INSTITUTE OF
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
AUSTRALIA
ACT

02 6154 9800
PO Box 4349 Kingston ACT 2604
admin@act.ipaa.org.au
www.act.ipaa.org.au

ABN 24 656 727 375

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Valedictory Address
Duncan Lewis AO DSC CSC

National Portrait Gallery, Canberra

11 SEPTEMBER 2019

Steven Kennedy: It's fantastic day. A sad day to be farewelling really a great colleague. And I was saying to Kerri earlier, a colleague who provides tremendous support to his Secretary colleagues. We might say a little bit more about that as we go through the proceedings. It's now my great pleasure to welcome Phil Gaetjens to the stage to provide some opening remarks. Phil commenced as Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on the 2nd of September, just last week. Prior to that, of course he was the Secretary of The Treasury. Phil, thank you very much for joining us today and please join me.

Philip Gaetjens: Thank you. Thank you Steven, and I associate myself with your acknowledgement of country and pay my respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island members present. I also acknowledge my Secretary's Board colleagues here today and senior members of the intelligence community and the APS more broadly. It's a great honour to introduce Duncan Lewis AO DSC CSC and make some opening remarks on behalf of the Secretary's group. As Stephen said, Kerri will be providing a vote of thanks at the end.

Philip Gaetjens: In a moment, Duncan is going to reflect on his 47-year career, and give us some insight into what he's seen and done in nearly five decades of service to this nation. Before he does that and without wanting to steal his thunder, I wanted to give you a sense of just how remarkable that career has been and the impact he has had. It started when he was only 17, just down at the road at Duntroon. There were early signs that Duncan was going to stand out. Notwithstanding he was an in an officer cohort that included a new Governor General, His Excellency General, the Honourable David Hurley, and the reigning King of Thailand.

Philip Gaetjens: His military career including time of the SAS took him to some of the most remarkable and challenging places, Lebanon in the early '80s, East Timor in the early 2000s and in that same decade, Iraq and Afghanistan. Significantly, Duncan became Special Operations Commander at the beginning of 2001, a watershed year in modern global history. Today on this anniversary of the September 11 attacks in the U.S., it's worth reflecting on how much the world changed on that day, and on the way so much of Duncan's work, since then has focused on keeping Australians safe.

Philip Gaetjens: It's not all been about the military. In 2005 Duncan switched gears and took on a civilian role in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and was ultimately appointed the inaugural National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister. As Secretary of Defence, and Duncan was the first military officer appointed to that role, and later as ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg, EU and NATO, he continued to serve with a military efficiency and civilian pragmatism.

Philip Gaetjens: It is this straightforward no nonsense style that has been the hallmark of his time at ASIO over a period that has seen an increasingly volatile global context. In a career marked by extraordinary courage and conviction, Duncan has shown great resolution in the public arena, in offering a more nuanced account of the national security threats facing this country. And just last week we saw in Duncan’s speech

at the Lowy Institute, the important role played by our independent agencies in identifying new and growing challenges, and putting these on the collective radar of the government and the broader Australian community.

Philip Gaetjens: To compliment this reputation as an effective leader of strategy and policy, I became aware just last week of another side to Duncan that is less well known at least publicly. I had the good fortune of travelling to Wellington with Duncan and other members of Australia's national security community for security dialogue with our New Zealand counterparts, and the appreciation shown to Duncan by our colleagues across the ditch was evident. Not just his professionalism, but also for the pastoral care, support and encouragement provided by Duncan in the aftermath of the horrific Christchurch incident.

Philip Gaetjens: If the respect shown by our New Zealand colleagues is anything to go by, it shows the great regard in which he is held by the broader international community, as well as here at home. In the years since Duncan was appointed to head up ASIO, the challenges posed to Australia in the world have been many and varied. But it's part of the nature of Duncan's job, that when he and his team are at their most effective, we often see nothing at all.

Philip Gaetjens: Duncan once told the story that a former headmaster of his had actually called him on the phone to express his astonishment at the success Duncan had achieved over his career. He's not the man to say, I told you so, but I look forward to hearing what it was like to spend a long and stellar career proving that headmaster wrong. Colleagues, please welcome Duncan Lewis.

