said at the Secretary's Farewell Dinner last week, I think Martin's probably the only secretary who has ever been a product of the Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education, well done them. Later on he went and got a graduate certificate of Public Sector Management from Griffith University. Martin then moved ... because when you think about moving careers you're often thinking about just a slight movement from one sector to another sector that's really close by, Martin did the obvious thing, he went from railways to healthcare. Now it sort of says something about Martin's strategic, sort of blue sky, over the horizon capabilities.

How did he get his first CEO position in the area of health service? It was when he was tapped on the shoulder by his boss and said, "We want you to go in and have a look at a couple of problems." Martin and Deidre moved to a small country town, and on his first week in there Martin was convinced that this was one of the friendliest places on Earth. As he walked down the street people smiled at him, they said hello, and he thought, "This is fantastic," until he walked in the newsagent, at which point he saw a big picture of his mug on the front page of the local paper with the headline, "The job nobody wanted." In spite of that inauspicious start, Martin did well there and learned a pretty important lesson that in Canberra one could easily forget, and that is how much people care about their local services.

Martin moved from health making another, only slight career change, and came to Canberra as Deputy Secretary of Defence in 2006. Think about it, railways, healthcare systems, defence, you'll see a pattern here, big, dirty, messy, complex organisations. Martin quickly earned a reputation amongst secretaries as a person you could trust with really hard problems. When I got the phone call from Terry Moran that we were now no longer the Department of Climate Change, and I was no longer the Secretary of the Department of Climate Change, it was now the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency, and I had no idea what the hell this mean, and he said ... Terry said to me, "But don't worry, Martin Bowles is starting with you tomorrow."

It turned out that this department was created out of a consequence of the fallout of the Home Insulation Programme. I'm not going to go over that,

we've had Peter Shergold talk improvements. We've had numerous conversations about what went wrong with that programme, but the point was we needed someone to handle a really difficult problem, the chaotic fallout of the Home Insulation Programme, which had, by that stage led to the death of four innocent young Australians. This was a critical moment for the APS, when our reputation as an ethical trusted public service able to deliver complex programmes was being sorely tested.

A programme the APS had been responsible for had led to the deaths of fellow Australians, four young Australians who hadn't really had a chance to grow and develop, and have the lives that the rest of us have had the chance to experience. But not just the deaths of those four young Australians, we had 1.1 million houses that had been insulated on to the programme, which were potentially safety risks. Safety risks in the sense that the house could burn down. A safety risks that the owners or their visitors or trades people who came to rectify the insulation that had been put in could be electrocuted and killed themselves.

In those challenging times Martin was both energised and driven to resolve the situation. One of the things that were striking for those of us who worked with him during that period was his deep calmness, the centre of his personality allowed, at a time when it would have been easy for us to panic by how overwhelming this challenge was, Martin was a bastion of calm in the centre of it. He was focused, he was reassuring, all in all he was a great leader because he developed along with his team solution approaches that took us way outside of anything the public service had ever done before. I'll have to say way outside anything I hope we have to ever do again, and for that he was rightfully and warrantably appointed a member of the Order of Australia by receiving a Public Service Medal.

He was subsequently appointed Secretary of the Department of Immigration Citizenship in March 2012, and he led the establishment of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection after the election of the [inaudible 00:06:50]. Martin was right there at the creation of DIBP and at the set-up of Operation Sovereign Borders. He then moved to the Department of Health in 2014, where he's overseeing what is significant health reforms in anybody's language. In every one of these areas Martin has been, he's actually left a huge policy and programme legacy, but what he really leaves is something that transcends those policy and programme achievements, everywhere he has worked he will be remembered for his inspiring, inclusive, collaborative leadership, and the life that he breathes into each and every organisation in which he set foot.

From the absolute inundation of e-mails and messages of things Martin has received in the past few weeks, and the comments that we got when we asked around PM&C, "What do you think of Martin Bowles?" "Good work. Great guy. Real leader." I think you get the idea of the impact the man has had, and the loss that we will suffer with him having gone on to do other things for the rest of his life. I'm really pleased for Martin and I'm incredibly pleased for the organisation that he's going to lead, but for the APS we will have, as with Gordon, suffered a deep loss. I'm lucky though, that as long as I behave myself you will remain a friend, and I look forward to seeing Martin's

on-going contribution in public life in Australia, for which we will all be better over the years ahead. Martin, welcome.

