

TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST

WORK WITH PURPOSE EPISODE 21

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DAVID PEMBROKE: Hello, ladies and gentlemen and welcome to Work with Purpose - a podcast about the Australian Public Service. My name's David Pembroke, thanks for joining me. I begin today's podcast by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to their elders past, present, and future, and acknowledge the ongoing contribution they make to the life of our city and this region.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Today, my guests on Work with Purpose are Rob Stefanic, the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, and his Deputy Cate Saunders. Rob has had a long career in public service, and before he was appointed to his current role in December of 2015, he was indeed the Head of the New South Wales Parliament. Rob, welcome to Work with Purpose.

ROB STEFANIC: Thank you very much David.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And Cate has worked successfully for many years across a number of corporate services areas in the Australian Public Service, including at the AFP, the APVMA and CASA. Cate, welcome to Work with Purpose.

CATE SAUNDERS: Thank you, it's a pleasure.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Listen, before we get into the conversation about Parliamentary Services, I'm always intrigued about people's journeys into the public service and Rob, if I might start with you, you were the Head of the New South Wales Parliament, but it seems that you've spent your career looking after Parliaments!

ROB STEFANIC: Pretty much. The majority of my career has been within the Parliamentary Service. I initially was one of many graduates that graduated in the recession we had to have in the '90s. I had originally intended to be a lawyer but that graduate employment had dried up. And so I found myself competing through campus interviews and landed in PriceWaterhouse, as it then was, in the corporate tax area.

ROB STEFANIC: So, there was a bit of a diversion there, and after a couple of years there because I had more of an interest in the policy behind the law, a role came up in the New South Wales Legislative Council that I found quite attractive. It was meant to be just a policy diversion for a couple of years... and 19 years later...

DAVID PEMBROKE: What do you like about it? Because I imagine it's a very technical job.

ROB STEFANIC: There are lots of different parts to it. I guess from the core parliamentary roles, you've got the procedure and the Committee aspects, and both have a feature I guess where an understanding of how the mechanics of law operates is valuable. There are those elements and then there's obviously the corporate side, the administrative side where I eventually did move to as well.

ROB STEFANIC: The reason I was in there for that long is because there are so many different aspects to it. I was able to move around and gain a whole bunch of different experiences that interested me for that duration. And as you do, I guess you sort of move up the ranks eventually and when the role with the Department of Parliamentary Services came up - there was a CIO role there - I moved into that and then into the CEO role after that. It has been a serendipitous journey as much as it was a planned one, but sometimes you just can't plan all aspects of your career.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And Cate that's often true of many people who work in the public service, isn't it? They get in, they get started, but it's infinitely interesting. There's a next job, there's another opportunity, because the work is important. Is that a similar journey to yours, was it that you got started and then opportunities just kept finding their way in front of you?

CATE SAUNDERS: It's funny that you say that because that is actually exactly what happened to me. Like Rob, I started my career as a graduate accountant with Coopers & Lybrand. But after a few years, the public service was calling me, that was in Canberra.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Were you from Canberra?

CATE SAUNDERS: I was from Canberra.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Right.

CATE SAUNDERS: Yes - born and bred, I went to university here. It really was a natural progression for me to move into the public service and something that I was really interested in. I started that in the year 2000 when I became the accountant for the High Court of Australia. From there I had a number of roles. The opportunities presented to me at the AFP were phenomenal. It's a very mobile agency.

CATE SAUNDERS: After about 20 years working in financial roles, I moved into HR - human resources - which was a massive jump for an accountant of 20 years. And certainly a massive role at the AFP as well. I managed the branch there and then cool opportunities came my way, including the role at DPS, which is where I first began working for Rob before I won the role as Deputy Secretary.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Great. Okay, well listen, let's get to it. Because the announcement that really changed Australia back in March when the Prime Minister stood - actually in the courtyard up at Parliament House - where he gave us all the news that life was about to change. Rob, where were you when that announcement took place? And what did you do as the person who's in charge of the Parliament?