Duncan Lewis: Phil, thank you very much for that generous but largely undeserved introduction. My thanks to each of you, every one of you for being here this morning. So many people, so many familiar faces. Secretaries, Agency Heads, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Good Morning. Could I, Steve, compliment the work of IPAA and congratulate you on your appointment leading that organisation. Could I congratulate also both you and Phil for your new daytime jobs as Secretaries of Treasury and PM&C respectively.

Duncan Lewis: It is a poignant fact, that as I speak to you this morning, it is indeed the 18th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks in New York City and Washington. That was an event that had such a extraordinary impact, not only around the world, but on this particular officer and the rest of his professional life because it was a real watershed.

Duncan Lewis: On Friday I'm going to walk out of the beautiful ASIO building that I can nearly see through the trees there. I'm going to walk out of that Ben Chifley Building and try not to look back. But I know that my mind will be racing and retracing the events and the people that I've encountered over the last 47 years. The message that I seek to leave with you today and the title of my address is ‘it's a privilege to serve and to lead’.

Duncan Lewis: It was dark, raining hard, very cold. I was 17 years old, a cadet at Duntroon, deployed in the hills somewhere between here and the coast, on a field exercise. I

was freezing, wet, hungry, lying face down in the muddy ground, rain dripping off the front of my bush hat onto my rifle, and I didn't hear him ghost up behind me, but there was a tap on my heel and it caused me to turn around, and there was the gnarled shadowy figure of one of my instructors.

Duncan Lewis: And he said, "Lewis." And not knowing if I was in trouble, I said in a shivering probably high-pitched kind of voice, "Yes, Sergeant Major." And he growled, "Always remember Son, it's a privilege to serve." Now, that moment, the word privileged was the furthest thing from my mind. Over the years however, I've come to recognise the power of his comments. It is indeed a privilege to serve. It's been my privilege to serve and to lead as a soldier, a bureaucrat, a diplomat, and a spy. Every step of the way I've been supported by my life companion, Jenny and our family, daughter Alison and son Simon, and I make the point now and I'll make it again later, that they also serve.

Duncan Lewis: I always wanted to be a Soldier. Since I was a small boy living in semi-rural environment on an orchard on the outskirts of Perth. My dad left school at 14, my mom was a senior nursing sister and later on nursing lecturer. And it was my grandfather who had the greatest influence on what was to become my life's journey. He was a Doctor of Medicine, and he interrupted his medical training at Melbourne University, to join the 1st AIF and spend the first four years, his first four years in France. He returned after World War I and completed his medical degree, and some years later during World War II he joined again as a medical officer. The two world wars left him with some emotional scarring, but a treasure chest of stories and yarns that all soldiers tell, and I was hooked.

Duncan Lewis: My grandfather's life always struck me as being amazing. As a boy, he together with his own father, his dad, who was the Lloyd's surveyor, Lloyd's the shipping insurance, he was the Lloyd's surveyor of Australasia. My grandfather and his father visited the Williamtown docks, where the majority of vessels at the time were sailing ships. Later as a young doctor, he owned the first car in the Victorian town of Yea, and before he died he watched Neil Armstrong walk on the moon. So he went from sailing ships to the moon. What a life.

Duncan Lewis: I began service at Duntroon in January 1972 and standing there with me and our newly shawn, short haircuts were not the go at the time I tell you, it was very hard. We all had locks down to here the day before, but I was there with the newly shawn group with the now Governor General, the future Chief of the New Zealand Defence Force and the Crown Prince of Thailand, recently Crown King. Now we always had some idea the Crown Prince was going to do okay in life. But we not were not sure about ourselves.

Duncan Lewis: Our foundational military education and training was a great launch pad for all of us, and it's interesting when the famous American Civil War general Robert E. Lee was on his deathbed, he opined to a biographer that the worst mistake that he ever made, the worst mistake he ever made was to take a military education. Now I can understand General Lee's sentiment, given he commanded the confederate forces and they were 600,000 of him country men died in that war.

Duncan Lewis: But my experience given a very different context, has been quite the reverse of General Lee's. The best thing I ever did professionally was to take a military education. It prepared me and my comrades to lead and arguably exercise one of the greatest privileges that one can have, to command and lead Australian soldiers, and in my particular case prepared me, I think, for a second half of my life, as the most senior appointments, holding the most senior appointments in the public service.