Martin Bowles:

Well, let me first start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to elders past and present, and to also acknowledge any Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander, all of the people here with us today. Firstly, thank you to IPAA and thank you to Frances for that introduction, and giving me the opportunity to give some reflections on what's happened. I think IPAA is a great forum for the public service, but we need to commit to it, and I think we've seen that in the last few years, firstly with Glenys and Gordon, and now Frances, we have really, I think reinvigorated IPAA to a point where it can be a great support for the APS more broadly.

It's great to see so many people here. It really is fantastic. It's a little bit confronting in a whole lot of ways. I had to put a tie on today for the first time in about two and a half months, and that was hard. I've had a suit on once before, and that was the Secretary's Dinner, but I refused to wear a tie there, but can I also thank Martin for those kind words. I think I'll invite him along to my new organisation to do the introductions for me, that would be good. It might help me get my foot in the door.

I've been thinking, I left at the end of August, so I've been off for about six or seven weeks now. I went on holidays for a while and that was fantastic, and I've been back for a few weeks, and just thinking about what I was going to say today has given me food for thought really. Martin's touched on a range of things I've done, I'll probably touch on some of those as well as we go through, because I could come here today and give you all a lecture about what needs the APS needs, what can we fix, why is it broken, if it is broken, I could organic all of that, but I think that would be really arrogant, and that's not what this is about.

I think we need to think differently in the APS. Absolutely, I don't think it's broken. I think there is enough leadership in the APS to take anything to any new levels that we want to. Those who know me would know that I'm not really going to go around and be that arrogant person, because I'm usually five or six steps ahead trying to think of solutions if we do have a problem. I'll be wanting to do that. I thought today I'd talk about what I've learned about organisations and about myself over the last little while, and I'll probably wonder off into some stories. I'll try not to repeat anything that Martin said, but you don't hold me to that. What I would hope to do by doing that is to give you, members of the IPAA's, the inspiration or at the very least the inclination to take the great institution of the Australian public service forward, because that's what is required right now.

I have had an absolutely wonderful and interesting public service career, probably not your typical Secretary of a Department in Canberra, but hey, it takes all kinds, somehow eventually we get there. As Martin said, I joined the APS in, well, nearly 40 years ago, just shy of 40 years, worked in Queensland, New South Wales, and the Commonwealth, but Martin mentioned I was born in Rocky up in Central Queensland. I went to school at the local Catholic school with the nuns. I mentioned that because it's important where I finish

this story, but I started with the nuns. Those of you who went to Catholic school with nuns remember that rule with the knuckles. I'm a bit worried about that in the next phase.

I did go to uni in Rocky, Capricornia College of Advanced Education, which later became Central Queensland University. I was the first in the family to go to university, a working class family, first person to go to university. I majored in golf and drinking, and quickly decided I had to do something to support that habit so I got a job. I applied for three jobs back in those days, and one in the insurance business, one in the local electricity world, and one in Queensland Rail. Just a background, talking to mom and dad, "Oh, you need stability, Martin. You need stability. QR is the go." Bang, that's where I was. I got three jobs in a week. You could do that in those days. I'm not sure it's quite as simple anymore, but anyhow so there you go, I got to work in QR and I quickly realised that if I wanted to be different, if I wanted to make a difference I need to do something.

Back to uni I go, QR, before grad programmes were even grad programmes for those grads out there, they have this thing called, "We'll pay you to go to university so we can really get you educated to run the world." I went and Queensland Rail very generously paid for me to go back to university, and I did that and eventually I graduated, and so on and so forth, but who would have thought that 30 odd years later I'm sitting at the centre of public policy thinking for the country? I never did. I never ever thought that this is where I'd end up when I finished [inaudible 00:14:58], counting, and computing with my majors, I gave ... well, I didn't give up golf and drinking, but I probably put them back into the secondary category. You just don't think sometimes that you can end up in certain places. I suppose my life then became something about, "How do I prepare myself for whatever's coming next?" I never believed I'd end up in Canberra, and in fact I was probably one of those people who's quite disparaging about Canberra, but let me just go back a little bit.

