

TRANSCRIPT OF PODCAST

WORK WITH PURPOSE EPISODE 22

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DAVID PEMBROKE: Ladies and gentlemen, 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 today, studio 19 is on the road once again, and we've made our way to number One National Circuit in Barton here in Canberra, which is the home of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. And today, an episode with a difference as we discuss the Australian Public Service, not just through the lens of COVID and its associated challenges and opportunities, but through the eyes and lived experience of a veteran and the eyes and lived experience of a beginner.

Philip Gaetjens is the Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the leader of the Australian Public Service, a career public servant. Phil joined the APS as an Assistant Research Officer with the Bureau of Transport Economics way back in 1977, since then in what has been a typically diverse and challenging career in public service. Phil has worked in a variety of roles in Canberra and South Australia, as well as serving overseas as the head of the APEC policy support unit in Singapore. Phil has been the Chief of Staff to two former Treasurers, Peter Costello and Scott Morrison, and also served as the Secretary of the Treasury before being appointed to his current position as head of Prime Minister and Cabinet in September of last year. Away from his day job, Phil is also a life member of the Australian National University Sports Union for his contribution to the ANU Hockey Club. And I'm looking forward to talking to him about the role of sport and the way and the impacts it may have had on his leadership style. He joins me now, Phil, welcome to Work with Purpose.

PHILIP GAETJENS: Thank you very much.

DAVID PEMBROKE: By way of contrast. Eleanor Kay began her APS career eight months ago and has been working as part of Phil's team since July. Prior to joining the APS, Eleanor worked as a student advocate, focusing on sexual violence, mental health, and education quality in universities. She completed her Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics with Honours at the ANU and has a Diploma of Languages in Arabic. And she achieved that in 2018. Eleanor is an enthusiastic gardener and she's thrilled that spring has arrived and the new shoots have arrived following the frosty Canberra winter. She joins me as well. Eleanor, welcome to Work with Purpose. Thank you, Eleanor. We might start with you. You've started your working career at a time of the bushfire crisis or dealing with the bushfire crisis. And then you've been working in the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet during a once in a generation global health crisis. A lively start to your career in the APS, but surely you would have come in with expectations; have those expectations as you were coming in matched the experience that you've had since you've been working as part of Phil's team?

ELEANOR KAY: I think when you're outside of the public service, it's hard to really fully understand what it looks like to work for the Government. So, I actually think coming in, I was quite unsure what I was expecting to find. It has been amazing to come in and see here at PM&C, I think to some extent, a hub of activity spanning across all parts of the public service, covering a wealth of portfolios and to see the number of people working in very different areas, but together to try and address some really significant problems facing our country. So it's been quite amazing to see that and to see that breadth in such a short time.