Duncan Lewis: The motto to this part of my story is that education and learning is never wasted and it can often lead to the most unexpected twists in life. Now, I owe much to those early military instructors and then the soldiers that I led as a young officer for the lessons they taught me. When I graduated, a 21-year-old leftenant, an infantry officer commanding a platoon of men, 30 guys overwhelmingly older than me, many of them had just recently returned from the Vietnam war, I had to grow up very quickly. I learned that there were soldiers that were far less educated than me, who had not had the same opportunities as me, but were deeply knowledgeable and had an extraordinarily highly developed moral compass, and importantly an acute 'bull dust' meter. We used a slightly more colourful variation on that term.

Duncan Lewis: They taught me a great deal about myself and a wonderful break on a young officer who could from time to time think that he knew it all. The timeless principle that I took from this raw and basic level of leadership at the team level, was that you must know yourself and know your people. There's a lesson in that for all of us in the APS context here, and I frequently see young, and indeed sometimes not so young leaders, who do not make an effort to know their people. Sure, they may know them at work, but consider their private lives off limits. Now, I don't buy this.

Duncan Lewis: We were as young leaders required to keep a thing called the platoon commanders notebook. You had a book that had all of the personal details that you could garner on your people. I'm not suggesting it'd be required in the public service, but the discipline that's forced by that exercise meant that you got to know all about your people. It was expected that you knew about your people and perhaps we can learn something from this.

Duncan Lewis: A second great lesson that I learned as a young leader was that you must give a lot of your private self to those in your team. Your workforce spends about one third of their time, just think of this, spend about one third of their time in your charge, doing your bidding, supporting you, contributing to the targets and the objectives that you set. The lesson I learned, is that they deserve to understand and know what it is that makes you tick. They are amazingly inquisitive, and I believe they have a right to know your views, your values, your fears and your interests. They are putting their trust in you and they want to know what flicks your switch. They want to know your boundaries. They are interested in your family and your private life. What makes you happy and what makes you sad.

Duncan Lewis: Now you can say, well that's my business. They have no right, no need to know, but it just doesn't work like that. You have a personal relationship with those that

you lead, no matter what level you're exercising that leadership. And like all relationships you need to put yourself into it. I recall one of my early bosses saying, “Mr. Lewis, love your soldiers and they'll love you back.” And it's a concept that's worth reflecting on.

Duncan Lewis: I had a soldier, Joe Van Droffelaar. He was very hard to love. He had an incurable stutter. I was a Commanding Officer of the SAS Regiment. We're at a formal dinner and Sir Charles Court, the Premier of Western Australia and the Honorary Colonel of the Regiment came to the dinner. I was very nervous about hosting this VIP, and I noticed with some anguish that he was talking to Joe over in the corner. I went over to get this and Joe's stuttering. And he said, so Charles said to him, “So Joe, what did you do before you joined the army? What made you join the army?” And Joe said, “Well sir, I wanted to be a radio announcer.” And I thought, Oh my God, if the earth could just open up and swallow me, this is the end. And Joe then continued on to say, “But I was too tall.” I learned a lot from soldiers.

Duncan Lewis: I came to reflect on leadership in far more depth in my career, later on when I was studying at the British Army Staff College where two young Australian officers a year are sent off to progress their education and learning. And I recall learning at the time a lesson that's been central to my own leadership endeavours, and if I could leave you only with one thing this morning, ladies and gentlemen, is this. Your first responsibility as a leader is to create atmosphere. Just reflect on that for a minute. Your first responsibility is to create an atmosphere.

Duncan Lewis: Later in life I came to work closely with two of our country's most senior leaders, the late General John Baker, one of the most outstanding military leaders I served with, and Prime Minister John Howard. Both of these leaders in their different ways created atmosphere around them that encouraged, it is an atmosphere that people felt they were important and cared for, it was an atmosphere where those two leaders knew and always remembered their people's names. General Baker was an extremely humble man in the most disarming way. The memorable thing is that he had absolutely nothing to be humble about, because he was invariably the smartest man in the room. He would ensure this would never be apparent until it was too late for the hapless.