- ROB STEFANIC: It's an interesting journey David, I guess when the emergence of the pandemic started to get reported more widely, we already started talking about it and the possibility of it striking Australia and what the implications would be for us. We'd already started the planning and preparation from some time ago. As I guess, the pandemic spread and it became more obvious that it was going to have an impact, we were essentially ready to go by then.
- ROB STEFANIC: It wasn't a surprise, fortunately for us because we have ... I guess there's various aspects to the work we do. One of those I guess is as custodians of the building itself, but obviously the core purpose is allowing the Parliament to function. We were very much thinking about how we'd ensure the Parliament could operate come hell or high water.
- ROB STEFANIC: We'd never shut the building. Even during the peak of the fires, we ran our air conditioning 24/7 so that importantly and symbolically the building could be seen to be open. A long answer to your question is we were pretty much in our 'war room', I guess, getting ready with the various measures that we were putting on the table that we felt were necessary based on the risks that we had and how we needed to manage them.
- DAVID PEMBROKE: Cate, take us to the 'war room'. What questions are being asked in that 'war room' to ensure that the Parliament can continue to operate? And who were the key players at that point?
- CATE SAUNDERS: Yeah, look, that's a great question. When the World Health Organisation did declare COVID-19 as a pandemic, at DPS, we needed to enact our pandemic plan. We had one ready to go, which was fantastic. And as the Deputy, I needed to establish and then chair our Continuity Coordination Group, which continues to meet regularly and is made up of members from across the DPS SES with functional responsibility for responding as well as observers from the other Departments who operate within Parliament House as well, like Department of the Senate, Department of the House of Representatives.
- CATE SAUNDERS: As well as that, it was really important that we stayed in close communication with the offices of the presiding officers. Their Chiefs of Staff were also observers for those meetings. The questions immediately were, how would we respond to the necessity to have our staff working remotely?
- CATE SAUNDERS: That was probably one of the key challenges for us because DPS is traditionally been, and still is, a very operational agency. Traditionally our staff have operated onsite. We needed to work very quickly to ensure that we had that ICT capability as well as the work practices for our staff to work effectively from home. And we were working really closely as well with the COO Committee, the Whole of Government COO committee.
- CATE SAUNDERS: It was particularly important to make sure that we stayed tapped into that Whole of Government response. Then it was questions like I guess reminding ourselves or reviewing the critical roles within DPS to ensure the continuity of business, making sure that we were also fully across all of the ACT Government restrictions as well as the health advice that was coming out from all of the health officials.

CATE SAUNDERS: And Parliament House really is like a small city. It is a microcosm. We deliver so many services in addition to obviously housing Parliament, the most important function and the support services that go along with that. We welcome members of the public into the building. There were considerations in relation to that as well as operating things like a gym, many food and beverage outlets, a really large scale capital works programme. And the list goes on. There were a very large number of considerations and questions that were being asked at that time.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And Rob, from your point of view, how did it feel? Was there a sense of calm as it was rolling through or was there a degree of perhaps anxiety because of these huge numbers of considerations? Because it is really a city within a building in many ways.

ROB STEFANIC: The feelings were interesting and I guess are quite broad depending on where people were sitting, I think, because the situation was so fluid and we're adapting so quickly. I don't think there was actually time to process any emotion out of it. We just needed to get on with it. But we were mindful, I guess, of the anxieties and stresses that it would cause for staff, given the expectations of, am I going to work from home? Do I need to be at work? Do I have health issues? Am I of a certain age risk group?

ROB STEFANIC: We certainly were aware of quite a lot of different sentiment around. But I think the thing that we were really careful about is we have repeatedly communicated that all the measures were based around the safety of the people. And that's not only the Parliamentarians because if our staff became ill or affected, the possibility of knocking out the entire operation and therefore the ability of the Parliament to function was an issue. We kept reiterating that the measures were very much for their own safety.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Now, it was, I think perhaps about a week later on the 23rd of March, where the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate announced that each house would meet, and I quote, 'in a manner and form not currently provided for in the current standing orders'. You said that some of the planning was done, but were people starting to scramble to think, 'how are we going to stand this up? How are we going to ensure that parliament stays and can operate?'

ROB STEFANIC: Cate, do you want to talk to that one? I guess you were involved a little bit more in the actual delivery of that.

CATE SAUNDERS: Certainly. As Rob said earlier, what was critical in our response was ensuring the continuity of the provision of services while we were managing all the risks. There really were a number of measures that we needed to introduce really quickly. Mitigation of risks was really at the forefront of our mind ensuring that we were consistent with ACT restrictions and health advice.

CATE SAUNDERS: We had to put in place really strict control measures from the outset. Restrictions around things like our gym, the numbers of people, the times that they could attend. That was really strictly controlled. The controlled arrangements for our cafes and dining rooms, including limiting the seating, only having takeaway options, cancelling all of our functions and events which happened throughout the ensuing weeks.