- DAVID PEMBROKE: Has that been the biggest surprise, the fact that you do see the whole of the Australian Government from where you sit it here, PM&C and, and perhaps the pace of the world?
- ELEANOR KAY: Yeah, I think absolutely the pace and the amount of content that's happening is something that's hard to conceive when you're outside of it. And so I think I've been really surprised and I'm really encouraged to see the amount of incredibly hard work that occurs in this Department, but then from this Department to see what's happening in other Departments as well, and to see across the public service, how many people are working so incredibly hard to support our country.
- DAVID PEMBROKE: Phil, if you think back to when you began back in 1977 as an Assistant Researcher in the Bureau of Transport Economics, and you contrast that with Eleanor's experience, how do you reflect back on that and the changes that you've seen in the APS in that time?
- PHILIP GAETJENS: Well, starting in 1977, and my first memory actually is arriving in Canberra on Anzac Day and just fronting up at an empty airport no one to meet, no idea. And you see this tiny road going into Canberra from the airport, and going where are people taking me? Canberra then was I think at about 120,000 people was, it was, it was quite a small place and now it's 450,000, something like that. So it was a very different time. One of the reasons I actually got into the hockey club was I played hockey over at Flinders Uni in South Australia. And the university hockey scene is vibrant. And it was a good way to meet a lot of people coming to a new, a new place. I knew no one in Canberra. I left Adelaide too. That was an unemployment then was somewhere between 7% and 10%. I think, I can't remember. It was, I felt so long ago, but I came to Canberra for a job.
- DAVID PEMBROKE: But was it public service that drew you to Canberra and that notion, or was it the sense of that's where I can get a job?
- PHILIP GAETJENS: A job was first. I did economics and then geography at Flinders Uni. And for some reason I just had in my mind that I was going to do something related to transport. So the Bureau of Transport Economics showed up. So it just seemed to be a good thing to do. I was the only one who's left home. So I'm a bit of an adventurer in one respect, but whether you call coming to Canberra from Adelaide being adventurous I don't know! It was just a way to do something that I thought I wanted to do.
- DAVID PEMBROKE: What about your reflections back in those times and the way work was and the work that you did and how you did the work, and you think about the way that you work today with technology, with the, you know, the numbers of people and the breadth of the challenge that you have at the moment?
- PHILIP GAETJENS: Well, work has changed incredibly. Again, early on in my career, one of the first things I learned I think was to be friendly with the head of the typing pool, because then you got your work done quickly. They don't exist anymore. We, or I have seen the introduction of the, well, the teletype was around when I was there. I've seen the introduction of the fax, the introduction of the IBM golf ball typewriter, computers, mainframes where you actually had to batch feed things and you'd get stuff back the next morning. It's been an enormous change from an old technology block submission, get back things a few hours later, or, you know, the next day or something like that into something where things are happening instantaneously. With email, iPhones, iPhones didn't exist in 1977. They didn't exist in the early

nineties. So I think there's now a much more of an expectation from both social views and work views that things happen instantaneously. And that's put a lot of pressure on systems, on people and work now is 24-7.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Eleanor, what sort of contribution can you make in, in this team, in that environment where there is, you know, you've grown up in, you know, you're a digital native, there is that expectation around instantaneous response. How do you make your contribution as, as a graduate in this organisation and in Phil's team to help the team deal with the challenges of technology?

ELEANOR KAY: I think I might talk about some of my graduate cohort as well, because I've seen members of our grad cohort bringing fresh ideas about how teams can coordinate, how they can use technology. And I think particularly earlier in the year, when we started working from home full time in a very short space of time I was in a different team at the time. And, and having the chance to talk through with your team, what does it look like for us to use the technology available to us to stay connected? What could we do differently? How can we maintain that sense of working together while we're in a very different space? And I think lots of grads have brought those ideas into their teams. And that is, I hope a valuable contribution that we're making.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Do you find that you're listened to, even as a graduate that you toss up the ideas and that that members of the team are willing to listen and integrate what you, the ideas that you're bringing forward?

ELEANOR KAY: Certainly, in my experience, I've worked in some amazing teams and I've really appreciated the chance to work in the Office of the Secretary. That this team is a very close-knit team. We work well and hard together, and I think I've really appreciated the chance to bring forward ideas and to be listened to.

DAVID PEMBROKE: It's interesting Phil, isn't it that you really do need everybody as part of the team to be contributing in this, as things are moving, as you mentioned before, it's moving fast instantaneous and you really need everybody bringing their best effort and best ideas every day. So how do you encourage the young ones to come forward with their ideas and their skills and their knowledge?

PHILIP GAETJENS: Connection, I think is the main thing. On top of both in Treasury and here we place an incredible amount of importance on the graduate intake every year. That is the future of the public service. So I think in no matter what budget situation, I think all of my colleagues would actually seek to maintain the input of graduates every year so that we can keep the system running and bring in new blood, new ideas. And again, I think there's been a bit of hope, you know, we don't just get economists. Now we get graduates from a whole different range of backgrounds. So this is, you know, diversity brought to life every year in terms of bringing in people that have a different background, a different set of expectations, a different set of skills to actually feed into the public service policy debate and the service provision that we provide. And I think in this modern world, it's not between the new recruits and the old guard of the staff. It's not between young and old.