Duncan Lewis: John Baker was an engineer and in that way that an engineer minds works, it's a amazing thing to me, but in the way that engineer mind works. He could order things in his head. Those of us used to marvel at his speeches, we'll always remember his uncanny ability to do what I've chosen not to do this morning, and that is speak without notes. He would stand up without notes and declare that he had 17 points that he wished to make. And he would turn to the first one and say there were five sub-issues that he wanted to address here. And so on he would proceed like a machine, paragraph, sub paragraph, sub sub paragraph. And of course, we would all be sitting at the back with a notebook and pencil, recording the numbers to see if he missed anything, and he never did, it was extraordinary, he had a mind like a computer. But he always cared about his people.

Duncan Lewis: And I recall Jenny and I hosting John Baker and his wife Margaret in Jakarta while I was the army attaché in Indonesia. And even though we were meeting with the President and a glittering array of who's who in Indonesia, the only thing John Baker was worried about was the welfare of his staff. His ADC, his driver, his valet and so on. He cared about people.

Duncan Lewis: John Howard had a similar rather disarming manner, but was always in charge. And from where I sat, he always seemed to have time for his staff, and an amazing patience for their shortcomings, particularly my own. His leadership in the cabinet room was always something I admired, and he managed the various competing interests under great pressure. The tough decisions relating to the deployment of Australian military forces were the ones that were taken with the most sober, and the most careful consideration. And they exemplified to me a highly experienced and effective leader in action. I was deeply touched, when after all these years, he sent me a handwritten note last week to wish me and Jenny, well. John Howard understood atmosphere.

Duncan Lewis: Leadership during crisis and in particular during military operations, when people's lives are often at risk, provides a particular set of challenges. And having led teams in crisis, for example, when we did the job on the motor vessel Tampa, you'll all remember that in August 2001. Or planning that same year, the first special forces deployment into Afghanistan, or indeed responding to the bushfires in Victoria in 2009 or the 2011 earthquake in Christchurch. There's a particular lesson to be taken from all of these by me and that is the value of a studied stillness.

Duncan Lewis: When crisis strikes, there tends to be a lot of rushing about, and this is a time when a leader should consider just anchoring yourself in one spot. Where people know where to find you, they're reassured by your stillness, your stillness and calmness will become infectious. When the Tampa crisis broke, I recall having to restrain my natural inclination to rush off down to the operations room and to take over. I had to force myself to stay at my desk. The ability to speak to the Prime Minister, the Chief of the Defence Force, whoever was ringing. While my staff came to me with the unfolding issues, confident in the knowledge that they were free to do their job, and not have me looking over their shoulder and second guessing them. Now clearly people have to hurry around in a crisis, but if you're in charge, take charge, anchor yourself and have everyone else run around.

Duncan Lewis: I was able to further apply this technique during my time as commander on the border during the Timor operation in '99-2000. I found that even when there was a firefight with the opposing militia forces, resisting the temptation to rush into the operations room and start doing the job of the ops staff who were all trained and tasked with managing this situation, was difficult but necessary. When engulfed in a crisis, the words of Rudyard Kipling's poem were always helpful. I used to carry a copy of that in my wallet. If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you, and if you can trust yourself when all men doubt you, but make allowance for their doubting too. Now, this poem was written in about 1895, it's nearly well over a hundred years old, but it still has resonance in leadership considerations today and I do commend it to you.

Duncan Lewis: My periods studying at the U.S. Army War College in '99-2000 was an inflexion point in my service. The college was designed to turn mid-ranking officers from men and women of action into men and women of contemplation. Having said that, it was always intended that the need to retain a bias for action would endure. Surely this is what we seek in the APS today. Young men and women with knowledge and learning, but with a bias for action. Some of the learning at war college was delivered by the Harvard Business School, and it was there that I was introduced to a concept which stood me in good stead for future roles.

Duncan Lewis: The concept which some of you will know and some know very well, is easily remembered for it's acronym VUCA, V-U-C-A, VUCA, a concept to perfectly describe the environment in which a strategic decision making takes place. VUCA, meaning volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. When you think about it, so much of the work we do here in the policy area of the APS fall squarely into the VUCA classification. I also learned at this time that while management and leadership as concepts have a great deal of crossover, there is a distinct point of difference. And I'm concerned when I see leaders who believe management in itself is enough. Put simply, it's my view that management is about doing the thing right. Leadership is about doing the right thing. Many of you will, I predict face a moment in time when you must decide between doing the thing right and doing the right thing. It's very nuanced, but it's very important and it will come to you.