CATE SAUNDERS: Also strictly controlling the movement of people through the building. We introduced something that was a new term to me called 'cohorting', which involved keeping cohorts of people separate. In particular, we needed to keep members of the public separate from our Parliamentarians so that we didn't have the virus spreading from one group to another. In addition to that, we needed to introduce procedures for how the building would respond if there was a positive case of COVID.

CATE SAUNDERS: Thankfully, that hasn't happened, but we needed to be sure that we would be able to notify everyone within DPS, and the building as a whole. Those control measures all needed to be introduced at the same time. I guess one of the analogies that are used is it's like organising any really big event. There's a whole lot of organising and scrambling, as you put it, that has to be done from the outset. Once you've got those measures in place, then the processes follow from that.

DAVID PEMBROKE: But what about in terms of the actual Parliament itself sitting? The fact that the Members of Parliament, the Senators and the Members were not going to be able to come to the Chamber. Was there drafting that needed to go on or interpretations of legislation that said, 'Oh, hang on. This is how we might be able to get around it?'

ROB STEFANIC: From the outset, there's been a view that the Parliament needed to be able to meet. There was a period of time, I guess, between March and August before the Houses met. There was a bit of public commentary about the Parliament not fulfilling its purpose if it can't meet. I guess two of the important points that need to be made are - there's a hell of a lot of Committee activity. Committees are an organ of the Parliament.

ROB STEFANIC: In the period between March and now there were well over 300 committee hearings and about 130 or so of those were done by video conferencing with participants and with Parliamentarians. There was a very active body of work happening already, but particularly with the Members of the house, there's important constituent work that they do as well. And with COVID, there are obviously a lot of people ringing the Electorate offices seeking help.

ROB STEFANIC: People that are in dire straits trying to work through the system. There's a massive load of that constituent responsibility that's there as well. There's sometimes a perception that Parliament is all about Question Time and there's a hell of a lot more work that goes below the surface. But in terms of the sitting itself, there's never been a view that Parliament wasn't going to sit physically in some form.

ROB STEFANIC: There's debate constitutionally about whether it needs to sit physically. And that's a debate, I think that will continue for some time, obviously when the drafters of the Constitution prepared it, they weren't thinking of COVID or technology at the time. There's a lot of interpretation of what that means under the Constitution. But the Parliamentary Privileges Act actually allows Parliamentarians to participate.

ROB STEFANIC: Wherever they participate in the Parliamentary process, it's covered by Parliamentary privilege. That, by implication, means they don't actually physically have to be present. And video conferencing has made a feature for about 20 years now through Committee hearing. So it's not a new concept in Parliamentary context.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay. Now we do have questions, which are a feature of the Work with Purpose podcast that come from IPAA Future Leaders. And I do have a question that relates to what we were just discussing. And it's from Amy Burgess from the Attorney General's Department. And she asks, "The pandemic represents the first time that Parliamentarians have been able to attend virtually rather than purely physically. And with that comes a host of challenges and some limitations. Aside from the technical challenges of facilitating this new way of working, what are some of the flow-on issues, for example, implications for voting, Parliamentary privilege, which you've just answered and how were they worked through?"

ROB STEFANIC: Yeah, so a lot of the political decisions, I guess I'm not privy to. Ours is more the implementation and procedurally, as I mentioned, because a lot of that work had already been done in terms of the pre-planning. There was a level of confidence that constitutionally, based on the privileges act, those elements were pretty much under control. There's the mechanical side of it, I guess, with the technology being used.

ROB STEFANIC: Then there was the issue of getting the Parliamentarians that were going to be in Parliament actually sitting there. The view was is that there needed to be a quorum in both Houses that was present for the actual debate and for the voting. One element that was a feature of both Houses is those that were participating remotely could not vote. So they could participate in most other respects in terms of debate. But that was one feature where they couldn't.

DAVID PEMBROKE: To you Cate, in terms of the technology, one of the features of Parliament House for those of us who have been lucky enough to spend extended periods of time up there, is that it is very well connected building with a huge amount of capability. And there's that huge capability that is sitting in the basement. How has it held up under this increased call on its capability to be able to deliver?

CATE SAUNDERS: It's held up remarkably well. The people who work in DPS and throughout Parliament House have been amazing. In terms of the capability of people, I mean, you're happy if I go there right now?

DAVID PEMBROKE: Sure. Yeah.

CATE SAUNDERS: The people have been extraordinary. Everyone has really stepped up and been committed to the response and prepared to work in different ways to how they have before. Some of the things that we've needed to do to ensure that we have the right sort of physical distancing throughout the building and the business continuity, is to split critical teams.