I think what COVID has shown us is in the public service, we have to keep on serving Australians. If we have to work at home, we still have to keep connections with each other. There have been or there's a view and we are doing more work to actually collect data that productivity has been maintained for a lot of people, if not increased. And therefore there has been a commitment by APS members, whether they're working at home or at work, or in fact, if they've been redeployed to do

other things, there's a commitment to actually provide the output. So I think one of the biggest connections that has been made I think has been myself, the Public Service Commissioner we've put out now, I think four open letters to the public service. We've had three, and maybe a fourth APS 200 very soon, and we've got two more scheduled this year. So not withstanding spatial separation, not withstanding physical separation from each other. We are trying to make sure that we connect with the service, that everyone can realise that they have a part to play. And that there is still an enterprise not withstanding. You've got 150-odd thousand people around the country performing different roles, but having one purpose and that's helping Australia get through this.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Now, there's still plenty to come in terms of dealing with COVID, but as the head of the public service, you know, you've been in the job just over a year. Now, you must be very proud of the way that the APS has performed dealing with this once in a generation crisis, because certainly that's, you know, the APS, reputation has been well and truly enhanced with the way that it's been able to support the government.

PHILIP GAETJENS: It's great pride that I have of the public service. Again, this is an unprecedented time. You have multiple factors like the it is frankly, you know, the fear that this invisible pandemic gets across the system. So people have had to work through that. Some cities have been lucky to actually have a lack of cases. Others have had more so but people have kept on coming to work, said that whether you've had to stay at home or be at work, people have kept that purpose of helping Australia get through this. You then have the economic consequences of that issue where through no fault of their own businesses have had to shut. So this has been not if you like a recession, which is usually caused by a financial or an economic shock. This is a health shock.

And the response to that health shock has been government actions absolutely necessary to prevent the spread of the virus. That has led to people losing their jobs. It's led to people, sorry, it's led to also measures from the government like JobKeeper, for example, that is trying to keep that employment connection, which is very, very important to make sure that the, the scarring and the economic impact can be minimised, but not withstanding that we saw the June GDP numbers, you know, down 7% for the economy, which is a well, it's not happened in my lifetime. And it's an economic consequence of a health event that has not been seen before, certainly in my generation.

DAVID PEMBROKE: And Eleanor, your role again, as part of Phil's team dealing with this, looking out over the APS, what's your reflection on what you've seen and, and the role that you've played and how it's made you feel?

ELEANOR KAY: I think it's one thing that I've tried to keep in mind through this is, is hearing the human impacts of this crisis. And I hear Phil talking about it now. I think it's so important to be reminded of the people who've been impacted in their health, in their economic standing. One thing that I find in some ways, our privilege is to see correspondence written into the Prime Minister, into the Secretary, reflecting on people's experiences throughout this crisis and as public servants to assist in responding to Australians and engaging with their experiences. I've done less of that in this office. But I think one thing that is incredibly important for us as public servants is to remember while we work on policies and systems, and we need to think big on a lot of problems. We also need to remember the individual people being impacted and holding both of those things in tandem is something I've found to be really important through this year and the different policy issues that I've had a chance to engage with.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Phil, in your role as leader of the APS you know, the Prime Minister made the six guideposts speech up at Parliament House in, I think August of last year. And he made the point that the APS needed to be flexible, technology enabled, citizen focused, open to outsiders and diverse points of view from within and without. On that measure, how would you judge the current performance of the APS? Is the APS living up to that aspiration of the Prime Minister?

PHILIP GAETJENS: I think it is in several respects in terms of dealing directly with the needs of, of Australians, we have had the biggest redeployment this year. That, again, I've never seen before in my 40 odd years in the public service, when we have people redeployed within agencies, Health almost redeployed every area for retest every area to do things that were necessary to deal with COVID. We've had graduates from payments in other departments, go do Services Australia and answer the phones. And that, again, I think the graduates I've seen from PM&C and I went down to visit them and the others all in fact, reflected that the direct interaction that I had had with people who needed help was something that they will remember for a long, long time. So that, that has been an addition which would not usually happen.