Duncan Lewis: While at war college, I was tutored by a general who led the SALT II talks, the strategic arms limitation talks with the Russians in the 1980s. He trained us in the art and the skill of making a deal, cutting an agreement. I found this knowledge to be extremely valuable when I was the National Security Advisor, when I was in the trenches with the States and Territories. There we were, so many issues related to who was responsible and invariably of course, who was going to pay. And I rate the ability to negotiate a deal and then sell it to those impacted as a high order skill for any young leader aspiring to high office.

Duncan Lewis: I'd like to make a few more observations about leadership in the public sector. I have occasionally been appalled to see leaders put themselves first, first in queue first to get away, first to take credit. I was taught as a young SAS officer, the old British army saying that at the end of the day when the work's done, you need to look after your horses, look after your men and look after yourself in that order. And this translates well into how the APS might approach leadership, the horses, the men and yourself. It can be adapted to looking after your mission essential tools first, your people second and then yourself. It's not wrong to look after yourself because at the end of the day, if you fall over for one reason or another, either literally or figuratively, then the team is adversely affected.

Duncan Lewis: Now, another observation I'd make is the requirement for leaders to be able to manage specialisation. As the world gets more complex, we find more high order specialisations in the workplace. This is particularly noticeable in the public sector. And I was very fortunate as a young officer to achieve selection for the Special Air Service Regiment, the SAS. This experience placed me in charge of soldiers who had very specific roles and highly specialised skill sets. Notwithstanding I was in

command of a small but intensely trained team, each member was an expert in some specific function and they expected to be treated and managed as such. The rest of the team, including me, defer to the expert when it was his turn to perform.

Duncan Lewis: The SAS selection course was the hardest thing that I've ever done. It taught me an amazing thing about myself and about my comrades. It introduced me to something quite foreign to most military organisations, and that is a flat structure. Where the value of contribution with not what rank you wore, but the level of expertise you brought to the party. My job as the boss was to harness the dynamic, and get Olympic like elite performance out of the team. It was a huge challenge, but one of the most rewarding things I've done.

Duncan Lewis: When in late 2004 John Howard and Peter Shergold together came to the view that I would be well positioned to lead the National Security apparatus at PM&C, it was contemplated that I'd be seconded from the army, and I acknowledge in the audience today, Andrew Metcalfe, who was part of that plot. Thank you Andrew. Effective as a central part of that plot now I've come to think of it. That was not how I saw things about being seconded, and I asked if the position was spilled, would it be acceptable for me to apply for the position? It was important for me that I had no strings back to the Military or the Defence. I would have had Peter Cosgroves' hand up the back of my shirt. It would have been a bad look. I wanted to act as a member of the APS, free of influence, and without the daily awkwardness of my young APS staff struggling to relate to their boss being a General in the Army. And so it was, I applied for and I won the position.

Duncan Lewis: And the lesson for us all, I think in this chain of events is that things happen, and again, there is a stronger, more colourful expression around that, 'things happen'. Just when you think your career may be coming to an end or conversely you're on the cusp of victory, events take over. This life truism was understood by the former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, who when asked famously, what was the most difficult thing that he had to manage as Prime Minister replied, "events, dear boy events." And so it is. You simply just don't know what opportunities or disasters are around the corner. At any rate, I transformed from soldier to bureaucrat. And then to continue the theme of events, I move quickly into the Deputy Secretary job and then the National Security Advisor, working for Prime Ministers, Rudd and Gillard. This work was indeed one of the great privileges of my public service. Proximity to the head of government was the experience of a lifetime. I had the opportunity to meet with Kings and Queens, Presidents and Prime Ministers, bishops and billionaires.

Duncan Lewis: My lesson and one I leave with you today is that you don't need to be the smartest person in the room to have influence and impact in that environment. In fact, it can be a distinct advantage to make your mark in those circumstances by watching more and speaking less. One priceless moment I recall while travelling with PM Rudd, speaking and meeting famous people, was a photo that was taken of me and Henry Kissinger. And some wag of a photographer, and it's a message for the photographers at the back there, some wag of a photographer titled a photo, two great national security advisers, Henry Kissinger and Duncan Lewis.