- CATE SAUNDERS: We've had to split those teams up so that we can ensure that if there is a spread of COVID, that we've got teams who can still continue to maintain the building. All of those people that you're referring to who work in the basement, for instance, they have to be able to keep things ticking along and continuing, even if there is an outbreak.
- CATE SAUNDERS: There were lots of measures like that, that we needed to put in place from the outset. The technology helped us, but just as important has been the attitude of the people and their willingness to work differently and to embrace technology. And I think to trust the leaders of the organisation that we would be keeping them as safe as possible throughout that time.
- CATE SAUNDERS: But there've been other measures that we've had in place, like copious amounts of hand sanitizer that you'll see at each entrance to the building. And we've had safety marshals at the entrances as well to hand out masks to people and provide guidance on how to use them. All of that's been important and there've been times where our staff, particularly those who are required mostly when the building is open to the public, who've been prepared to step into a completely different and very foreign role in order to be able to support the Whole of Government response.
- CATE SAUNDERS: I've got a great example of that, if you're interested in hearing about it. In order to help Services Australia in their Whole of Government response and to ensure that JobKeeper claims were processed as quickly as possible, there was a call out, which I'm sure you're aware of, across the public service for additional people to step in and help. We were able to set up a satellite processing centre for Services Australia, which actually operated out of Parliament House.
- CATE SAUNDERS: Some of those spaces that you're referring to, which weren't required during the pandemic - some of our function spaces - we actually set up as JobKeeper claims processing hubs within Parliament House. And we staffed those with our own staff. People who'd worked as security officers, visitor services officers, conducting tours, people in our catering and events areas, to name a few, they moved across and for the first time ever, were processing claims.
- CATE SAUNDERS: They learned a new skill really quickly. They were really happy to be able to help to that Whole of Government response. And one extraordinary story I heard was from one of our longstanding Security Officers who again, had never worked in this area before. He is a gentleman in his mid-50s, he was learning, was processing claims, was talking to another gentleman who had submitted a claim who was also in his mid-50s, who explained that for the first time ever in his entire working life, he was needing the support from the government and needed assistance like JobKeeper.
- CATE SAUNDERS: That really hit home for our Security Officer who was already committed to the cause, very willing to step up and overcome his own nerves of learning something so new. But he felt such a deep, emotional connection to the work that he was doing and that was a resounding story from everyone who was working in that space.

CATE SAUNDERS: And what was great for Rob and I was that we also saw this, up until that point, untapped and underutilised talent and capability. That's certainly something that we've taken on board that we will be pursuing more of.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Rob, how will you look at that capability? How will you then use that to adapt into the future?

ROB STEFANIC: I always say when you've got these sort of events, you need to keep looking for silver linings, and that was certainly one of them where it's changed our focus a little bit. Obviously the staff have to be amenable to being engaged in different ways. But it was important that it gave them a sense of satisfaction and we've certainly got a number of stories where people found the ability to contribute and to help people in need was a massive incentive in itself.

ROB STEFANIC: We've done some strategic workforce planning in the past and we're now re-looking at that. Just to examine a little bit more about the talents we've got on board as Cate mentioned, we've got nearly 200 security staff and they come from all sorts of walks of life, all sorts of histories. Being in the military or ex-police or tradespeople. There's a lot of talent sitting there that isn't normally being used.

ROB STEFANIC: We just need to open ourselves up a little bit more. And given we do provide a very broad range of functions, enable a bit of mobility. They've got something, I guess a little bit more rewarding and a little bit more diversity in the work that they do.

DAVID PEMBROKE: How are they holding up, the people, given that it has been such a challenging time? Because yes, COVID but bushfires here in Canberra. It's been a very challenging time for people. And while that initial surge of enthusiasm is there to help and to contribute and to be able to do something to help people, how are they holding up to today? Are they still pushing forward?

ROB STEFANIC: We've tested along the way with our staff about their sense of anxieties. We obviously, like other agencies, have our own employee assistance schemes. There seems to be little utilisation for that. That was quite surprising for us where it's really expected there would be a much higher use of that. I guess we have been careful in terms of how we managed our environment.

ROB STEFANIC: I'd like to think that the work that's gone into emphasising their safety has assisted with that. We were certainly all challenged during the home-schooling period, myself included, when you're not doing any job properly. Not as an employee, not as a parent and not as a schoolteacher. There were certainly a lot of stressors there. But security of employment is a big thing in these times. I think that was certainly a feature.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And Cate, how long did that call centre operation stay in place for up at Parliament House? I haven't heard that story before.

