



# **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

## **EVIDENCE PERSPECTIVES: REDEFINING THE RESEARCH-POLICY INTERFACE**

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**NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY**

**PARKES, CANBERRA**

**WEDNESDAY, 6 JUNE 2018**

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: The Institute of Public Administration Australia, ACT Division, is delighted to partner with the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia to deliver this active conversation. My name is Gordon de Brouwer, and I will be your chair.

I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners. I acknowledge the Ngunnawal people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution that they make to the life of our city and our region. I would also like to acknowledge, and very warmly welcome, other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be at today's event.

We have a fantastic event organised for this morning. You are going to have me for about 10 minutes talking through a few things. We have a fantastic range of speakers: Professor James Walter, the Professor of Political Science at Monash University; Professor Anne Tiernan, the Dean at Griffith Business School; Lin Hatfield-Dodds, the Deputy Secretary, Social Policy, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet; Professor Brian Head from the School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland; Jo Evans, Deputy Secretary, Climate Change and Renewables Innovation, Department of the Environment and Energy; and the inimitable Professor Meredith Edwards from the University of Canberra.

We have a great panel and it is great to see the enthusiastic participation from across the public service but also from across the academy and universities to talk about evidence and policy. We are really bringing together two groups of people—public servants who are active in policy and academics who provide a lot of insight and thinking that could be used in policy.

The aim of this forum is to build an understanding of the contemporary challenges in using research in policy work and also to generate some very practical ideas for how to improve the use of research in policy. Both sides are really important to the argument, but both sides, frankly, are going through a lot of self-reflection and institutional change—universities and researchers on how they are structured, what their incentives are and the nature of that system; and also the commonwealth public service through the review of the Australian Public Service. Your ideas really matter and they are really at a point of foment where they can be influential.

Let me outline the discussion today. We are going to start with an introductory address by Professor James Walter. The panel will then come the stage and they will have two minutes each to focus on four questions. There will then be a bit of a discussion among the panel; then we will move to table discussions. We will come back to that, but you will see that you have something on your tables as an indication of where to go. After your table discussions, you will have a discussion with the panel on some of these matters.

We will be photographing today's event, as you can see. The event will also be posted on the IPAA website. If you want to join the conversation online, the Twitter hashtag is #ippaevents.

We are going to start with some engagement, getting to know you and a bit of context setting. We are using PollEv; so get on your phones or your internet-connected device—tablets or laptops also work—open a web browser

and enter the address that is up on the screen to the right and left. When you go into [pollev.com/ippa](http://pollev.com/ippa), what you will find is you can only vote once.

The first question—this is to get a sense of who you are— is: how would you describe yourself? Are you a researcher, a policy person, an analyst, a program manager? It will start to feed live up on the screen. I would have described myself as a policy person, and maybe a number of academics would also describe themselves as policy people; so there is a little bit of overlapping.

What we can see is that most of the room is composed of people who are involved in policy in some form, also a bit of program management and analysts and maybe 15, 20 per cent are actual researchers.

We will go to the next question, which is to provide a lens for today's conversation: thinking about how you use research evidence in your work. Do you proactively use research evidence in your work and what is the frequency of that? It will be interesting to see for policy people or people who work in government what the source of that is. Is your first point Google on a browser or do you go to other institutions? Do you go to the scientific or the research institutions directly? Do you use general browsers. How do you get access to research evidence?

The point here is that a lot of people in this room use a lot of evidence, or want to use evidence and be proactive, and they are really out there looking for evidence. That's good. I thought we had a bit of a fear that there would be a little bit of the "rarely" and "never"; so you have broken our expectations on that. That is good to see.

That gives just a bit of a sense of who we are in the room. I would like to start today's proceedings by introducing Professor James Walter. James Walter is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science in the School of Social Sciences at Monash University. He has published widely on Australian politics, history, biography and culture. He maintains broad interests in political leadership, political psychology—I have to say that there is probably a bit of that in real life—political biography and the history of Australian political institutions.

James's current work involves research projects linking leadership, policy, political culture and intellectual history. Please join me in welcoming Professor Walter to the stage.

Prof James Walter:

This event has been organised with an unusual military precision and we all have to speak very briefly. I am really just setting a context for the discussion. I and my colleagues are representing the Academy of the Social Sciences, and there are three reasons why this event and things like it are important to the academy. The first is that the academy states as its reason for being to promote excellence in the social sciences and in their contribution to public policy.

The second is, for that to be achieved, that we need to periodically review the relationship between academic researchers and the policy community. The third is that it is even more imperative that we seem to be in a period

when the very processes that enable policy determination are under challenge. Indeed, last year a group of us here organised a workshop funded by the academy to talk about just that issue. It was a very productive meeting of academics, NGOs, public servants, former public servants and ministerial advisers—a wide group. The challenge for us was: where do we go from there? We know roughly what the problems are, but what can we do about them?

We are all familiar, I'm sure, with assertions about the alleged incapacities of both political parties in the public sector in addressing these challenges. But the academy is too, that academic research community also is subject to that sort of criticism. Expertise, whether it is of long-serving professional practitioners or academic researchers, is increasingly challenged by opinion leaders. So there are institutional changes behind that that we need to try and understand.

It appears to be generated by public concern about policy institutions, not only in Australia but worldwide. Systems appear to some citizens not to be working for them. There has been perplexity about issues of community concern that experts seem unable to address or to resolve. Think of recent instances: disputes of energy markets, the problems over banking regulation, the issue of housing affordability. All of those rate pretty highly in polls of what people are worried about.

The collective action problems that underlie those sorts of issues are things that academic researchers should be able to address and that policy institutions should be able to resolve. None of them will be resolved forever but, generally speaking, we come up with solutions that work for a period. They are collective action problems. But seemingly at the moment we are mired in his endless debate about those issues.

Has it to do with the relationship between researchers and the policy community? Has there been some diminution of that connection? If so, would addressing it resolve some of these issues? Would it raise the standing of each of those bodies?

Two questions:

how is the partnership between traditional research and policy determination travelling? I want to then speak briefly about the research side and the public sector. On the research side there is insufficient consciousness of the distinction between the incentives operating in the research environment, such as universities, and those that apply in policy settings.

Researchers often think that their evidence speaks for itself. That sort of hubris is misplaced. Academics still have to be persuaded that research needs to be crafted and communicated in relation to the concerns and priorities of the policy community and its need to find solutions for very particular problems on very constrained time lines. Career incentives for academics should include this element.