I said I was one of those early type graduates so they looked after me, they mapped out my career, and they said, "You're going to go far young man," but I was bored, I was restless. It wasn't really enthusing me, and I think it was one of the very first lessons for me, was if I'm not engaged, if I'm not having fun, if I'm not enthused I'm not going to do it well. I made a lateral move, I moved into a finance job in Queensland Health, where I started to get bored as well, and then I had the opportunity to run a couple of hospitals. I went on three months long service later and I loved it. I'd actually been bitten by some form of bug, that meant I wanted to know more.

Eventually I got sick of all of that in Queensland Health, I moved in New South Wales Health, went to the Richmond District, which was fantastic. I was recruited in February '95, I was appointed early March '95. The election was the end of March '95. I took up in April '95 and my job was abolished in June '95. A great career move, but as it turns out, things happen and eventually I played a few roles up in the Northern Rivers and had a good time with my friend and colleague Mike Cormack. Then I was appointed to the Chief Executive of Midwest Area Health Service, which Martin referred to, where my ugly doll was in the paper and everyone was really laughing and

not being friendly, but we won't go into that. I'll touch possibly on that a little bit later.

After that I went to Prince Henry, Prince of Wales Hospital, CEO there, CEO of Wentworth area Health Service, moved into education as a Deputy Director General of New South Wales Education for a period of time. Those roles though gave me such a great grounding, a great understanding of how the system works, how it works with consumers, everyday consumers, because what you see when you're out in state world is you see that consumer very, very closely and very, very acutely sometimes, especially in the health portfolio I have to say. Education was also interesting, because funnily enough everyone goes to school, so everyone is interested in what happens in education.

Anyhow, what you don't get though sometimes is the big picture or at the very least, your big picture is about the size of the Mona Lisa, quite small if you've ever seen it. Your world becomes quite different and I noticed that when I come to the Commonwealth, and I'll touch on that in a minute. Education, I've been there for quite a few years and it did become a little bit groundhog dayish. The Commonwealth thought they invented building the education revolution and laptops to school students and all that, well, we were doing that year on year, time and time again. I think I built more covered outdoor learning areas, our halls and classrooms than I care to ever think about ever again. It was well before they're building the education revolution.

Anyhow, I was getting a little bit sick of a few things then around New South Wales and I thought, "Oh well," somehow approached me about a health job in Victoria and I said, "Oh, all right, all right," and that seemed to take a bit of time. Then someone said to me, "What about defence? Rick Smith's looking for a deputy in defence." "Not interested. Not interested." 11 years later, I've been in Canberra for all that time and I did start in defence as Martin said, and I have to say I have loved every minute of it. Since being here I love the community. I love the APS. I love the organisational aspects of the things we've dealt with.

The Commonwealth though is fundamentally different to the state as what I've learned. Yes, they're about politics, they're about bureaucracy and about process, but they are fundamentally different in all those aspects. I quite often describe when you work in a local government, when you're in area of health service you deal with local government a lot. In local government your customer is right there and you can't escape them, the state's usually about here. The Commonwealth generally, the customer is over here, unless you turn your head to look at them occasionally you might forget them, but I think we would do that and [inaudible 00:20:16] peril. We need to remember those sorts of things, because they're there, and we do have probably a bigger impact than the states do because of the way our federation actually works.

We talked about defence, climate change, home insulation in the middle of all of that, immigration, health, I've had the privilege to be the Secretary of two of those places, deputy in the other two, and the people I've worked

with have been absolutely fantastic, all levels. They're intelligent. They're committed. They're open to innovation. They're responsive to the never-ending need for change, and they're desperately looking for the leadership that will drive the APS, and that's something that I really loved, and it's something that really got me enthused every single day. I could go through a million stories, but I don't have the time. You might want to ask me some questions later on about some of those interesting things that have been out there, but a number of people in the room, and it's great to see quite a number of people that had been with me in different guises, in all of those organisations, some poor buggers, some have been a long part of those journeys, poor buggers as well.

It has been a really fascinating time, 11 years, it has been the best time for me. I said before it's important, it's important that we, I'm still saying we because I haven't really gotten out of that yet, in the public service is to keep the consumer front and centre of our thinking. I mentioned the state's here, and us here, let's flick at it occasionally and look to what's actually happening out there, because it really is important. The Commonwealth and why I think I loved it so much, where else do you get to play on the national stage? Where else can you have a positive influence, and hopefully it's always a positive influence on things that matter to everyday Australians? That's why I think I've really enjoyed my time.