And I think we're even looking at whether we, you know, embed in the graduate intake, for instance, some time in Service Delivery because that's something that we all should be familiar with in, in helping the Australian people. So we have done that. We have had policy advice, delivery of huge programmes. JobKeeper, JobSeeker, there are enormous amounts of money necessary to actually hand out so that we get through this, people have done that at enormous speed. And they are enormous amounts of money that, that again has never been seen and the place. So we have had people do different things, designing and delivering good programmes. We have had a much greater focus on data. So in terms of the APS reforms that were put forward by the committee last year, and with, with David Thodey, we have looked at much greater focus on data to actually get to know what is going on. So we are doing dashboards, data collection on a lot more issues that we used to in the past. I think the Prime Minister is, has a never-ending appetite. He's not hungry. It's a never-ending appetite for data.

DAVID PEMBROKE: That was one of the, that was one of the guideposts, wasn't it?

PHILIP GAETJENS: Yeah, absolutely. Yes. Yeah. He wanted the score. He wants the score. Yep. So we are saying that at, at very granular detail so that we get an idea of what is going on with, with cases around states, with what is happening across the economy, if you like from the, the reaction and the response to this. So I think the, again, the public sector, I think has stood up across an enormous range of areas to keep things going. As I said, it is, it is seismic, I think, tectonic, whatever you want to say in terms of what has happened to change people's lives, and they're still doing work. People have had social issues with their family or friends. We have had in, in the ACT here, we have had bushfires. We have had hailstorms. We have had disruption from the way that people are usually used to working. There has been an enormous demand for, and to put a lot of praise, I think on the, IT people in probably every department with the pressure on the systems to actually have a lot more video conferencing, a lot more remote computing that has gone through well, every National Cabinet meeting that the Prime Minister has chaired has been delivered via video conference. So the National Cabinet, I think it's now up to 28 or 29 meetings apart from COAG on the 13th of March in Sydney the leaders of this country have not met physically. It's all been via video Cabinet meetings themselves via video conference. So there's been just an enormous way in which things have changed. And I think

what the Australian people are seeing are the outcomes and output from all that work. And they can see physically at their home and at their workplace, what is being done and what's being provided.

So I think there is, well I'm pleased to say there's a recognition of what the government and the public service is providing. And I think that's something that public service leaders have also given to the people who work for them in their departments and agencies of the efforts that have been made and the confidence, I think that's been given across the country by the fact that people, I think do have the view and trust in the government, that it is handling this pretty well.

DAVID PEMBROKE: If I could take you back to that challenge around data, because again, it's about building a culture, isn't it around data. What are the challenges in building a culture of data into the public service, into an organisation that has worked a particular way for a very long time? It's a big organisation, change is difficult. So how do you start to make changes? So is it, it becomes part of the way of doing business?

PHILIP GAETJENS: Well I think to get the demand from the top for data helps enormously so that you have a pull factor, which, which can then drive all of the actions behaviours and exhortations by leaders throughout the public service. You then have, again, I think a purpose and where purpose comes more than usual. For example, the biosecurity laws, which gives the health minister the power to actually declare a pandemic and then do things that are enormous powers with respect to, to normal way of governing that can actually then give right to the cessation or, or more flexibility with respect to privacy laws and things like that, because we need the information to get things. So there are a few sensitive areas, which I think people accept in the current circumstances need to be looked at with some flexibility.

We have also had at the same time, some recognition within the public service and the government and I think the population, that if the Department of Health has data and the Department of Social Services has data, the Tax Office has data, we have got data within the public sector and we need to join that up. So we are, we've got a data transparency bill that is coming out, which is actually aimed to provide public servants with a greater ability to share data. It needs to be done with respect to the purpose for which it's been used. But that, again is a sense of making sure that we have a joined-up view to data. And don't ask people for things five times, let's ask them once and use it five times. Let's get together with the states and see that we can actually look at what can be done between, again, in this pandemic, there is a relationship between the Commonwealth health area and even aged care area, but the state public health units, because when outbreaks occur, the first responder to an outbreak is a state public health unit. So let's again try and join up what needs to be done to address the issue.