The recent introduction of indicators of research engagement and research impact by the Australian Research Council is intended to try and push this issue to introduce a new set of incentives into the equation. But one could still question the advocacy of those incentives for interaction and dialogue.

The distinction between the obligation policymakers have and researchers' perspectives tend to intensify when increasing political partisanship exacerbates policy discontinuity. It becomes ever more difficult to align research and research time lines and the implementation of evidence-based initiatives with abrupt change in political cycles and policy directions. Researchers who formed useful relationships through high level contacts under the auspices of one government are sometimes disqualified from continuing such work under another.

One means of working around those impediments is for researchers to build relationships with policy champions in the public sector and for bureaucrats to alert researchers when a policy window emerges that is relevant to their interests. But the key to this always is relationships—how are they to be established, how are they to be maintained?

Let me quickly say something about the public sector. Arguably, the demand now is for intersectoral and intergovernmental engagement and fresh approaches to long-term strategic thinking. Practitioners and academics both have a responsibility to address these. So let me give a set of general issues that we might consider:

What institutional settings need to change to promote this sort of intersectoral engagement?

How can we get big ideas into the policy process while engaging both the practitioners and academics?

How can we shift the focus from political risk management to policy development?

How can public servants be given more reflective time to think to move from day-to-day imperatives to thinking over the horizon?

What creative ways can be pursued and by what organisations to promote policy dialogue across these divisions?

How can academic researchers be incorporated into policy dialogue in ways that might persuade them that they have to think about how to craft their communication so their research can apply in policy settings?

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: Thank you very much, James. I hope we can post your comments on the website. That is a very valuable set of ideas, especially saying that relationships really matter. Frankly, the onus is on us to establish and maintain those relationships.

I observe that one of the things that I saw that worked when I was a public servant was the department was given responsibility, or the minister was given responsibility—naughty, Gordon! —for our cities, for the cities agenda. One of the universities offered the minister and the department to organise a briefing for the minister. Normally when you say you want a whole lot of academics to brief a minister you kind of shudder because it is going to be very long—it's the timing thing—and how do we distil it for a minister who mostly work on short attention spans?

The person who initiated this was a person who had worked in policy advising and wasn't a traditional academic. What they did across universities in Melbourne was to organise four sessions of half an hour each where three of the key leaders, the thought leaders, in that university or in that area spoke

for five minutes, talked about one or two really basic bits that they saw were coming from either their research or from the evidence and to distil that for the minister. We had four of these sessions over two hours.

The minister could digest two hours—four sessions of half an hour—where the academics really stuck to that five-minute thing of, “This is the really one important idea, minister, when you have this responsibility on infrastructure or on sustainability or on dealing with congestion.”

They went through that. That was one of the best things I have ever seen in my professional life of how you bring ideas and insight—the conceptual frameworks and the evidence—in a really distilled fashion for a minister that we could then draw on over succeeding months to flesh out. It was quite an influential exercise. That came down to people who were willing to have a go and people who had relationships across from the university to the sector, but who were influential.

James, thank you very much for that.

I would like now to invite the panel members to come to the podium. I introduce Professor Anne Tiernan, Lin Hatfield-Dodds, Professor Brian Head and Jo Evans. Welcome to you all.

You have all got two minutes each and we have asked you to speak specifically on a particular issue. Lin, could you start? In relation to context, what has changed in the policy landscape in recent times?

Ms Lin Hatfield-Dodds: I have two minutes. I am going to talk fast, give you bullet points and then we can discuss it later on or you can discuss it at your tables.

From the global perspective, I think we have moved into a time of paradox around policy. We have uncertainties and we have opportunities. Part of our challenge is how we balance them, play them off against each other. Navigating between those uncertainties and opportunities is going to be key.

Then there is the relationship between geonomics and geopolitics. And my question is: are we in a geopolitical recession? Is the west fracturing? That goes to issues of trust in government, transparency, speed of information, data, all that sort of stuff. Governments and public servants, in particular, talk a very good game about data. Observationally over the last two years I have been in the service, we are not that good at gathering quality data and making it transparent to the public. That is probably because our ICT systems are not all they could be.

The drivers of populism I think are still unclear. But a question in a lot of people’s minds around the globe is: have western democratic governments lost control? We have got uncertainty about the future of work and we have got challenges around the free movement of people around the globe. We have got technology driving change; it is driving online abuse; it is driving massive opportunities; it is accelerating innovation around the world. So good, bad, challenges, and opportunities there as well.

There could be huge inequality if we do not think in a really strategic public policy way about all of that. There is no shortage of good ideas I would say, but I think a public policy tool kit is quite orthodox and the times we are in currently are anything but orthodox. So how are we going to bring into being a new tool kit or a refreshed tool kit at least?

The Australian policy shopping list in my mind: changing shape of the family. Look up any AIHW research and it will tell you how it is changing. But almost all our policy settings around individuals and families, particularly our payment system regulations and requirements, are set around a heterosexual family with biological children where people partner over a life course. None of that is particularly normed anymore.

We have got a rapidly shifting labour market. We have got the rise of the megacity—our four big megacities that have huge impacts on infrastructure within them and between them, and transport challenges. That takes us to population questions—where we live, how we live, why we live there—and the public policy challenges about trying to regionalise the country. Nobody wants to live in a Sydney that is 20 million people.

That takes us to issues around education, health, marketising and driving competition policy through human services. If your goal is increased choice and control for individuals, then we need to keep a really sharp view on that and not just do competition for the sake of—or, what we used to do—paternalism in service delivery for the sake of. We have got to be really clear about what are the end points we seek and what are the policy drivers we are going to put in place to deal with that.

My last point is this: I think our biggest structural issue in public policy in Australia is that the Australian population wants it all and is not prepared to pay for it. How are we going to tell that story to the population? If we cannot crack that nut, everything we do with government is playing around the edges.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: We will move to Jo Evans now, again on context: how has policy-making changed?

Ms Jo Evans: Listening to Lin, I have to say that it is almost exhausting to think about the scale of the issues that we are all having to deal with. But I want to make three observations about what it is like to be a policymaker now or about how it might have changed. The first one is how much more contestable the environment is in which we are giving our advice. Gone are the days when the public service was the font of all policy advice and information to ministers.

We really are in an environment now where the ministers, the decision-makers, get information from anyone and everyone and from a variety of quality of sources—some great, some more like opinions. A really diverse range of views is coming forward. Public servants have to be aware of them and they have to find ways of synthesising that and actually presenting then a coherent piece of advice to ministers, which is a very difficult thing to do when everything is moving very fast.