Extraordinary thing that we would be in the same photo, but he was one of the most remarkable people that I've ever met.

Duncan Lewis: My time at PM&C introduced me to some of the most memorable exchanges with Honourable Senators at estimates, many of you will relate closely with this. One sense of the truth was frequently under challenge, as the estimates committee burrowed down one day into the ritual sport of questioning the number of days the Prime Minister spent out of the country. I recall one unnamed Senator asking me if the Prime Minister had been to Singapore on a certain occasion. I answered the Senator that, “well, yes and no.” There was an uproar from the opposition senators with assertions that always dissembling and worse. I was finally able to explain that by their own Senate rules, absences from Australia, of course measured in 24-hour blocks. And with this particularly fast-moving Prime Minister, we had left and were back inside Australian Airspace in 18 hours. Therefore, it was arguable that we'd not been in Singapore at all. It didn't seem to cut it, but I thought it was worth a try.

Duncan Lewis: Later when I stated that I was not able to provide an answer to a question to which I admitted earlier that I knew the answer, the comment was made by the most senior and distinguished Senator, “Mr Lewis, you have taken the democratic process to a new low.” I had to remind myself at that moment that it really was a privilege to serve. Notwithstanding this exchange, I always try to answer questions truthfully, even when we all knew the intent of the question was either mischievous or even on occasions, dishonourable.

Duncan Lewis: In 2011 quite out of left field, my then boss Terry Moore and the Secretary of PM&C, a leader who taught me a great deal, and Terry understood that leadership is in large part teaching, he said, "you're going to be appointed as the Secretary of Defence." I would begin the job at about the same time as my friend and classmate David Hurley, same time he became the CDF, so we came onto the field together. The Defence diarchy would be historically unusual, and indeed I would be the first senior, former senior military officer to hold the Secretary's appointment in half a century. Later my time in Defence as the Secretary was cut short when I concluded at that point with great difficulty that my integrity was more important than staying in the top of the tree.

Duncan Lewis: I'm not prepared to discuss the details, but the Prime Minister at the time asked if I would consider taking the appointment as ambassador to Brussels. I'd replace Brendan Nelson whose posting had come to an end, and I agreed that for the good of the Department and for the ADF, it was better that I get out of the centre of government for a spell. So I moved into my third phase of professional life as a diplomat. I loved the work, came to admire the great stress that impacts our diplomats. Young officers all over the world, working hard, often in very trying conditions, serving the nation's interest.

Duncan Lewis: One big lesson I took away from my time as ambassador was that when we as officials travel, some of us in very senior appointments, we should always appreciate the work that embassy staff do and put into official visits. From time to time when misplaced ingratitude was exhibited, I had to reflect on a phrase that I

heard long ago, those who matter don't mind and those who mind don't matter. It's worth reflecting on. This sort of poor behaviour ties into another feature which concerns me and that is upward management.

Duncan Lewis: It is my view that our community needs to pay far more attention to a group of leaders who make upward management an art form, they are worryingly common and not routinely called out. They progress beyond where they should and cause a great deal of stress and staff anxiety wherever they operate. They typically get the job done, but at what cost? This genre of leader doesn't invest in their organisation, they draw down on the available credit and leave a diminished organisational balance sheet for their successes.

Duncan Lewis: Now, somewhere along the road in my APS journey, I began to realise that as a soldier, I had been lavished with a level and degree of training that was not always possible in the APS. This realisation often worried me. This is no reflection whatsoever on current APS training systems or training staff, but I must conclude that we could do better. I had in the military, nine years on the public purse being either educated or trained in the most expensive mediums and courses. Now in the APS in the last 15 years, I've had two three-day courses, and one of those interestingly was on leadership.

Duncan Lewis: The point I make is that while we can't expect to replicate entirely the way in which the ADF, for example, prepares its leaders, we have to do better. I think it's odd, for example, that there is no public service college per say. We have schools and colleges and universities, to be sure, that cater for public sector training and education, but we do not have a highly credentialed, renown, respected, dedicated public service college, for one of the largest workforces in the country. It's something to think about, perhaps in the finest tradition of the ancient Chinese, we might consider developing our humble public servants in a more deliberate way. I think this sort of training may support public service leaders in better managing the attempted politicisation which we all face from time to time. It helps you nuance some of those circumstances and those situations.