Let me just touch on ministers, 11 years, I've had six Prime Ministers in those 11 years, twice was Mr. Rudd, 12 Cabinet Ministers and 11 Junior Ministers in that time. As Secretary, I had four or five depending on how we want to count Mr. Rudd, Prime Ministers, seven Cabinet Ministers, and seven Junior Ministers, and that's not a long period of time to deal with that many people. We've got to remember what the public service and the ratio of secretaries to ministers is quite fascinating. I used to walk down the hallway of Immigration, it was fantastic because they had the secretaries on one wall and they had the ministers on the other wall. They had to extend the ministers' wall, but the secretaries' wall was still quite short because you can actually do that. You got to remember we are the brains trust, we are the corporate memories, we are the ones who actually need to make some of the really tough decisions and make tough calls occasionally. I'll touch on that when I get to my lessons.

A couple of really fantastic ministers I've dealt with, Greg Combet, Chris Bowen, and Scott Morrison, I'll only mentioned a couple. They worked hard. They worked hard, but they were hard, they were demanding, they were challenging, some more than others. They were interested in what was going on though and they'll absolutely respectful of public service and what we could contribute to that broader conversation. If you want me to talk about the other 20 odd ministers and others that I've dealt with read my fictional book that will come out next year.

What have I actually learned? Because I think that's the real lesson. As Martin said, 40 years is a long time, going back to Rocky, if I wanted to start this all again would I start it in a different place? No, because I am my life's experience, and I think that's what makes me today, right back to the nuns, which we'll touch on again later. For me, the things that I think have made

some of these easy for me, some of this hard for me, is to make difference. Difference is really important, and I'm not just talking about let's play lip service to any particular category of person, we can't do that. We are a community that's made up of many different types of people, and it gets right down to my life is different to your life, no better, no worse, just different. To think if we can actually put a team together with that difference, and the make up of our community, what difference we will actually make to the Australian community.

I have always run pretty strongly on recognising difference for what it is, whether it's our Aborigines and Torres Strait colleagues, whether it's the LGBTI colleagues, whether it's our disability colleagues, our multicultural colleagues, our colleagues from Rockhampton, we are different up there by the way as Queenslanders, but it is important when you're actually developing, which is the second really important thing for me that I've learned, the team. The team that you build cannot be clones, they must be made up of that difference, because if they are not made up of that difference you will have less impact on the community that you're going to serve. Saying that when you have a team you need to develop that team, you need to build the skills and then you need to trust them, because they're out there trying to do a good job.

I've said a number of times in a few organisations now, "Generally people come to work to do a good job." Sometimes they're not that good, there are issues, but generally though they don't come to work to do a bad job or to be evil, apart from a couple of psychopaths that I've worked with, who I won't mention today, but we've got to recognise people will want to work for good leaders. People will want to do a good job when they come to work, we have to enable that, so build your team.

The other thing is once you've got a good team don't be frightened to let them go, because they need to learn different things, they need to broaden. Generally speaking what I found, they always come back, a couple of people in this room have keep coming back, and that's a fabulous thing, but it is really important that we actually think about that. Also, on teams, make sure you make your mind up about people. Martin mentioned when I went to that area of health service that there were a few problems there, oh my God, there were some problems there. The budget, the people, there were doctors, everything, you couldn't jump out some of these issues, but one of the things the Head Office then said was, "The Executives are useless, just get rid of them and start again."

One of the things I did is I went there and I talked to people, I made my own mind up, and yes, there was one of them who was pretty evil, and needed to find a different alternative in life, but the great thing was some of them wanted to do a good job but couldn't. The leadership wasn't there, they were in the wrong job or something like that. Try and make sure people are in the right jobs, because people end up doing things they don't want to do for a whole range of reasons occasionally. Get them as best you can to help you get you deliver your message. Now the great thing for me is one of those useless people who was said to be useless, followed me as a CEO of that area

of health service for the four or five years after I left, he wasn't useless. He just had not had the opportunity. Make your own minds up.