I would put into that same category of contestable advice the very different role of ministerial officers that has evolved over the last decade or so. That has shifted the way that public servants have had to use information and advice and put it forward. Contestability is a big change in the way that we make policy.

The second one is, as I describe it, is that there is a change in the parameters about the way we are asked for advice. Again, I feel that when I first started in the public service—which was frighteningly 17 years ago—there was more space for the public service to think in a holistic way about an issue, to have a strategy about how we were going to tackle all these issues, and then put forward the advice in quite a coherent way.

Now I think my experience is that we tend to be asked for advice in a narrower way. So the challenge has become: how do you frame that advice and give that advice so that it is still consistent with a broader strategic picture or way of thinking but is still being responsive to the specific thing that you have been asked to deliver? Maybe the way I would frame that is that there is a more targeted way of advice being sought and our needing to respond to that.

The third thing I wanted to point to relates a little to the first one about the contestability of advice, but there is also this issue—maybe it goes to the link with research as well—of the sheer weight of data and information that we actually have to deal with. Again, it is not the same as years back when there was one authoritative source of information that you could go to. Now we have so much to deal with and, as Lin said, we are not particularly good yet at dealing with all of the data to frame our advice.

Those are the three things I wanted to throw into the mix for you guys to talk about and ask us questions about later in terms of things that I think have shifted in the way we make policy advice.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: We will move now to Brian Head. We are going from context into challenges: what are the contemporary challenges in using research evidence in policy?

Prof Brian Head: A background point: I spent half my time in the last 30 years outside academia and half as a university person. So I have seen it from both sides of the fence. A lot of research I have been doing has been, in fact, research about how to improve relationships between those sectors.

If we were to line people up across the room, there would be some people who love data and who would huddle and talk about data and the things that get them out of bed in the morning being, “There is a new data set that I am getting,” or “There is a new data linkage,” or “There is a new algorithm. There is some new kit that I want to play with.”

It goes through to the other end, which is more a people focus, a relational focus, a dialogic focus. I think that is part of the dilemma with this sort of topic. We have data specialists and people who are championing some of the innovation agenda who are up one end of the room and other people who are much more about the things that really count. They are going to be persuading people, working with stakeholders, taking practical wisdom seriously,



looking at corporate memory, looking at how we have learned lessons from the past and carrying those through into the future et cetera.

Secondly, I wanted to say, depending on the context in which we are dealing with this problem of linking an evidence base better to the policy-making process, there are different kinds of challenges at a day-to-day level. One is simply to do with fine-tuning what we are doing, and that is more about performance information, KPIs and monitoring and feedback, and improving what we are doing.

Another one is dealing with emergent issues that are coming over the horizon. Everyone is worried that there is a potential crisis. People are rushing about looking for appropriate responses. How do you do quick and dirty analysis building on best available knowledge, not just research knowledge, to do with those sorts of things? Then, more broadly, there is the complexity agenda, which might not be the same as the crisis agenda.

How do we deal with all the collaborative challenges? How do we deal with those intersections between issues that affect each other? How do we deal with multiple stakeholders who have rather different views about what the problem is, let alone what the solution is? I think those contexts in which we are talking about the question are rather different and we need to think that through a bit more carefully.

Without trespassing too much on what Anne's going to say about what to do about it, let me just sketch a few quick obstacles to better use of available evidence, including professional wisdom. One is politics. Some areas are highly partisan and polarised and what counts as evidence is dismissed by other people. Some areas are sensitive and confidential; so we cannot have a lot of open and dialogic kinds of discussions. They tend to be very in-house, for obvious reasons. In respect of issues relating to the academic community not targeting their research particularly well, we are getting slightly better at it but, on the whole, we are not very good at this in terms of timeliness and targeting.

There are issues about turnover of staff, particularly in the public service, whether it is the ACT, the APS or other jurisdictions. It is very hard to build relationships if people are changing positions all the time. We need to do something institutionally about that. That is why groups like IPAA are particularly valuable.

Then there are micro issues around lack of access to data, lack of data bases, lack of clearing houses where you can quickly find stuff, and simply lack of skills and resources to do the job.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: We will move from context and challenges to insights. Anne, what needs to change to enhance the use of research in policy?

Prof Anne Tiernan: Like Brian, I have spent time on both sides of the relationship and I have spent the last three years at Griffith building an intermediary organisation in an effort to span the divide between public sector and policy advising on one hand and the university community on the other, trying to help academics to

provide advice that is decision-ready. “I know it is all about you guys but, actually in fact, the debate is about this.” So trying to do some of that just for context.

I have got a couple of points to add. The first one is that I was struck by what Lin said. I am not sure that we do have an ideas problem. We have an implementation problem and we have a learning from implementation problem and learning lessons. I have written quite a lot about the loss of institutional memory. It is something I am very concerned about. But institutional memory resides in policy communities. I think this concept is too little understood in the public sector.

I recently did a submission to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit and their inquiry into the massive increase in the use of consultants. The argument I made there is one that I make again today. It is that we need advisory systems that are more diverse. This is something that the public sector really struggles with. Because of the contextual changes that have been described so well and the risk aversion that has come into demands from ministers and their intolerance to how long it might take to develop an intelligent answer to a question, even if it had been well posited, people are holding things very tight. Getting out and mixing in more diverse, less hierarchical advisory systems and policy communities becomes more difficult.

There is a lot of capacity that exists. The challenge is for people to understand how to mobilise those networks. Your cities are a really good one, Lin. The commonwealth comes in and out of cities policy—on a predictable cycle, actually. Cities policy is not a new or novel agenda for states or local governments. But the APS would rarely look to those because you are a superior public service. I say that deliberately, provocatively, because all of us have to get over ourselves and be out mixing in more diverse contexts.

Brian’s point is enormously well made about the practical lived experience of people who are not abstractions but who are the recipients of services or the recipients of government programs. I think that is one of our challenges—how to break down those divides that I think have, for a variety of contextual reasons, become stronger.

Of course, the elephant that is always in the room is that, notwithstanding Jo’s point about increased contestability, the supply side has never been greater in terms of the advice that is available. But the channels through which it flows on to the demand side in terms of ministers have narrowed and have narrowed in really dangerous and unhealthy ways that are not serving ministers very well.

I think those are some of the things that I hope the APS review will look at—thinking about those networks of advice and how they can be used, drawing in the widest possible range of perspectives from where the expertise exists rather than trying to build it all each time these issues come up, but talking to the policy community about those things.