The population of Australia does not differentiate between state and federal governments and who does what they just want government to do something. So I think there's a lot, a lot greater expectation and understanding, I think for that to happen, we actually need to share data and use data very effectively,

DAVID PEMBROKE: Eleanor to sort of maintain that sort of commitment from the community, and the permission from the community, trust sits at the heart of it. As a young public servant what role and responsibility do you feel that you have first of all, to drive the data culture and the development of the data culture, but then to build trust, you know, between the public service and the government and the citizens and stakeholders in the Australian community?

ELEANOR KAY: I'm a philosopher. So data scares me, but it's so important. And I think seeing numbers, my goodness! No, I think I have seen in my very short time here, comparative I have seen the value of data being gathered and data being analysed and understood well, and I think my understanding of data is that it you, you have to understand where it's coming from, the story it's telling. It could tell very different stories depending on how you choose to explain it. And so I think it's really important that we have those people who are skilled in data analysis and that we are making sure we're really understanding what it's saying. We're taking the time to understand it and to then take our policy decisions from it.

I think in the trust space, hearing you talk about the rate of change feel is I think really exciting. And I remember on this podcast actually earlier in the year at Brendan Murphy and Caroline Edwards talking about the rate of change in their department. And I think that, that I hope that that gives members of the public some confidence or, and hope in the public service there's you can make bureaucracies it to the butt of many jokes, I think. But, but I think the Australian Public Service this year has shown a willingness to innovate, to make changes quickly to learn as we go and to keep at the forefront of that, the focus of how can we do what is best for Australians. And I know that that has given me hope and confidence and built my trust in the public service.

And I hope that that is something that as public servants we can continue to do, to be honest about what we're trying. We will, I'm sure make mistakes, but as we do that to continue learning and communicating to the Australian public, that what we're doing is trying to make things best for our country.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Have you been struck by the, the mission of public service? Is that something that sort of has grabbed you since you've been here, that there is actually a deep purpose to what you do? It's not just coming to work. It's not just a pay check. It's actually much more than that.

ELEANOR KAY: Yes. I think it's, it's why I chose to work, why I chose to apply it to work at PM&C. And, and in the public service, is this sense of I think government plays such a large role in people's lives. And I think this year has, as Phil said people expect things from the government, particularly in times of crisis. And I think has demonstrated to us this year that the government has an incredibly large role to play in people's lives and in shaping our country. And so I'm passionate to be here because I would love to be part of that. I think that that vision and mission of the public services is incredibly important. And I think lots of people here are motivated by that.

DAVID PEMBROKE: So Phil as you look to the future, as you look to, to, to start from where you are today, obviously continuous improvement, you've got to keep getting better, looking to the future. What do you do next what's how do you continue to drive the reform and the change? Obviously the Thodey review, the government's response to the Thodey review, there's a program of work, but how, how do you keep that momentum going and how do you stop sort of perhaps that reversion to, you know, traditional ways? This is, you know, the way that we've always done it around here. ow do you take the good and leave behind the bits that, you know, we could probably all do without?

PHILIP GAETJENS: Well, I think one of the ways we're going to do that is because we're going to follow what's happening in the rest of the country. I think the pandemic has actually changed social/business/work life forever. You know, we, we have worked out with

systems with the way people themselves adapt that we can do things differently. We don't have to hop on a plane every day. We don't have to do this weekend. We can transfer things electronically so that we can see written material. We can see each other, you can see the body language over videos. That's not just absolutely remote and completely anonymous telephone conversations. So I think there will be a quantum leap in terms of, because everyone has had to do this. It's not just been one area or one section doing it. Everyone's had to do it and they will recall their own experiences. And I think they will be providing suggestions up, down and across as to, well, this worked, why can't we keep doing it this way?