CATE SAUNDERS: It was a few months.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay.

CATE SAUNDERS: Yup. They are no longer one of our services, which everyone's a little bit disappointed about because the staff truly enjoyed it so much. But obviously it's great that that's no longer a requirement.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Sure. Now, Parliament House, the building is a thriving tourism destination, and particularly in the weeks when the House and the Senate sits. It is full of people coming and going. It's a vast enterprise that is delivering for all sorts of groups. And I do have another question here from IPAA future leader, and it's Rebecca-Lee MacDougall from the Department of Education Skills and Employment.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And she asks, "Like many people who've grown up in the New South Wales school system, and I don't think it's just the New South Wales school system. My final year of primary school included an excursion to the nation's capital. One of the highlights for me at least was visiting Parliament House, where we had our tour and we got to sit in on the House of Representatives. Given the COVID-19 situation and the travel restrictions and other health measures imposed, many schools are unable to do this excursion. How has the DPS engaged with schools during this time allowing young people to gain a better understanding of the Australian political landscape while not being able to travel to the heartland?" And I'll throw that to you Rob, to start.

ROB STEFANIC: Yeah. One of the really regrettable outcomes, I guess, from COVID-19, is I guess not only ourselves, but all the cultural institutions in Canberra had to shut to the public. And that obviously meant school visits as well. I think what the reflection is for us is that we do need to put more digital content online. We do have some material there, but it's perhaps not as engaging as it could be for that cohort.

ROB STEFANIC: The reflection for us is we need to do a little bit more work. Now, that has other implications as well for schools in regional areas that don't have the opportunity to come to Canberra. It provides them with an ability to get a civic experience as well. It is unfortunate. We literally had to pull the shutters down on the school groups. But as soon as we could, once we opened our doors again in July, we had school groups lined up.

ROB STEFANIC: I think the 21st of July, we had Canberra-based groups coming in through the building and obviously managed them in a COVID safe way. But obviously we've had to then close the building again for this two-week Parliamentary sitting period. When it's over, we'll be opening it again and opening it to schools. Unfortunately given that we have about 140,000 school kids a year come through Parliament House, there are many I guess, as the school years progress that will just miss out, and it is really unfortunate. And I am fairly heavily involved in the civics education space.

ROB STEFANIC: And I know there's a body of work being done at the moment about how we can continue to facilitate those school groups to Canberra and making sure again, there's COVID safe measures in place, that operators that bring schools to Canberra have a coherent series of policies that can give schools the confidence that the visit to Canberra can be safe. We're really working towards cranking that up as soon as we can. But I guess obviously with border restrictions being variable across different states, that in itself poses some challenges.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And Cate for your team, because it's interesting when you reflect on this. I can remember my trip from primary school, way back - it was the Old Parliament House then, not the New Parliament House. But I can still remember as clearly as yesterday. I can tell you exactly where we went. I remember who the Member was, Michael MacKellar from Warringah, I remember who I sat next to in the Chamber.

DAVID PEMBROKE: It is such a powerful experience to go to Parliament House, Cate. That must be a real challenge for everyone in the building, because I'm sure it would probably be the favourite part of many people's jobs, is to have the kids in the place.

CATE SAUNDERS: Yeah, absolutely. It has been really difficult, I think for everyone. And it's particularly stark when you walk through the marble foyer and it's empty. It feels eerie. It actually has an eerie feeling about it. We are focusing more on what we can provide online. That's really important. That has consumed quite a bit of time and energy and focus, which is great.

ROB STEFANIC: But it's interesting you say that. It is one of the things also with the closure to the public that there's usually this hubbub in the common areas of the building that are there and particularly, the most school groups come through on sitting days. You've got the activity in the building. The resident population is between 1500 and 2000 people. It swells to anything up to 5,000 on a typical sitting day. There's a lot of activity. There's a real life in the building and you kind of expect when you walk through that marble foyer, that you're going to hear the kids banter and the noise. And it's just, yeah, it's not there.

CATE SAUNDERS: But a shameless plug we have just placed our latest exhibition.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Are you doing something like the Rugby League? Where you're tuning up the crowd noise in the foyer.

CATE SAUNDERS: I really encourage everyone to jump onto the APH website and look out for Voyage of Discovery. Joseph Banks' Florilegium. So it is really good.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay. And that's an exhibition?