Listen and watch is another thing I tell people all the time, and people from health are probably sick and tired of hearing some of those things. I'll talk about some of those, but listening and watching, you know you got two eyes, you got two ears, and you got one mouth, most people get the reversal of that, they keep bloody talking and won't let people get a word in. Again, I won't mention any names although I've got a long list, but watch and listen because it is amazing when you do that is what people tell you. It's sort of legendary in health about the lift stories, because I had to make a throwaway line on my first day talking to the whole staff, "Oh, if you see me on the lift don't hesitate to just have a chat to me." There was a certain issue that nobody talked to anybody in the lift in health, well anyhow that became a little bit of a story, and it was fascinating. It's the lessons and the things you find out, so just have a quick glance.

In the lift one day and there's this woman on the brink of tears, I said, "What's wrong?" "Oh, I'm just been stressed. It's okay. I'll be fine." I said, "What have you been stressed about?" "Oh, I'm trying to get this report done for you so you could get it to the Minister tonight." I go back up to my office and say, "What report have I got due tonight to the Minister?" Of course there was none, someone was using the power, if you like, of the Secretary's Office to get something done. There's a million other things like that.

My absolute favourite, and I tell this one everywhere now, is I go to the lift with this young lady and her about five or six year old son, and I was chatting to her, "How is it going?" "Yeah, really good." I said, "So you've got a new worker in today." "Yeah," chat, chat, chat, and I said to the son, "So you're looking after, Ma?" "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Now she was crying all night last night." I just went into this blind panic, "Why was she crying all night?" I didn't actually ask that because I didn't want to know, and I say, "Oh, okay." "Yeah, yeah, she dropped the phone in the toilet." I thought, "Hmmm, I probably didn't need to know that bit," but just watching and listening what goes on around you.

A number of my old deputies have been caught up by this quite often when I say to them, I said, "What's happened with Joe?" "What do you mean?" "Well, I've just heard boom-boom-boom." "How do you know that? That's not true." They go away and they come, "Yeah, well that is true." You got to watch and you got to listen to what's going on around you because you pick up a hell of a lot.

A couple of other things, embrace a permission culture. What I mean by that is one, where people are prepared to try different things and not be worried. One, where if things go wrong there's no crucifixion's held at dawn or dusk, because things do get wrong quite regularly in fact. The real thing is how do we get ourselves through it? How do we change that dynamic? If you create a culture where people feel like they have permission to do things you can get anything done. Home insulations like that, immigration was the classic for me. We had some of the most horrendous issues happening quite

regularly, and we kept doing the same old things, so we created an environment that all of a sudden we did different things. We changed things.

Well, there's a whole lot of people who's going to claim credit for stopping the birds, I won't go into that one either, but it's ... everyone plays a part in this and it is by creating the culture that allows people to try different things. One of the things that goes with that is don't shift the blame. There's a great exercise and that goes on usually because you can't get into trouble. Those of you in health will remember the fantastic bunch of lock-up night of 20, whatever it was, 15 I think, where I was absolutely smashed. The media, standard estimates, every one of the victim, well, as I keep saying, "I'm the Secretary. I'll get it right next time."

We got it wrong, me bashing to death the person or persons, and there was quite a few persons involved in this issue who's not going to help. They knew they bugged it up. They didn't do it again and I didn't say anything. Don't try and blame, I think is one of the real things that I've learned over that time, because fear cultures drive things underground, and people will be too frightened to raise anything. If you don't know better you'll get killed in the crossfire. With permission of course, you have to engage with risks, and sometimes that's organisational risk, sometimes it's a personal risk, but you need to balance risks with innovation, with facilitation, and good governance. Home insulation was the classic for me.

Home insulation, we had the Hawke report, Allan is here somewhere today, ANAO report, a Senate Committee, estimates inquiries, and a rural commission, but that was so 2009 and '10. While that sounds funny, people forget the problems or they didn't live through them, therefore, they just don't want to know or in some cases, they're trying to prove themselves they have this can-do attitude or they have the Nike attitude, "Just do it." I think it's up to us as public servants to keep reminding people occasionally about those things, because there's a million and one things that can go wrong all the time. You would hope we never get to another home insulation issue, but it is entirely possible if we, as public servants don't do our job properly, and that's a really serious message and one that I learned during that phase and it was just amazing.