Some of that is about greater intentionality in harnessing where the expertise exists and learning where that is. I did a study of policy capacity in the APS

seven or eight years ago and a lot of expertise wasn't gone; it was just somewhere else. I think that policy community concept is a useful one.

We must, must, must look to the demand side as well. I have been unsuccessfully trying to persuade ministers for ages that they are not well served by their advisory systems as they are working now, but a lot of that change has to come from them, and their willingness to do so or their insight about that has been pretty resistant.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: We have a couple of minutes before we go to the conversations. What is striking to me, in listening to what the four of you have said, is that with the increasing complexity, we really need to think clearly. We also need multidisciplinary, cross sectoral responses. You are not going to find the solutions to the issues you are talking about in narrow confines; everything is related and we have to think about how we work on that relationship.

I think you have dismissed the idea that we can pass over any responsibility for providing comprehensive advice to ministers, and said no. We still have a responsibility for that, and it is not that we just do the little bit. So we really need to be strategic and very tactical in how we frame a story.

What is also really clear is that, absolutely, the public sector cannot do that in isolation. Certainly the commonwealth cannot do it in isolation. There is a lot of experience and insight. So whatever ministers want, the onus is on us to engage and be responsible for that. Despite the problems of confidentiality, you can have really serious conversations with people, and we do not need to unnecessarily inhibit ourselves from doing that.

Engagement, engagement, engagement; being out there and talking to people and in a trusted and confidential way and with respect. That is really vital. I thought you have got quite a strong call to arms. You have got more to do, and get out there and do it. That would be how I would hear what you are saying.

Ms Lin Hatfield-Dodds: I have a comment bouncing off that and bouncing off what we have all said, particularly about the contestability issue. While contestability is big—I had 25 years outside of government in the community sector; I worked for some years in my 20s, left, and came back—the thought of any public servant in the room that we are the only channel or the preferred channel all of the time is just a nonsense. The good parliamentarians in my view are constantly triangulating. They are out in their electorates. They are known in their electorates and they are triangulating with trusted agents from other sectors all the time. Where it gets dicey is when they are working with rent seekers and not managing them but listening to them.

I think the challenge for us as public servants is that we are very text based. I have never worked in such a text-based environment. In my two years at PM&C it took me a while to shift my teams to go to infographics and verbal briefs as well as paper white pages with linear text on them. I just read that and go, "I cannot do this 12 hours a day. I am going to die of boredom." You have to do it. There is an amount of stuff we just have to eat and ingest and reflect about. When I think about my job, my job is all about judgment and strategy, but mostly judgment. But in the middle of all of that, in that pipeline

that we all have to our ministers and to cabinet, it is really critical that we are engaging. The only way to do that is to be a brutal prioritiser and triager.

One of my responsibilities is for the commonwealth's intergovernmental work. I have responsibility for COAG. Two years ago PM&C started a program of going out and meeting with every state and territory in their own space. We meet with our state colleagues, we meet with the business sector, we meet with the community sector, we meet with academics, we meet with key leaders. It has absolutely shifted the dial for COAG.

We also put in place a forward strategic plan, policy pillars and all the rest of it. But the building of relationships of trust meant that this year for the first time the commonwealth landed a hospital heads of agreement, a \$30 billion hospital heads of agreement, in about three weeks. Two weeks of those was working the states and territories. That was off the base of a high degree of trust and the fact that we do regular meetings with people.

That is kind of a fairy tale and that worked really well. I could give you a hundred examples where it has not worked quite that well. But the point is that everything is better when you invest in relationships and build durable relationships of trust. Your policy advice to government will be vastly improved if you can harvest the insights and lived experience across multiple sectors and multiple stakeholders and package that up as part of your policy advice.

Nothing is more irrelevant to a politician than the public service thinking its insight from Canberra is the only insight worth having. It is arrogant and just not true. And it is not where we want to be. I suppose my challenge to you is to prioritise the time. I never, ever have time to leave Canberra, but I get on a plane and I go anyway.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: We will move to the table discussions and we will come back. You have 15 minutes to go through the questions that are on your table. We have three topics for the tables: the first is the challenge—what do we have to overcome to increase that research and policy link. What are some practical approaches—what is the most practical thing that could be done to improve that policy research linkage? Then there are individual behaviours. You are responsible for this. What do I have to do as part of the public service or the research community to facilitate evidence-informed policy?

It is up to your tables to work out how you want to address those issues. You have one question per table. The panel and I will be walking around listening to, but not interfering with, your conversations. Then we will come back with the panel. You can make some comments, give your views and engage with the panel on that. It is over to you.

[Table discussions]

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: We will come back now to a discussion with the panel. We will ask for your feedback. We will structure the comments coming back through any additional comments you would like to make around the challenges; then go on to what are some of the practical elements that you see that we could do differently; and, finally, we will go to those elements of what would you do, what can you do.

Personally, I think that is very important. I often heard when I was a public servant, “You should do this. You should do that. The system should do this.” But, really, the system is the public servants or, frankly, more broadly, the policy community and the community in general. So it is really what you do that matters. You can be a big driver of behavioural change in institutions.

This is not a table-by-table response. It is really about whether there is an issue you want to raise or a comment you want to make. If so, feel free to do that. If you have an idea that doesn’t come out in the conversation, you can write that idea in the evaluation form. That will be distilled by IPAA and that will then be published or it will be available. So you can have this very direct conversation with the panel or you can also do it in the evaluation form. Does anyone want to make a comment around challenges?

Question 1:

I work with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. My comment is mainly in relation to whether the funding research model in Australia actually supports the concept of evidence-based research. I am mentioning this because I have been struggling to find a funding model in Australia.

I work in the public sector now. I come from a research organisation. One of the problems I actually encountered was trying to find the funding model because I needed research to try and provide us with some answers. But the only funding model I found that could work was the Australian Research Council funding model, which is led by academia.

When you have research being led by academia, sometimes it can go in a direction that you do not really want it to go. So there is no funding model where you have policymakers actually leading the research and bringing in universities and academia to support that research, similar to the European model, for example.

In come from Europe and I have worked in European projects where government provides funding that is led by policymakers and you bring in researchers to actually support the projects. I am wondering whether anyone here can comment on this or maybe whether it is a challenge.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: Before going to the panel, I will get a few other comments and then we can talk about the challenges.

Question 2:

I am from the Australian National Audit Office. Our table came up with a lot of ideas as to why there might not be that nexus between research and research-informing policy. I had one idea which I felt really strongly about. Not everyone at my table agreed with it.