CATE SAUNDERS: It is. Yeah. It's our latest exhibition.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay.

CATE SAUNDERS: We've produced an online version as well.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Because this is the thing, isn't it? Like the diversity of yes, the Parliament's there but there is so much else that's going on up there. Any given day of the week really, there's all sorts of things. I love going up there. Like most people, I think you'd get the opportunity to go there and I think it's just such a marvellous institution. But where to from here? I think that's really interesting having had the experience that you've now had, having had the pandemic plans and the response and the staff and everything else. We've got to where we've got to now and who knows what's coming into the future with uncertain times ahead. Where has it taken your thinking Rob? Where does the future lie?

ROB STEFANIC: Yeah, that is a very good question. I think it's one we're all struggling with. I speak to colleagues across the sector fairly frequently and I think we were all focused on life after COVID. Everyone was looking for that day when the clouds clear and the skies are blue again. But I guess as we've seen with the transmission rates in different States, our focus has now really going to be on living with COVID and making sure we're adaptable if and when transmission rates increase. Obviously until a vaccine is found, we're going to need to be highly flexible in the way we operate.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And are those decisions being made sort of modelling on a weekly basis, fortnightly basis, looking at things and saying, "Okay, we'll put this set of regulation in place to be able to operate the building." Is it that sort of time horizon that you're looking at?

ROB STEFANIC: Early in the process we've been hooked in with the Commonwealth CMO and the ACT Government CHO and we're monitoring, I guess, what the different stages of their planning are and what the impacts are given everything from the restaurants that we operate to the physical distancing required just in the office areas or have implications. Monitoring that in advance and making sure that we are putting in place the relevant measures is one of the ongoing challenges. I think we just need to be agile on our feet and rather than get anxious about it, still keep looking at the horizon. I think that for me is one of the big things we've just got to keep looking in the distance.

ROB STEFANIC: It's very easy to get drawn into the tactical responses to COVID without thinking at a whole-of-enterprise level. What are the implications for the core business that we provide? And those decisions are made with the presiding officers and the health advice that comes with it. There's quite a large collaborative process involved in coming up with the decisions on how we operate.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And Cate, a final question to you. Having been through what you've been through, how has it changed you as a leader and how is that going to change the way that the Parliament operates into the future in the key role that you play there as the Deputy Secretary?

CATE SAUNDERS: That is a great question. For me, the most learning I've had is that realisation of what can be achieved, the extent of what can be achieved when there is sharing, sharing of information, sharing of advice and sharing of resources across agencies, but also within agencies. And the level of capability that is clear when there's a crisis and when everyone needs to work collegiately and really step up to deliver what's required.

CATE SAUNDERS: That has been a great realisation of mine and something that we certainly need to continue into the future. Tapping into the Whole of Government response was phenomenal, but then seeing the talent that our staff have, before COVID, it really was untapped and certainly not utilised to the extent that it could have been.

DAVID PEMBROKE: It's interesting. People can't see this, but your face when you talk about your staff, you light up. Obviously you're really proud.

CATE SAUNDERS: We are so proud. We really are proud of what they've done, their contribution to that whole of government response and then also the support that they've given to Rob and I and the Executive Parliamentarians. They're proud. They're really, really proud of what they do and what they contribute and how they keep Parliament House going. And we share that pride and also have that pride in them.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Best of luck for the future, I'm sure a busy time ahead. A challenging time ahead as you continue to deliver the critical elements of Parliament House, all the way from the legislative parts of it through to the museums and everything else. Cate Saunders, thanks to you for your service and Rob Stefanic, thank you for your service.

ROB STEFANIC: Thank you very much, David.

CATE SAUNDERS: Thank you.

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DAVID PEMBROKE: If you want to discover GovComms, type it into your favourite podcast app, and it will come up and also it was previously named 'In Transition' so you may find some of those episodes coming up as well. Now in terms of Work with Purpose and this particular episode, if you do see the social media promotion and the links, please pass it on and a review or a rating would be just fantastic for us.

DAVID PEMBROKE:

Please pass it along because that helps the programme to be found. Thanks again to our good friends at IPAA for making this programme happen today and to the Australian Public Service Commission for their ongoing support. This programme would not happen without the team here and back at the contentgroup office. A big thanks to them for all the support and to you, the audience, a big thank you to you for coming back in such big numbers. But again, thanks to Cate Saunders. Thanks to Rob Stefanic for coming in this week. That's it for now. We'll be back at the same time next week, but for the moment it's bye for now.

SEPAKER 4:

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