All of the staff we used to talk to and everyone, they're used to get beaten to death on a daily basis. We had providers trying to beat us. We had suppliers wanting to beat us. We had homeowners wanting to beat us. I thought, "This is the best professional development you ever get," and they thought I was stupid, but it was because it thought them a whole range of things that they would never have ever got anywhere else. That balance is really important.

Don't presume others don't have good ideas. We like to think we always have the good ideas, but there's a lot of people out there, your staff, your stakeholders, your consumers, your colleagues, don't presume they don't have good ideas as well. It's in our interest to share information and data for the greater good, not for our own power trip. I think they're really important things, and that really drives me to, "We don't own anything in the public service. We're not owners. We're there are stewards trying to steward the

system and to deliver the best thing we possibly can for the Australian community."

Also, you need to have courage. Courage to pursue ideas. Courage occasionally to say no, just be careful how you say it. I've learned to say no in about 433 different ways and languages, but you need to know that, and it can get you into trouble. Be convinced when you say no you mean no, but you do have to have courage in the system to do that. Leadership does come with that risk, but courage I think allows us to do what is best for the Australian community.

Martin mentioned my calmness, that's one of my always messages, "Always remain calm because people are watching you all the time." If you're frazzled and if you're jumping at the shadows, everyone's watching, they're going to be even more scared than you are. Remain calm and that is really quite a challenge I think most of the time, and that brings me to authenticity. You have to be authentic because generally if you fake it people will know, because they watch words and action, and if words and action vary they will say, "Well, we just wait then, it will change." Authenticity is really, really important.

The recent ... I'm getting close to the end, I'm going to go over a little bit. The recent staff gathering a staff member said to me, "What are you most proud of?" That made me stop and think, and for me it's not things because I've done so many things that I'd never dreamt that I'd ever get to do, so it's not the things. For me, it's the people, it's the teams, it's the way people come together to deliver on whatever and sometimes deliver in the most very difficult times and solve some of the country's most intractable problems. If you think about home insulation, and you think about immigration, and you think about some of the issues we've dealt with over the last little while, that's a pretty, pretty interesting range of things. For me, it is that people element and how we can actually drive that.

The integrity of the public service though has to be incontestable, and again that's going to be up to all of us to really just keep pushing that, with the ever-changing world that we're currently in, I think we need it more than ever. It's a bit of a challenge there. I'm going to miss this immensely. You can't spend almost 40 years doing something and not enjoy it, not love it, even though if you look at my dictionary I've changed the definition of love and joy and a whole range of things, but for me another thing that you need to hang on to occasionally is you need to wake up one day and know it's your time, which I did a couple of months ago. It was my time.

I've always been a healthy sceptic, what I didn't want to be is an unhealthy cynic. You got to recognise when it's your time because we all have a time. I've got a great opportunity coming up with the Little Company of Mary, remember those nuns from the start? Now I'm going back to the nuns, I've got to learn a whole new language again, but someone asked me recently would I come back to the public service, "If you were ever asked?" For the right job, for the right person, in a heartbeat because it's been fantastic. It's been a fantastic journey.

Just finally, my secretary colleagues, thank you very much for coming. You are the pinnacle of public service. There's 18 ... I can never remember if it's 18 or 19, anyhow there's a number, and there's a 160,000 public servants, it's interesting odds whether you're going to get there. It's been absolutely fantastic working with you all, I've loved every minute of it. I think we've had some interesting times and the power is when we come together on issues and I've seen that, immigration ... Sorry, home insulation was a classic, people could not be more supportive, that was really fantastic. Many of you are going to be close personal friends for life, it's one of those things and I really, really will miss that bit. I remember a whole range of things from my time in Canberra, but more broadly in the public service.

Now more broadly to all of you, don't be afraid to challenge that status quo. Your difference, getting back to difference, is what is needed in the public service and together you are the public service. Thank you for coming today, and I am happy to take some questions, over to you, and I'm conducting by the way, over to you. I've talked too long, so there's probably only about five minutes for questions. Does anyone want to have a question or, have I just dumbfounded you all.

Question 1: Tell us about the book.