It occurred to me that the reason ministers may not be paying much attention to the research community is because the Australian population, or populations generally, do not pay any attention. The average voter doesn’t pay any attention to the research community.

A case in point is that we are still largely living in denial of the science of climate change. Lin, you mentioned that we want everything in this country but we do not want to pay for it, I think that is really true as well. If you go on to

the OECD website, you can see that Australia is right down the bottom in terms of average taxation rates. We are down there amongst outliers such as Mexico, America, Chile.

A case in point overseas is that Donald Trump is the President of the United States of America; so I feel like the information is out there but it is just not being paid any attention to by the average person. I think that is a big barrier. Ministers are not going to listen to policy, no matter how rational and re-searched it is, if it will not get them elected. That is my comment.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: We will hear another one on the challenges.

Question 3: I am from the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science. I work in the Office of the Chief Economist. We were talking about the significant structural and cultural barriers on each side. I will give an example on the side of research. I have previously worked at the ANU for many years. The way that researchers are rewarded is really, “What journal did you publish in? What was the impact factor? How many grants did you get? There is your promotion.”

Only very recently have some universities adopted those indicators that were discussed before, which is about, “How many international collaborations have you built? Have you worked with government? Have you influenced policy or policymakers?” That type of cultural change takes a long time and those affects take a long time.

On the other side on policy, you have people who would work in policy in very fast-pace environments. There is so much research out there. It is not like when you go on to Cochrane or whatever that you will come up with one piece of truth. As researchers, are we actually putting things out there that are digestible and accessible? You can find a hundred papers that support one thing; you can find a hundred papers that equally do not support it. When you work in policy, do you have the skills to be able to understand what the difference is, what is good research design—do they have the right statistics knowledge et cetera? Those were the kinds of things that we were talking about.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: And the last one.

Question 4: I am from the University of Canberra. My major point is a bit more personal to me, though my colleagues were sympathetic. It is that I think it comes down to how the system is constituted and the dominance of the politicians. This was alluded to by a couple of the speakers. If I can dramatise this, I am doing interviews about sources of policy advice in four countries. Here everything is clearly channelled around the minister. The starkest representation of this was by a very senior public servant who started off by saying, “It is demand and supply. No demand from the minister, no supply.” Of course, this screws capability. You screw capability and I think that rolls through to people in the system who can relate to academics. So that was the strongest statement.

But I just add—these points came out to some extent in our discussion—that the politicians got rid of internal researchers, but you seemed to be talking

about externally. If we go back to the 1980s, there were lots of researchers around. Meredith remembers that federalism research unit at ANU and other ones that were commonwealth funded. They got rid of those. This in a sense will be a solution.

More recently, of course, the Commission of Audit got rid of lots of advisory bodies. Even if there wasn't much in savings, they still cleaned them out. That was a medium for people to mix. What came out from this table was that not only did the libraries go—I do not think we can just blame the politicians for this—but also people at my table do not have access to academic journals. They have access to nothing. I will leave it there.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: I will go to the panel. In responding to Michelle's question at the start, if there is anything practical to mention, what would you do differently? You do not have to respond, but I will start with Brian?

Prof Brian Head: Just on the research question, I think the situation in Australia is a little more sanguine than you imagine. There are two ways of thinking about it: one is that some of the established research funds encourage partnerships to apply; so it is not just academics defining and leading research. There are opportunities for joint work to be done through the established channels. There are some specific funds that are very much industry driven or government-agency driven.

The second part of it is that there is a heck of a lot of contracted research or commissioned work. That brings me to the real point I want to make, which is that it would be very helpful for this constructive dialogue if all agencies had a clearer and transparent published view of what their future research needs might look like.

There is this free resource out there, which is the research centres that actually want to do work that is relevant, but they find it hard to know what to focus on. To cut a long story short, when I did a survey of government departments seven or eight years ago, only about two per cent had a published list of research priorities. I think we can do better.

Prof Anne Tiernan: I was really struck by that question and the \$500 million increase on consultancies. There was any number of other ways of spending the money in terms of building longer term capacity.

The other issue at this point is that the commonwealth sets the funding incentives and the funding framework for research. So the distortion towards international publications and all that sort of stuff was set by the higher education minister in the commonwealth. You have more agency than you think, I guess, in terms of how to work in those areas.

In terms of a practical solution, I really agree with Brian that a huge amount of transaction cost and expense goes into the negotiation of contracts for commissioned research on both sides. We have to maintain legal units. You have to maintain legal units to do these kinds of things. Maybe there are more collaborative, stable developmental research arrangements that could be put in place taking those savings from those endless backwards and forwards arrangements. They could be more enduring, too, to reflect some of

the conversations we had down the back, of people not knowing that projects had been done and years go past.

Some of the things that John Halligan has alluded to—for example, the Federalism Research Centre—are enormously important. Everybody knew where it was, the money went there, people knew how to access it. So I think the answers are within our remits. They are in our hands potentially.

Ms Jo Evans:

There was also another comment from I think the same table. There was a question asked of one of the other people on the table, “Does your organisation have a research budget?” The response was “No, but we are doing all of this work in co-design with the community, we are really engaging and so on.” So it is almost like there is this split in people’s head between what is research and then what is work that we have to do to make policy and policy implementation successful.

I do not know if we can somehow blur that line a bit more, because I think government departments do have funding to do research that helps to better implement policy. That was the observation. I do not have the answer to how we do that, but in our own experience working with Griffith on climate change work, maybe there is an example of that. There was an entity called the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility—rolls off the tongue—and they did a lot of great research. But the struggle for us was how we made the research relevant to the people who were trying to use it and how we could work better with Griffith. Now we are working in a partnership with Griffith and the CSIRO to say, “How do we make that information accessible, relevant, real to people so that they can use it?”

Maybe that is an example of where we are trying to work on that split between what is research and what is still research but research on how you make things relevant and implementable.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: We will move to the second set, which is any practical ideas you have. What would you do differently across the system? A set of tables had that, but you may generally have your own insights. What would you advise the APS review to do differently? What would you advise James to do with ASA?

Question 5:

I am from department of industry. It was really interesting to hear you guys talk about there being no published research questions out there. One of the things our table said is that we are all working in our own departments. We all want to know about the future of jobs. We all want to know about disruptive technology and all that sort of stuff. We are all working on that in isolation. One of the things we said was, “Wouldn’t it be really cool if we could have a standard set of questions that we need answered as a government so that we can actually tap into those research questions and get some practical answers around that?”