Duncan Lewis: Now, an apolitical public service such as ours doesn't just happen, it needs to be nurtured and defended. This is a complex and sometimes highly nuanced matter and we need to be specifically schooled and prepared to respectfully hold our ground. An apolitical public service is a precious jewel, and it must be a treasure that's preserved.

Duncan Lewis: Now, while living in Brussels and on return to Canberra for my mid-term briefings, Tony Abbott called me to his office. He called me to his office twice in one day. The first to ask if I had agreed to become the head of ASIO, and when I demurred, I was called back again an hour or two later, to be told I would be the head of ASIO. It was another learning experience. So I became a spy. I managed to get another six months out of him by telling him that I had a dog which was in quarantine, and I couldn't come back until the dog could. That worked actually, I got another six months so, I was very grateful.

Duncan Lewis: But this most recent appointment as the head of ASIO and the one from which I'll complete my public service the day after tomorrow, has been an enormous privilege. I can't speak highly enough about the work the men and women of ASIO have done and will continue to do in these uncertain and unpredictable times. This year, ASIO celebrates the significant milestone of our 70th anniversary. We were formed in 1949 to face the then menace of communism and ensure that Australia could protect our secrets and preserve our democratic institutions, free of foreign interference.

Duncan Lewis: The tumultuous events of international terrorism beginning in the late '70s and the early '80s, magnified by the 9/11 attacks in 2001 had an enormous impact. And as a result, ASIO began directing increasing amounts of energy and effort towards counter terrorism. That was at the expense of the counter espionage mission. Today the pendulum is swinging back again to our roots, as we addressed the re-emerging issues of espionage and foreign interference.

Duncan Lewis: In its first year, 1949, ASIO was an agency of 13 men, yes men. And we've come a long way since then. As a committed and active member of the Male Champions of Change programme, I'm pleased to report that ASIO has now for all intents and purposes, reached gender equity with 46% female staff, and around 40% female SES staff. There's more work to be done. We have in total just on 2000 staff, positioned in every state and territory of the country, and in a wide range of overseas posts.

Duncan Lewis: We are not as commonly expressed in the media, the nation's domestic spy agency. We are the nation's security service, and like our partner agency MI5, we operate without geographic boundaries, to address threats to Australians wherever those Australians may be in the world. It's been one of my great privileges to have led ASIO and to work with my current staff. I want to note particularly today what wonderful support my three deputies have given me. Wendy Southern, Heather Cook, and Pete Vickery, and they're here today. Thank you very much.

Duncan Lewis: I want to thank my young executive officers. They come in bright eyed but they leave broken. And particularly I want to thank Sharon and Esther Ray, my two long serving and long suffering executive assistants. To Sharon in particular, my life would have been an administrative nightmare without your support and your friendship, and I thank you for putting up with me. As I come to reflect on our workplace, I can't help but think of a quote I heard long ago and it went like this, “Life's journey is so much better when the pathway is paved with praise.” We could all do with giviing a little more praise, it's so easily overlooked.

Duncan Lewis: Finally, I want to say something about my family. It took me too long to realise what unqualified support families give to officers working in the public sector, and what impositions they face as you sail through your working life, particularly when you get to high office. To my wife Jenny, my companion and friend through life's journey, and to our two wonderful adult children, Alison and Simon, I say thank you. Thank you for your support, thank you for moving into 23 houses in five countries, in four states and territories. Thank you for enduring the changes in

school, for the bravery of making new circles of friends every couple of years. Jenny, thank you for acting as my advisor, confidant, counsellor, and reality checker. While I can reflect on the privilege of service indeed, you also have served and I thank you.

Duncan Lewis: I want to conclude now by returning to where I began. To serve one's country is an honour, which not everybody has the opportunity to experience. We're lucky in the public sector, we do. We have had the chance to serve and for me I have had the chance to serve as a soldier, as a bureaucrat, a diplomat, and then as a spy. It's been an honour, four careers in one working lifetime. To paraphrase our current Prime Minister, "how good is that"?