Martin Bowles: About the book. Well, it could go back a long way, the book. I said a long time ago I should had someone writing shotgun who's writing a whole range of notes, and there's a bit of few people in the room who have done that for me on times. It is a fiction book of course, because I couldn't possibly write it as a nonfiction book, but nobody would believe some of those stories I can tell. I better leave it at that. I don't want to tell you the main characters.

Question 2: One of the things I think we experience across lots of different organisations though is that structure and hierarchy sometimes is an impediment to that kind of inclusion. What are your thoughts on where to next, in getting away from some of that impediment?

Martin Bowles: For me, it's all about leadership. You're always going to have structures, and we can make them lean, we can make them not lean, we can do a whole range of things. Great structures will fail when leadership fails, all the people within it fail. Authentic structures will always work when the good people are there and there's good leadership. My real issue with this is we have to push hard on our leaders to be inclusive. There is no reason that anyone shouldn't want to push some of those agendas, and yes, you might push up against someone who's going to be a little bit harder and you're not going to win, find another job. Find someone who will allow you to flourish and be the person you need to be, because if you can't be yourself, and it gets back to that difference issue, and you can't have those sorts of conversation, it's not for you.

Now some people work really well in difference environments, I'm not saying one environment is better than the other. You've got to work at what's good for you, but structure won't be the thing or should not be the thing that stops it. Although I totally accept there are some organisations where

structure does actually do that. Frances is here, so one more I think up the back here, and then Frances will take control.

Female: Just on that diversity issue, you mentioned about working with psychopaths, I'd be interested in your insights in how best to work with psychopaths?

Martin Bowles: That's a tough one. It depends on where you sit sometimes. There are some people in this room who'll be able to tell you a story that I might have dealt with some in the past, where I just told them to off and out the room, but that doesn't work. You have to work out how you best fit in those sorts of places, and you make your class based on you not them, because if you're guided by them you'll end up mimicking. You could end up being very damaged in some of those environments.

My advice always in these sorts of things is you must enjoy what you're doing, if you're not enjoying it you're not going to do a good job, that's just the reality. If you don't thrive in those sorts of environments you need to find something else, and I know it's really easy to say, but it doesn't have to happen tomorrow. You just keep working on that sorts of things because it's important for you, but it's important for the APS more broadly, and it's important for the Australian community even more broadly.

Frances Adamson: I see the word end up here, and I see that you were very obedient eventually to the word end, but look, on behalf of everyone here today, Martin, thank you very much. I mentioned at the beginning, I said some people are probably in the first days or months or early years of a public service career, and I'm sure for them everything you said would have resonated deeply. For others who've been at it for a number of years and for those in the front row and myself included, I think you reminded us of a number of things we know to be hugely important. You made a point about valuing difference, valuing diversity, and the importance of making a difference. You've spoken about the importance of building a team, of building skills, of building trusts, I mean it was just from my point of view, jampacked, full of things that we need to have, if not at the front of our minds always, that's difficult when we're doing the jobs that we're doing, but to be able to sit here and reflect and be reminded by someone who's drawing on a deep well of 40 years experience.

That's really something, and I know ... I suspect that everyone will takeaway something different. I think you've encouraged us in some important areas. I think when you spoke about the inspiration and inclination to take the great institution of the APS forward, I think you spoke to all of us. You've given us encouragement. You've spoken about the importance of courage. You also spoke about a small view about Mona Lisa, and I want to just, as a final thing remind you a little bit of the world stage on which you also play. This is a DFAT prerogative, if you get a IPAA president I'm going to do things like this. It says Tonga, it says Australia, but we'll assume he was standing behind Australia.

I simply want to say, Martin, you've been a great friend to DFAT and our organisations have worked closely together on international objectives, delegations, and events. You have reinvigorated the Department of Health's

international engagement in your tenure as Secretary. Under your leadership the department signed MOUs on health cooperation with China, India, Germany, and the United States. You led delegations for Australia's participation in meetings of the World Health Organisation, the Commonwealth Fund. You argued strongly for good outcomes. You didn't just make a difference domestically in Australia, you made a difference for Australia internationally. Most particularly here, you led the Global Health Dialogue as Chair of Committee A at the 2016 World Health Assembly.

I want everyone to know, how would you know unless I tell you, he was applauded, Martin was, for his eager use of the gavel, and in recognition of his love of the gavel he was given his own gavel to take home. Martin, thanks.

End of Transcript