I am in an innovation lab, the BizLab in the department of industry. Again, how do we then link in that quantitative research with the qualitative stuff? When we think about research, we always think about data, data sets and all that sort of stuff. But what about the why, what about the drivers from the community and what are some of the things that drive them? So it is linking



into how we can actually have the qual and the quant together. We can then start telling government, “This is the what but, then, this is the why.”

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: The thing that always struck me when I was a public servant is: what is the real thing you get from talking to academics and how can you engage? There is a comparative advantage in this game between academics and policy government officials. The academics can help you frame what the conceptual framework is, what the analytics are, how do you have those tools and techniques and train you in that? They can really tell you what the evidence is—tell you in a dispassionate, unbiased way, “This is the range of evidence, the empirical evidence. This is what it tells you.”

Of course, policy people know that, too, but their comparative advantage in this game is that they know generally how to talk to ministers about it. They know what will work. They can smell it. Does it make sense, how would you do it and can you implement it? When you bring that together, you have this mix of conceptual frameworks and the evidence, along with the ability to smell how to do it, how to make it work. It can be really effective. That is just affirming what you are saying.

Question 6: That reflects a little what I was about to say. That is a good thing. I work for the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities. I put a number next to how many ideas. We came up with about seven ideas ranging from, “How about we have researchers on a retainer for the very short turnaround times that we need a quick answer for today, the next three days or for this week?”

But that didn’t solve the long-term complex policy problems. So the department of environment has tried a good approach—to bring in, for example, visiting fellows from whatever representable institution to spend some time in the agency—maybe even be on staff. They bring their ideas into the agency, mix with public servants, help them for that conceptual framing. Maybe it would be an internship or for some sort of short time frame and then they would go out again.

There are two of us sitting here who have had dual careers both in research academia and now back in federal public service. What we haven’t had support for was quite the opposite to what department of environment had where we wanted to embed ourselves into a research time that is outside of our organisation as part of our job description—so doing it in both directions.

As this little group found, I think having it two ways—public servants being allowed as part of their job description to go out, be part of a research group or team that is multidisciplinary, and vice versa; bringing them in. So it is those really practical ideas.

Prof Anne Tiernan: We are actually doing that. We have some people from DPC and climate adaptation embedded with us. It is harder to get people from the university to the other way because that challenge is around publication. But also public servants get paid a lot more than early career academics; so that is actually also a bit of a dilemma. If you can come to some arrangement where people stay on their own salary arrangements and get invoiced, we find that works quite well and overcomes those challenges.

Question 7: Our table discussed that question as well. We have a number of ideas sitting here on a piece of paper that you can collect if you want. I thought I would pick out one of them. I run my own company but I have been in and out of the public sector, in and out of research land et cetera.

One of the ones we talked about touches on the thing that I was particularly interested in to hear from the panel, which is the issue of the different mind-sets that operate between research data sort of people and policy sort of people. I liked your characterisation of that, Brian. I think that is really true, even in the very same organisation your data people do not talk to your policy people and they have no idea how to do that very often.

We had a challenge. It is practical. It is a definitely practical solution but it might have a longer burn on it. If you are going to build that kind of trust and try to actually change that mindset, you have to stop the staff churn on the policy side. Trust lowers transaction costs. We heard that from all the people on the panel. But you cannot build that kind of trust when you haven't got the continuity. It is a practical solution, but it is a long burn and it has to go to our HR systems and a whole bunch of things like that. But I thought I would at least throw that on to the table as part of the mix.

Question 8: I am from the Department of the Environment and Energy. I am also studying public policy at Crawford School of Public Policy. I am really interested in how we still focus on the minister's office in such a co-governance world. I am thinking about the State of the environment report on the national level, which I am responsible for—building a community, taking that social learning that comes out of reflexive governance. Co-creating our evidence base and our data is possibly a way to go. At the moment we seem to use each other's but actually doing it together.

The State of the environment report is highly academic in its content with a few case studies smattered through. We have been talking to people in industry and business lately to ask them, "Do you use this to help you with your decision-making?" Generally the answer is no. It is a beautiful product, but what is the impact we have? Actually talking to who we think our users are, who we would like them to be, and not only getting them to use it but also helping in the creation of that evidence base is something we could do better.

Question 9: I am from the Department of Finance. Another practical solution could be having a research champion in every branch or division. We get a daily media briefing on news articles about our relevant policy portfolio, but we do not really get a regular digest about what other relevant research academic articles are in our space. So if we can assign one person to disseminate that I think it will get the conversation going and get people who often focus more on the operational side to start having those conversations about the policy and the research.

Question 10: I am from the Department of Communications. This is quick, and hopefully practical. It was someone else on my table who came up with it. It is just doing a lunch time session with an academic from a particular area that is relevant to your department or branch. If you did one of those a month for 12

months, that would be a lot of connections that could potentially be inspired—and also video it, as you could do this one, and put it online for those that cannot make it.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: I will ask the panel to comment.

Prof Anne Tiernan: I think that is right. They get really excited when you ring them up. If you were going to take them out for lunch, they would just be beside themselves. That is my job as Dean (Engagement), trying to build that capacity on the university's side to boundary span. It would be sensational for the early career people to be out learning that sort of stuff; essential career development. Please, visit, call.

Ms Lin Hatfield-Dodds: When I moved around tables, I heard a lot of conversation about what I said at one time is about deficient governance. People are talking about research parts of their own department or entity that were quite disconnected in a practical BAU, every day kind of way from the rest of the department. We are talking about that with academia and external engagement.

I always think in terms of ecosystems, so I wonder if it might be helpful for us to think more about public policy as a pipeline. The purpose of public policy is to make decisions for the public good. Decisions are made by the parliament. Public servants advise the government. We all know that. But observationally people often behave in the public policy world in the public service as if that is not true and we develop these fantastically internally consistent and elegant and beautiful bits of policy that are not actually going to get traction.

I am not a fan of the supply-demand thing because I do think, as Jo said, our primary role is to advise the government. But if we are going to provide a constant, excellent, robust pipeline of public policy advice, then we also have to take seriously as public servants our role as system stewards. It is not good enough just to wait for the political class to ask for advice; part of our ecosystem role is actually to persuade them that public policy is important and that the advice we have got and the issues we are marking as important are that.