DAVID PEMBROKE: Is there a role though, for the APS to lead in Australia in this rather than sort of follow what may have happened, what may be happening elsewhere?

PHILIP GAETJENS: Well, the leading edge can be the bleeding edge sometimes. So I think we need to be careful in what we're doing, but I think what we need to do is people through their own connections, either with banks, with online, other online interaction, if they have an expectation and a service delivery standard that they see through either online shopping or online banking, they would expect the same standard from government.

So I think we're being drawn up to a level that exists in the community and that will be required of us because why should governments and people's interaction with government be a lesser standard than then what they do in other parts of their life? That will be a pull factor for what we're doing. The push factor, I think we're getting from government itself is to be more agile, be more nimble. And again, the speed at which things have been done for COVID. And in fact, in response to the bushfires has also been again, doing things much more quickly than previously, so that people could actually get assistance to when their house has burned down or, or, you know, when they're in lockup or, you know, issues like that.

So we are, we are being asked to do things more quickly, which means getting data to analyse. So not data in terms of that's the outcome. It's getting data to actually help the analysis to anticipate what's going to happen and then draw a policy and device policy to handle what we think is going to happen. And then you can have, can adapt as is happening with Job Keeper. So I think there's going to be a bit more of a feedback loop. The other thing that we have to do I think is to make sure, and again, I think this will happen after COVID that leaders stay in touch with their staff and their people more. More basically, and that, that means, you know, there should never be a gap in communications. And if there, if there is evidence of a gap emerging, then I think it's up to leaders to fill that gap, not to wait until people. So I think we need to have a meeting or something.

We, we should take the initiative to actually look at what needs to be done, to keep everyone motivated, to know that everyone is actually looking after their own wellbeing, because a workforce that looks after its own wellbeing is a productive workforce. That'll keep on going. So we just have to keep all these pulse checks if you like. So I just think the different way of doing things is setting another level, which will force momentum to keep on happening.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Okay, advice. What advice do you have for Eleanor?

PHILIP GAETJENS: I give Eleanor advice every day and she returns the favour!

DAVID PEMBROKE: What would you say to it?

PHILIP GAETJENS: I'll look the advice and I've given this, I think ever since I've been in this position, and in fact, one of the one area you missed out in my background and my first role as Secretary was in fact, at New South Wales Treasury in between 2011 and 2015. And that helped me enormously because that was not only, well, that was a job. That was my first job as Secretary of the Department, we had to repair budgets. We had to reboot the culture of the New South Wales public service. Right, and that was an enormous benefit to me in terms of learning how to be a CEO or a secretary to get to that position and advice to Eleanor in terms of how to get up. My advice is based on my experience. So I was willing to leave one city to go to another city to work. I always, I think followed a path of interesting jobs. I never sent myself a plan that says, if I go from here to here to here, I'll go from this salary to this salary to that salary, it's, it's never been the money for me. It's always been interesting work.

I have experienced working in the public service federally, working in the public service in two states. As you noted before working over in Singapore. So a diplomat in a multilateral institution. I've worked as this up on the hill as the Chief of Staff to two Treasurers. All of that knowledge has provided me a breadth of experience that has been a solid platform which still helps me today.

So that, that breadth of experience, understanding how the interaction works between the public service and government, understanding how ministers work. And again, knowing that sometimes now you don't want to give this advice to this minister on this particular day, because something else has happened. And even as Chief of Staff, we realised Ministers can be I mean again, be fathers or mothers. The current Treasurer and the Treasurer I worked for with Peter Costello was Deputy Leader. So they've got those jobs to do as well. So there's a multiplicity of roles and the experience and breadth that I've got over time has actually helped me serve the multiplicity of my roles as Chief Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister. See, I have a department sort of group CEO of a portfolio and group CEO of the public service.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Big job.