Duncan Lewis: As I leave the Ben Chifley Building on Friday, the memories of working with so many wonderful people in the service of this amazing country of ours will be racing through my mind. I see so many of them in this room today. I thank all of you for your support and your friendship and your service. I've come to understand, there's not so much the success you achieve in life but rather, it's the people you have to share that success with.

Duncan Lewis: As I cross the lake for the last time on Friday, one set of words will reverberate, and they'll be the ones of that Sergeant Major on that wet cold night, so many years ago. "Mr. Lewis always remember it's a privilege to serve." Thank you.

Steven Kennedy: Thank you Duncan, really a truly remarkable speech, a great speech. You've imparted some great wisdom and provoked us as you usually do in your humorous and quiet way. I'm going to call upon Kerri Hartland now to give us a vote of thanks, but once again, thank you so much. That was a great speech.

Kerri Hartland: It's always really very daunting, speaking after Duncan as you can see. So, I'd just like to thank IPAA as well and Steven for giving me the honour of proposing this vote of thanks to Duncan. As one of at the time two deputies, I had the privilege of working with Duncan from the time he stepped into the Director-General role at ASIO. I have to admit that Duncan and I had a bit of a shaky start.

Kerri Hartland: My first phone call to Duncan, as I had the responsibility of onboarding him into the Organisation, was when I had to tell him that the name Duncan was not well-regarded in the Organisation. This was because at the time, that pay parking was being implemented in the Defence precinct, including in the then ASIO car park. Unfortunately for all of us, the machine's proprietary name was Duncan. So the Duncans were being installed with many jokes about Duncans. Second was his realisation that I was not an AFL supporter. I grew up in Queensland as a Rugby League supporter.

Kerri Hartland: Duncan was pretty excited on the first Friday he was in the office, when I had a yellow jacket on, the day of his beloved Tiger's game. I had to say I didn't have a clue. And when he started chanting about Richmond down the corridor and greeting me as a kindred spirit, I had no idea what he was talking about. However, after that, I learned a valuable lesson and I was astute enough to check the scores every weekend to know how well Monday mornings were going to go.

So there's a bit of a lesson there in influencing for all of those up and coming leaders.

Kerri Hartland: More seriously, when Duncan started as Director General, I and the organisation immediately recognised his leadership qualities. He didn't need a uniform on to show that. He could stand up and command attention, as you've seen today, have people follow him and identify his genuineness. He never became outwardly upset or angry if things went wrong, and I will remember more than anything else, the lessons that he provided me in humanity. Notably for me, in times of crisis in the organisational family, Duncan was meticulous in the way a situation should be handled.

Kerri Hartland: When the tragic car accident took the life of one of our senior colleagues and Duncan was overseas, and I was sitting in the chair, Duncan talked me through every detail of what needed to be done to support the family and the organisation. He also recognised how difficult and important leadership was at that time. John Baker would be proud of the way, I'm sure, that you provided the atmosphere, Duncan. That you've created, and I can say that you're very able to speak without notes.

Kerri Hartland: I was always amazed that complex issues took him so little time to master. I'd pour through the details only to find that Duncan would grasp it immediately in one sitting. Duncan immediately earned the respect of colleagues, staff, and so importantly as Phil has said, in the intel world.

Kerri Hartland: I was blessed to work with Duncan who both provided encouragement and support to me personally and professionally. I know it was a hard wrench to accept the DG position from Brussels, particularly for Jenny, and Olly, Olly’s the dog, but we all like to thank you and Jenny so much for your service and for your friendship. I'd also like to wish you both the very best in retirement, which I know will involve plenty of time travelling and enjoying time with friends and family both here and in the West. Thank you very much.

Steven Kennedy: Thank you Kerri, and thanks so much for sharing some deeply personal remarks. Now that was lovely. Now I'm going to present a gift to Duncan. I don't think he's a flowers and chocolate guy, so I think we're ... No, is that right Jenny?

Jenny: Chocolates.

Steven Kennedy: Chocolates maybe. But thank you so much Duncan again for your remarks, they were really remarkable, a wonderful person, a lot of colleagues here, are very happy for you. I did say sad at the beginning but we think you're going to have a lot of fun in this fifth phase, I think that would be, a fifth dimension, always the most interesting one. So I think all the best, I think it is really. And congratulations on a really a most remarkable career.