The PM&C board spends time every month identifying what the top five risk issues are for the Australian government. Then we have conversations about those risk issues with the Prime Minister and with Cabinet. It is just being really clear about the role of the different actors organisationally in the space and then the role that each of us can play as individuals to make the public policy system as good as it can be and to maintain it at that level.

Prof Brian Head: One of my favourite metaphors is the kaleidoscope. I think there is actually a hell of a lot of different kinds of knowledge and perspectives, all of which have their own validity up to a point. Part of the challenge for policy people, as knowledge brokers, is to make sense of that. A number of people have said that during this morning.

In that kaleidoscope it is very hard to say one form of knowledge is privileged or should be. There are people who make claims to truthfulness and reliability within that dialogue. I think that is understandable but, at the end of the day, it is not very helpful for governmental decision-making. It leads to some quite precious behaviour.

I am inclined to say we would get over some of this problem if we regarded people in the public service as knowledge workers. We bring different kinds of knowledge and different kinds of responsibilities. In that way of thinking about it, we are more open to having knowledge-related conversations with a whole bunch of other people who might be able to broaden our views or deepen our understanding of feasibility.

Quite a few people were talking about the need to kick the tyres, the pub test, the sniff test or whatever. All of those forms of knowledge, which are mainly stakeholder forms of knowledge, are really important. In the public sector they are all the more important.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: We will go now to that third topic around what you would do differently yourself.

Question 11: I am from the behavioural economics team in PM&C, but I will also be talking a little about my experience before I went into that team, which was in the community sector. So I may be echoing some of Lin's earlier comments.

The thing that I think individuals need to do, and hopefully I am doing to some extent, is to ask ourselves whether we are really being genuine and fair dinkum when we ask for evidence. I will give a few examples. Everyone has many stories about commissioning research which then didn't feed into the policymaking process and the jokes about it sitting on the shelves. I think the current wave of that is the desire to do co-design and to have citizen-centric approaches in policy. It is pretty hard to find anything in government which doesn't say that it is going to do that at the moment.

The question I would have is: how genuine is the effort to do that. That is where my community sector experience comes in. I used to be the CEO of the peak body for refugee settlement. There was a massive redesign of that program—flying everyone in from around Australia for a half day workshop. Calling that the co-design process is inadequate, but it is not uncommon. For the people who organise that, that would have been a significant internal achievement within their department to make that happen and would have been seen as a success.

I think this is happening across government. People are saying they are doing co-design, they are taking a citizen-centric approach, but how genuine is it? Are we really trying to get the answers that we are seeking that we think will improve the policy? Where the behavioural economics comes into it is that is largely what we try to do. We are trying to get inside the head of the group or the people that the policy is addressing to try to understand why they are behaving like they are at the moment and how they will react when the policy is implemented or there is some kind of systems change.

The challenge we have is that our approach, which is quite rigorous—we do randomised control trials which can take over a year, we apply strict academic rigour to what we do—gets lost amongst the broader suite of advice that people get, all of which is proclaiming to be based on citizen-centric approaches or user testing or going out.

I think there is a real challenge. I would like people like myself to be scrutinised more heavily by senior people in the public service asking questions like, “Tell me about this citizen-centric design. What did you actually do? What was the process you went through? What did you find out? Where was the complexity? Where was the doubt?” We need to really put the torch on policymakers and program designers with those kinds of questions.

Prof Anne Tiernan: I would like to know of a randomised control trial that could get inside the head of voters in Longman in a couple of weeks. These are the kinds of, “Yes, I know it is gold standard and I know it is what everybody wants to do,” but I think the experiential knowledge, the lived experience knowledge and how to mesh that becomes the real difficulty. That is the world that the politicians operate within—the narrative language of people who they are encountering in those communities, understanding need to be focused on 28 July.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: My impression is that the public service will instinctively say, “This is what I think is best.” Especially when you have open discussions or discussions with other people, it becomes striking because they are very insular, they are very inward-looking conversations. People outside just say, “You people are just talking to yourself; you are not talking to us.”

I know with some of the consultation around programs that were meant to be genuine consultation, maybe the minister as part of an election commitment had made a decision, “This is how this program’s going to be. You go out and tell people.” And people get very angry. People are very angry that you are just telling them how a program is going to run. You are not actually consulting with them and having genuine engagement. It is something that is a bit atavistic in the public service. That is a really useful reminder.

Mr Ben Mitra-Kahn: I am from IP Australia where I am the Chief Economist. You asked: what would you do yourself? One of the things we talked about was the need to anticipate better what is going to be the problem in six months’ time and in 12 months’ time. You often cannot whack together things in three days if it is complicated. One of the things I think we can do better is to waste more resources in thinking about that, commissioning thinking and asking for things in anticipation that something will be important and accepting that you are going to be wrong probably half the time.

I know something is going to be important in a year’s time in my portfolio and I am going to put out money now so I can spend some time on that. I may be wrong, but that is okay because I think I can run an argument now that says, “Well, this is valuable in case.” I think that is worth doing more of so that we are ready when it comes.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: Is there any comment the panel would like to make to wrap up?

Prof Brian Head: I have just one. A few people have talked about different reflections on co-design, co-production, involving stakeholders—some of them quite quick and dirty, as Simon says—and others perhaps more long-term engagement exercises. Governments globally are interested in this. I think the quality aspects of it are absolutely important and we need to learn a lot more.

But at the end of the day, if you are dealing with an emergent issue—remember, I had some different kinds of issues—where you suddenly need to work out what to do, then crowd sourcing some ideas through whatever method seems like a good way to pull in some expertise, pull in some ideas. You then to have make sense of it. You then have to take responsibility for how to process all of that. But there are different kinds of challenges. The work that BETA is doing in randomised control trials on very specific issues is absolutely terrific but, as I said before, we cannot make truth claims that one method will solve all our problems. It is kind of horses for courses. We have got to have a range of different kinds of options available.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: I would like to thank you very much for your active participation in this session. I think it is been really valuable. We will collect the papers. Please remember that you can write material on the evaluation form. I thank you for what you have done.

The panel has been wonderful. Thank you very much for your insights and your honesty. Please join with me in thanking the panel.

Before we close, we are going to do a couple more questions; so can you get your phones or devices out again? Part of doing these questions is to give us a bit of a response and a bit of evidence that we can use on what you see as priority for particular actions.

The first question is in terms of what you find to be the biggest barrier to using research in policymaking. Can you nominate what you see there? That will be relevant for thinking about how we frame responses to reduce those barriers.