PHILIP GAETJENS: So I can, it's a big job, but lots of people have done it before me and lots of people will do it after me. So I think all I can say is you might not have a plan going forward, and I have no trouble with that whatsoever cause I had never had a plan going forward, but being in this position, now I can look back and actually connect the dots and show to myself while I didn't have a rapid rise in my career. Again, I didn't follow money. I followed jobs, but going across all the different areas has provided that base. That gives me the confidence to be able to do this job. And, and again, coming, getting this job, I knew three of my counterparts in the States because I'd already worked with them. So that, that just that, that existing bunch of connections just helps immediately in coming to a new job. And the fact that I, you know, I know what's important to the states, so I've worked for a small state, a big state. And you know, I, I can't say, and in all honesty, I don't think anyone could say he loves every minute of it, but you know, as you grow older, most of the memories you keep with the good ones and, and every memory I've got is great.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Eleanor, what feedback or advice do you have for Phil as you head into the next part of the task that's in front of you? Because it's a very, very big job. And no one knows where it's going to end up.

ELEANOR KAY: I think I'm hearing you talk, Phil, about leaders needing to lead in, in filling those gaps in communication is, is incredibly important. And I think as I look at the public

service and, and I guess my thoughts on where the public service needs to go forward is, is working within our teams to hear from everyone down from your grads all the way up and hearing how the departments can work internally and work with each other, but also making space to hear from the Australian public and making sure that we are understanding what our country is saying. And I guess as we talk about change and as things will progress and who knows what the next few weeks or months might even hold for us, I guess I'm sure we will make mistakes. And I think as a public service where we can be honest about that and continue to always strive to listen and to hear the feedback from internally from externally that will be the way that we are the strongest because we get the most brains together to address those problems and move forward. And I think so, I think it's encouraging to hear our leaders have that mindset of listening. And, and stepping into that gap.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Phil perhaps the last word to you, the head of the APS, this is a podcast into the Australian Public Service. What message do you have for the, you know, thousands of people who are listening each week, what message do you want to send to them as we look to the future?

PHILIP GAETJENS: Well, I think the key message is to stay healthy and look after yourselves. The second message is whatever you're doing, whether it's frontline service, policy advice, weather forecasting, looking after emergency management the people who work in DFAT that brought a lot of people home whatever you're doing in your role, associate that to the purpose of how are we helping the people of Australia. Look at the way you can do it and whether you, your ideas can actually make that way more effective.

This is not just about money, it's actually the quality of the service delivery to the Australian people. And can I say, lastly, just to go back to your early reference to hockey, it's not just what we do with work I think. When I grow up, so I was at Uni at Flinders Uni as a person who worked, but for the ANU hockey club and in both of those organisations I was quite often the captain of a team, sometimes coach and in the sports union at both Flinders Uni. And I knew, and that's the first time I think you actually learn how do you actually wrangle 20, 30, a hundred odd people or an ANU sports union that has multiple sports. And I was, I was treasurer of the ANU sports union that, that the things you learn at an early stage in life when you're just dealing with other people is a very important contributor to your work life because your understanding then, and again, you might not even know it, but it's negotiation, it's stakeholder management, it's relationship skills. It's if you're captaining a team, you're actually setting the strategy for the team about how to beat the other team. And you're then looking at the players on the field and seeing how tactically you can change one player for another player or change the line of attack from left side to right side, all that stuff you're doing. And that is a lesson you can learn that applies to your work career.

So that just says, it's not just working, what you do, which is very important, but every extracurricular thing that you do or that you have done is also a contribution to you. And then how you think about and go about working. So it's not all about work, it's what you do for your life skills. That's again, not just policy skills, it's life skills, soft skills, because the other things are most important, I think to become a good leader.

DAVID PEMBROKE: Wonderful advice, Philip Gaetjens, thank you for your service and Eleanor. Kay, thank you for your service. And thank you for coming on Work with Purpose.

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Thanks again, as always to our friends at IPAA and the Australian Public Service Commission for their ongoing support, this programme would not happen without the team here and also back at the content group office. So thanks to everyone who puts in so much work every week to bring this to you. Another great conversation today here on work with purpose, that's it for now, we'll be back at the same time next week, but for the moment it's bye for now.

SPEAKER 4:

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