Where we are landing is that time is precious and we are not aware if research is available. I would say on the time one that my experience was that people always said they didn't have time to do research. Frankly, even when I was a secretary, you could make time. You can do that. I am not trying to trivialise that, but you can make time. So it is time and maybe being clearer that this is a priority. Therefore, it should be in part of your time. Then there is not knowing what is around. That is a good insight.

The second question is about what you would do. We had a lot of practical suggestions raised by you. Again, what sort of thing would you find really helpful to increase the use of research in policy?

Co-production of research is very important, some regular forums. IPAA's activities are very helpful, but really building up the sections, say, ELs and Band 1s in the public service and mid-level academics and having regular forums where on a particular set of problems or issues they can come together. That is a really nice way of building up personal connections and developing that trust.

It is people who are midway or a bit more on their career. They have a bit more life in them; they are not deputy secretaries or secretaries who do not have much future left. These relationships are then enduring. That becomes quite important. Thank you very much for that. That is a really handy response.

I will now invite Professor Meredith Edwards to join me for a summing up. I think I have done my summing up.

Prof Meredith Edwards: I have really enjoyed this session. I thank you so much. It is a passion of mine to get policy and research closer together, having been a public servant and being a researcher. I have been in the middle with the pros and cons of that. So thank you so much.

I started with a clean slate this morning. I now have some very messy notes on a piece of paper that I will go through to some extent. Gordon can stop me when I have run out of my time and your time.

My interest is what practical steps we can take, and I know that is Gordon's. What would you like me to say back to researchers with Jim, Brian and Anne to the Academy of the Social Sciences so we get that better connection.

The two things I heard from you that would resonate with them in slightly different ways is the importance of the relationships that you build with the various forms that you have suggested and the importance of access. For researchers, access to data is a big issue and for you, access to their research is a big issue. That will get better as we have more open access forums as they are coming. You go to Google rather than go to the research because that is the easier way of doing it and you will download what you can download.

Researchers do not always get it right with you because they do not have access to the right data, apart from the context of the policy issue. Access is a big issue, and I am sure there are ways that we can improve on that. One of the suggestions that I remember someone saying, or we wrote about some years ago in the context of an ANZOG review of their activities, is that an organisation like that could act as some sort of clearing house where you could find out where the expertise lies and who has written what.

But the other really important thing was about relationships. You have mentioned many, many ways in which relationships can be built up. If you want to know the evidence of research use by policy people, it clearly shows, as Brian's work in Australia has shown, that it is about dialogue, it is about interaction.

It is not about that article that you may or may not have time to read in the evening. It is about what you hear when you are having lunch. Yes, academics love being invited to lunch; there is a power imbalance there. It is about secondments, as I have done. That really helped me in my research work and in my policy work doing it both ways. It is about roundtables, workshops and regular contact.

You have indicated that you want that regular contact. We did some work on that some years ago for ANZOG. We found that it is not just about having the contact; it is how you organise that—not just having the forums but what are your issues that you would like to have your assumptions challenged on, the conceptual framework for the evaluations of, the evidence that can come from researchers.

As you have said, building, establishing and maintaining the connections that you might have with researchers becomes really important to them and really important to you. The more churn, as has been mentioned, the less likely that is going to be sustainable. But that is what you need, that is what researchers seem to need.

That was my take in very short form. I have listed many of the challenges that you face. It was interesting—I will not go through them all now; we will have them in our recording—that you focused a lot on challenges, which overlapped the context. Even when you were meant to talk about suggestions, you were coming to challenges. That just shows that there is an issue here on your side, as well as on the side of researchers, that needs to be confronted.

But the thing I took away also was that you are really keen to do something better. So when you get to your individual mechanisms, many that you suggested at the end might be useful. Despite your lack of time, you are interested in pursuing individually more of getting out of Canberra, mixing with communities and finding out what they feel on the ground.

Anticipating issues, having reflective time, was also mentioned. I went off to the ANU at one stage for six months, and that was the beginning of the child support scheme. I had time to reflect. I had time to think. I do not believe that we would have got nearly as far or got there as fast if I had not had that opportunity. Similarly, it happens the other way and you get the context. In respect of anticipating issues, you need that space. You need time in your diary, in your week or at another institution.

The other suggestion that I heard which really resonated from some of the consultancies that our institute has done is the talk versus the action. We talk so much in the public sector about citizen engagement or bringing policy and implementation together. They are big gaps. So we must think about as researchers how we can work with you to fill those gaps.

I feel I have rambled a little and I have not used my notes much. But I am sure it will all come out in the wash. I would love to take back your messages, as we digest them to our researchers. We, therefore, hope that we can get from your suggestions some more practical steps forward.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: That is brilliant, Meredith. I cannot add anything. I am not going to say what I was going to say because you have said it and you said it better. I cannot agree more with what you are saying.

Universities are going through a lot of reflection on these things. It is clear, Anne, from your job of engagement, from what ANU is doing with creating a hub with Sean Innis and others, from UC, and from the organising principles around action-based research that the universities are really focusing on this, and that is a great thing. There is a bit of an opportunity for public servants on the other side to see what is going on in universities and, I think, frankly, within the public service or certainly within the commonwealth. The APS review has really got an eye to this as well.



Maybe those terms of reference talk around capability, around innovation and around agility, but they all come back to the fact that you cannot be innovative or capable unless you are really an open, active thinker and engager. That engagement between the public service and researchers, or universities and academia, or research institutes is really important. This is a statement that is important, but also we have heard are some practical ways of what you would do to enable that. This has been a really great conversation.

Prof Meredith Edwards: The paper bag lunch at a university; if you do not want to take academics out to lunch—which they would love—if you said to any institute at a university, “We have an issue we would like to talk about in private with your experts; can you organise that,” they would jump at the chance. It costs you nothing, it is time effective and it is safe. That is building relationships as well. That you can do in your own city here.

Dr Gordon de Brouwer: In closing, I will make some final comments. You have an evaluation form and you get an email about that. We really appreciate your taking the time to provide that feedback. It is very helpful for IPAA and for ASA for you to do that. Also, if you have any ideas, that evaluation email will provide an opportunity for you to express that. We really welcome that, and that will be fed through.

Thank you for your very active participation. I thank all of you, but particularly James, the panel and Meredith. You have provided wonderful leadership for us by your contributions. Thank you very much. I also thank Drew, Sue and Mariline in respect of the policy and the content of this. You put a lot of effort from IPAA into constructing this. Thanks also to the IPAA team in making sure that the event ran smoothly, as it always does.

EVENT CONCLUDED